

# bridgeport prospers: scaling early childhood services state-wide

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Bridgeport Prospers | Bridgeport, Conn.



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*– Beth Bye, commissioner for the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood*

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The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds will allow Bridgeport Prospers of Bridgeport, Connecticut to scale up its existing array of services for children and families offered through the nationally recognized Baby Bundle program.

Bridgeport Prospers will leverage additional federal relief dollars from the American Rescue Plan Act to expand their home visiting services and developmental screenings for caregivers and families across the state of Connecticut, potentially impacting nearly 14,000 newborns and families across the state.

Leaders from their partnership have also planned to intensify their efforts in a range of other support services including literacy programs, universal supports for parents, increased infant/toddler care and access to data that will better support decision making.

Last month, Connecticut leaders announced that they would allocate a significant portion of the state’s ARPA funding to introduce large-scale community services for children and families, including universal home visiting. Bridgeport Prospers will be a key partner in this effort and has already worked with state and local leaders to plan for a rapid and equitable distribution of funds — targeting resource allocation where the needs are greatest.

“The work that Bridgeport Prospers is already doing through their Baby Bundle program is truly a model for Connecticut and was part of the inspiration for the state’s proposal for universal home visiting,” said Beth Bye, commissioner for the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. “They are leading with a results-based approach and their strategy is grounded in research. It is a smart move to support programs that are already effective and improving outcomes for children and families in our state.”

Launched in 2016, **Bridgeport’s Baby Bundle program** was developed to increase the number of children in the city reaching developmental milestones by the age of three. The program was also designed with an intentional focus on addressing the city’s health disparity gaps and supporting families living with economic, racial, education and health inequities.



"I went through post-partum depression and know how traumatizing it is to not have a support system," said Damaris Retamar, a parent from Bridgeport who also serves as a community messenger for Bridgeport Prospers. "I know this program will help a lot of families. It will support parents and provide families with the financial, mental health and physical support systems they need to take care of their child."

Over the last five years, the Baby Bundle program has made significant strides in accelerating health outcomes for families and communities in Connecticut, both locally and state-wide. Since 2016, the initiative has expanded well beyond its original network of community partners, currently including more than 40 diverse groups of stakeholders, and serving several thousands of families.

Bridgeport Prospers leaders attribute a number of key factors to the success of the Baby Bundle program including a strong focus on data and involvement of stakeholders at all levels.

"The Baby Bundle initiative gave us an incredible opportunity to not just start another program but instead focus on ensuring that the existing efforts in our community were aligned," said Allison Logan, executive director of Bridgeport Prospers. "This work is truly about building a community infrastructure that involves stakeholders as part of the solution and relies on data and uplifting lived experiences to support our decision making."

Over the next several months, Bridgeport Prospers will work closely with Waterbury Bridge to Success of Waterbury, Connecticut, to continue expanding services for children and families across the state. The communities have already partnered to share policy agendas and best practices, and to support each other in their efforts.

The Bridgeport Prospers story is a shining example of how state leaders and network members can collectively work to design, implement and deliver services to all communities, keeping equity at the forefront.





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