



In 2021, Baby's Space became a Community Resource Hub. Funded by Minnesota's federally-funded Preschool Development Grant (PDG), the Community Resource Hubs help pregnant and parenting families with children under age 9 connect with needed resources. Baby's Space: A Place to Grow is a child development center that works to create a cycle of academic success and prosperity for families dealing with the systemic impacts of poverty, racism, and exclusion. Through the Strong Families, Strong Bonds project, they collaborate with Hennepin County, Minneapolis Public Schools, and other community partners to deepen and more effectively coordinate support for children and families who live in the Little Earth housing development. Through this work, they aim to better meet families' intersecting needs and help families achieve or maintain stability to create home environments in which they and their children can thrive.

Program successes

- **Family connection.** While the COVID-19 pandemic halted in-person activities, staff did home visits and sent materials home. Since then, Baby's Space has resumed in-person family nights, which offer a shared meal and feature books and play performances. Even through the pandemic and social distancing, families felt very connected to Baby's Space and acknowledged its presence in their lives.
- **Board of parents.** Baby's Space has convened a board of parents together to reflect the needs of Indigenous parents and families. This development has helped Baby's Space and their families feel that the state is thinking about and including them in their plans.
- **Staff are proactive and engaged.** Staff at Baby's Space feel that they do a good job with the resources and capacity that they have to work effectively. Staff are proactive rather than responsive when addressing the needs of their families. Staff at Baby's Space feel more engaged with their work and have amplified the work that they do. The Preschool Development Grant (PDG) has helped staff at Baby's Space feel more engaged with their work and amplified the work that they do.
- **Partnerships.** With the help of the State, Baby's Space was able to enhance their work and build supportive connections with other early childhood development agencies and programs such as their partnership with Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS). The PDG grant strengthened their relationship with MPS and allowed for more collaborative work.

- **Support family and community needs.** The PDG grant has allowed Baby's Space to utilize funding in a way that is supporting their community needs specifically. For example, Baby's Space has helped lessen the load that grandmothers carry taking care of their grandchildren so they can worry less and focus on other responsibilities. Families have expressed their gratitude for Baby's Space for helping them with their needs

PARENT STORY: READY FOR THE BIG SCHOOL

My child started at Baby's Space when she was about 2 months old. I was struggling with child care and my aunt referred me to this program. My baby was cared for and educated. [She's now] ready for the big school (kindergarten).

I have other children that are currently attending Baby's Space. I love how they make the kids feel important and how they prepare them for school. They have an actual "graduation." Three of my kids have graduated from here.

Baby's Space not only provides for the kids, they have resources for family needs as well. They provide scholarships and other ways for the kids to be a part of the program. No kid is forgotten here, they are all treated respectfully and loved. Parents have the opportunity to sit on the committee, to share as well as to listen to suggestions. Thank you Deb Lund and Baby's Space for all that you do to prepare my child for the future!

Hub's Reach & Family Needs

As a Community Resource HUB, Baby's Space reached 384 people from January 1, 2022, through March 31, 2023. Two-thirds of those who received navigator services were parents, with grandparents, other relatives and caregivers, guardians, and providers also contacting Baby's Space for assistance getting resources they need. Baby's Space also observed the large number of grandparents raising grandchildren in need of legal support, in particular.

1. Number of caregivers supported by Hub, by type

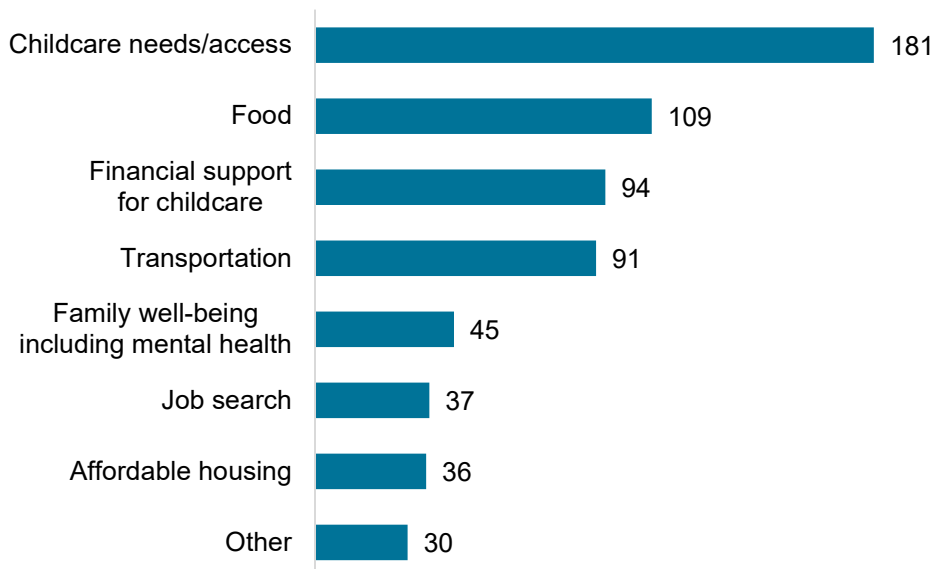


^a Aunt, uncle, cousin, friend, etc.

^b Childcare, home visitor, etc.

Over the same time period, 653 referrals were made. The bulk of the referrals were for child care and food, followed by transportation and financial support for child care. Baby's Space staff observed high need around transportation (related to high gas prices), and housing, and well as the differential support for working families who are ineligible for child care assistance. While referral organizations may be available to meet a generic need, sometimes they are unable to meet a more specific need. For example, foods shelves lack diabetic-friendly options, and landlords may be unwilling to rent to families without rental history.

2. Number of referrals from the Hub, by type



We've helped with gas cards and with vehicles. We helped one grandma in particular because her vehicle has not been working and in between helping with that, we've been providing transportation for her grandson to be here every day so that she can go to her appointments for her other grandchildren she's caring for. – Baby's Space staff member

Program challenges

- **Staffing.** Hiring and training new staff during the pandemic was a major challenge. Dedicating time to train new staff, as well as resetting and learn together as a whole, required closing down the space for training. This was difficult for parents as they weren't able to drop off their babies and disrupted their services.
- **Continued funding.** With the Preschool Development Grant winding down, staff at Baby's Space voiced the need for continued funding in order for their program to continue providing the same level of services to their families. They express that the need of their families are still present, and discontinued funding will disrupt the lives of the families who are using Baby's Spaces services.

Moving forward



Looking towards the future, Baby's Space plans to continue building relationships with their families, as well as connecting and building the relationship between children and their caregivers. Many of the children served are in out of home placement, which often causes a disconnect between the child and caregiver. Baby's Space strives to be empathetic and understanding to their children's and families' situations and needs, as well as their strengths and resilience.

[Baby's Space program is focusing on] relationship and connection with children and their caregiver, because a lot of the children that we serve here are in out of home placement, whether it's with a relative or a non-relative. And when that happens, there's a disconnect and then we have to reconnect, so getting staff to also understand that a lot of times everybody is in transition and being supportive and understanding in all aspects of pretty much everything... Just being more present and aware that the picture is always bigger than what you see.

— Baby's Space staff member

PARENT STORY: BABY'S SPACE FAMILY

With the help of the State, Baby's Space hopes to spread awareness about the importance of caregivers who are taking care of their relative children. Caregivers often don't see the value of their position and what they're doing. The stress that revolves around their responsibilities often obstructs just how important their role is.

Baby's Space strives to provide the care for children and the support parents and other caregivers need to be their best caregivers to these precious babies.

My childcare story began with Baby's Space in 2013. [My son] had to start child care as soon as he could as I was now a single mother of 3 children and had to get back to work as soon as possible.

What I first loved about Baby's Space was the fact I knew some of the staff already. I trusted them to watch over my brand new NICU baby and take the best care of him. I am grateful that my 9-year-old is still able to attend after school and I am still entrusting them with my 4th and final baby. I am grateful to still be a part of the Baby's Space family and community.

Over the years we participated in family nights, scrapbooking, holiday gatherings, making pancakes together as a family, PreK graduation, Christmas wish lists, and winter coat giveaways. As I write this, I am emotional because of how much Baby's Space truly does for the families they serve.

Without Baby's Space and the grace of their director and staff, I would honestly not be where I am today.