

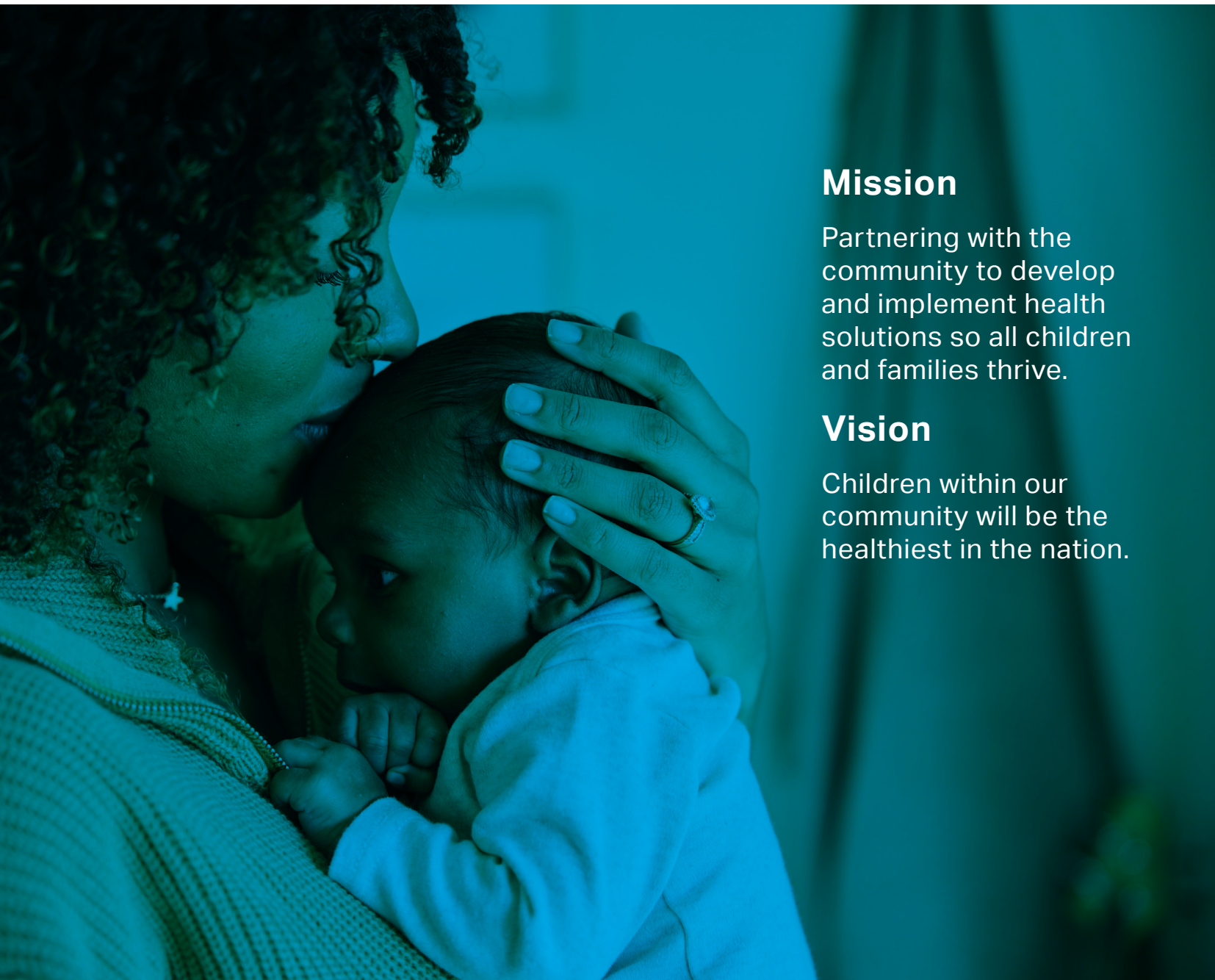
The Bessler Center

Mary Bridge Children's



2024

Annual Report



Mission

Partnering with the community to develop and implement health solutions so all children and families thrive.

Vision

Children within our community will be the healthiest in the nation.

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Welcome

It's been a busy year at the Bessler Center. We entered 2024 announcing and advancing our core strategies. The MultiCare Mary Bridge Children's Hospital & Health Network primary care partnership with United Way 2-1-1 continued to support the basic needs of families. Additionally, we partnered more broadly with schools, offering training and education in various capacities throughout the year as well as developing a school health website to bring evidence-based chronic disease management education to our partners.

This year, we also initiated the countywide "Healthy Births, Healthy Babies" summit, convened by the Bessler Center, which connected over 144 participants from 85 agencies to promote prenatal through infant health. This work resulted in multiple expansive, diverse partnerships throughout our county, all sharing the goal of improving prenatal and infant health outcomes. And thanks to increased funding, we brought on a new program manager, an exciting development that positions us to continue furthering our priorities.

We invite you to look through the following pages to gain a deeper understanding of what the Bessler Center at Mary Bridge Children's has achieved in 2024. As we embark on improving the health and well-being of the next generation, we hope you'll join us.



Healthy Births, Healthy Babies Working Summit July 23, 2024





About the Bessler Center

The Bessler Center at Mary Bridge Children's was founded in 2023 to advance health access and outcomes to achieve a vision that our community's children will be the healthiest in the nation. It's a partnership between two local physician leaders and MultiCare Mary Bridge Children's Hospital & Health Network, the backbone agency of our collective impact work. The Bessler Center is grounded in the understanding that broad and diverse partnerships are critical to achieving sustainable health solutions. Because of this, partnering for impact is fundamental to how the Center engages in its work.

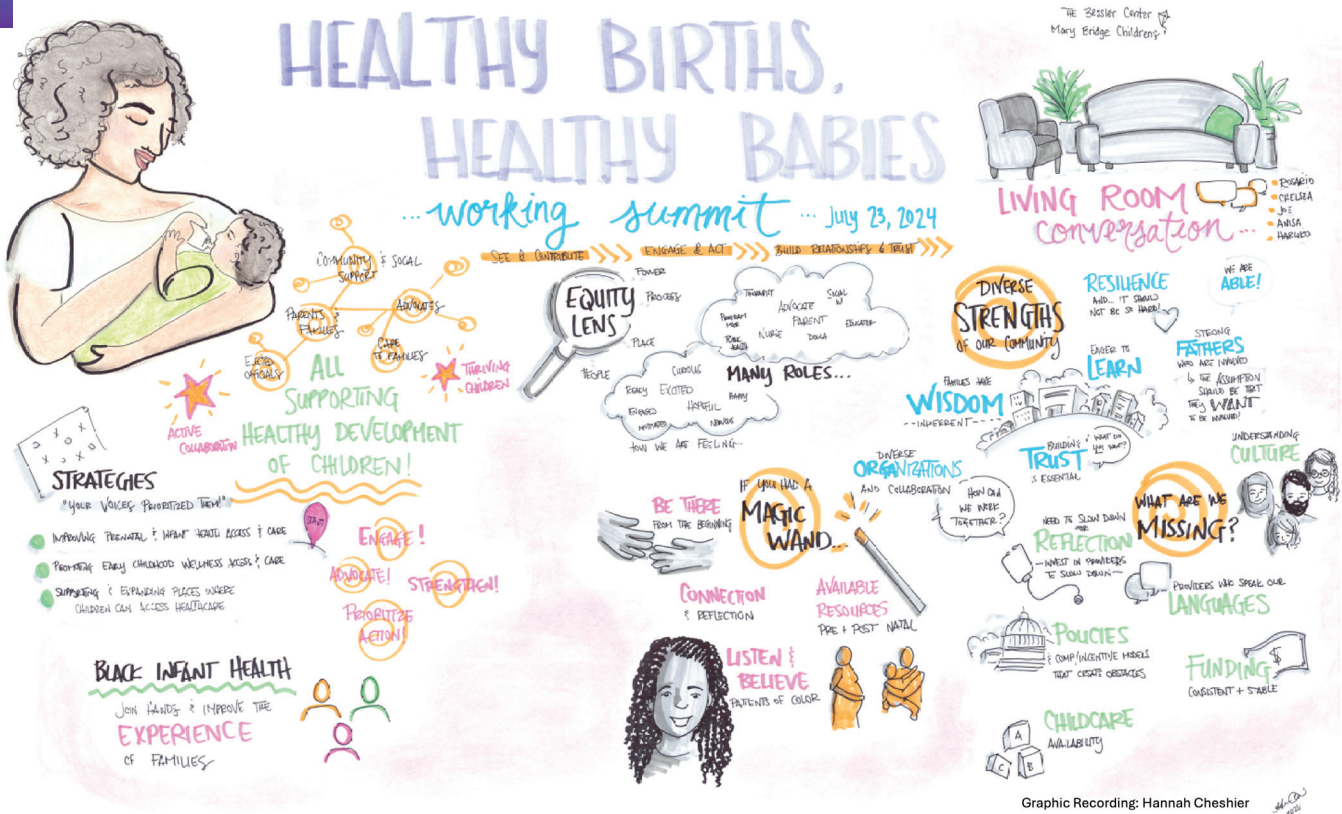
Bessler Center initiatives are co-developed with and prioritized for the community. Where helpful, ongoing work is scaled to serve children and families in need and maximize health outcomes. When gaps are identified, we innovate to find equitable solutions, generating capacity and funding to remain sustainable. Finally, the Bessler Center team engages in local, regional and statewide advocacy to ensure vulnerable children and families are represented in the policies intended to support them.

Strategy advancement

The Bessler Center strategies were developed based on community data and feedback. They include:

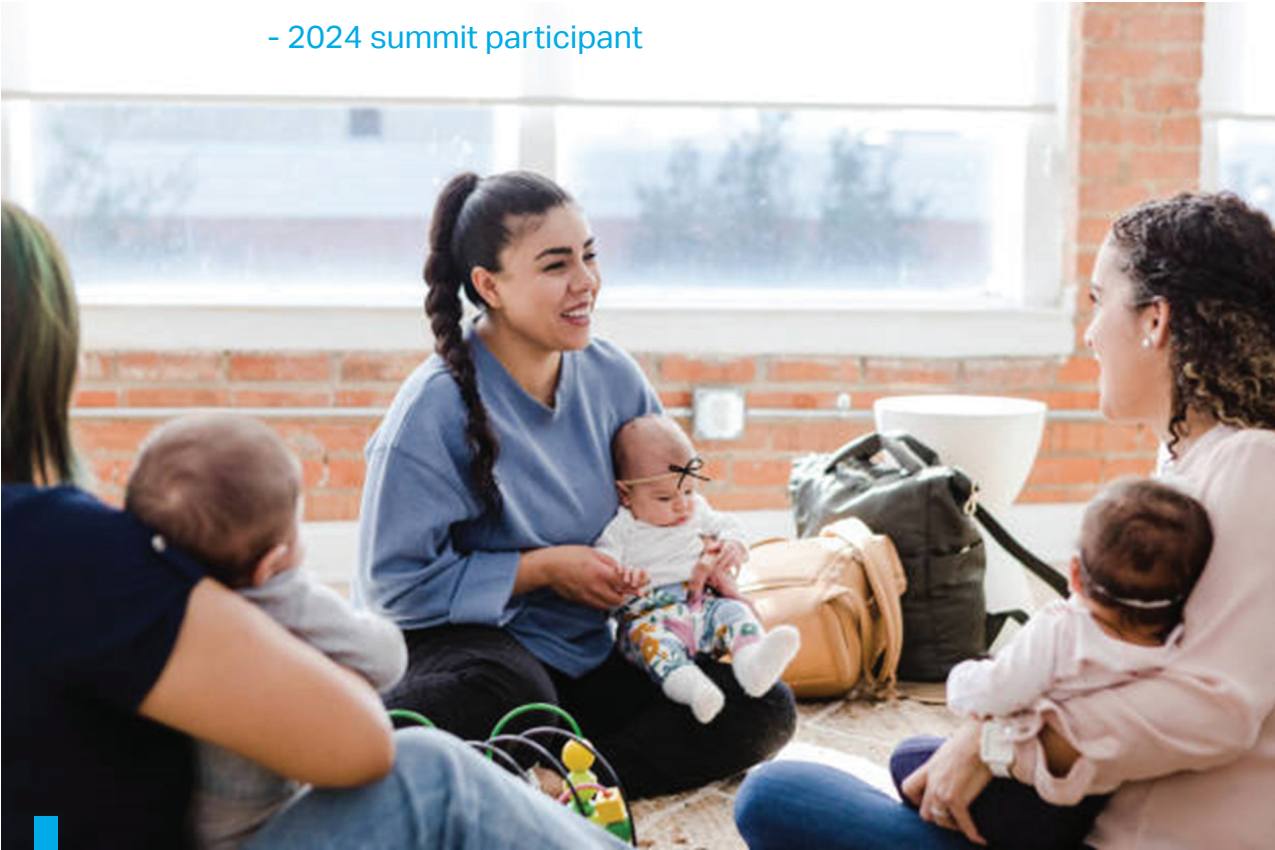
- Improving prenatal and infant health access and care
- Promoting early childhood wellness
- Supporting & expanding places where children can access health care

In 2024, our community prioritized prenatal and infant care as the strategic area most in need of — and ready for — immediate collaborative action and support. This resulted in the “Healthy Births, Healthy Babies” working summit, which prioritized actions to advance health outcomes and was widely attended by diverse community members, including parents with lived experiences who continue to promote this work with us today.



"Thank you! You have activated superheroes in our community!"

- 2024 summit participant



Prenatal and infant health in Pierce County

Since the "Healthy Births, Healthy Babies" 2024 summit, the Bessler Center at Mary Bridge Children's has joined with community partners to respond to priorities highlighted by local leaders and families. Additional 2024 accomplishments include:

- Provided small grants to several grassroots organizations supporting culturally relevant care for parents during pregnancy and postpartum.
- Secured funding to increase access to Women, Infant and Child (WIC) nutrition services at Mary Bridge Children's, resulting in a 10 percent increased capacity to serve families in need.
- Partnered with Pierce County Perinatal Collaborative to conduct community surveys, identifying the challenges families face in accessing resources, and laying a foundation for reducing future barriers to care.

Enhancing early childhood wellness within community

Family support, nurturing and safe environments and social resources are critical foundations to child health. In our community, many children lack access to a medical home and basic needs. Fewer than 50 percent of children receive the recommended vaccines by 35 months of age to protect them from preventable diseases. We know we can do better.

The Bessler Center at Mary Bridge Children’s uses the Robert Wood Johnson Community Health Roadmaps framework to ensure that the health needs of our community’s children are effectively considered and addressed. We understand that 80 percent of health outcomes are determined by social need factors such as access to food, housing, transportation and community support.

In 2023, we created partnerships between several of our primary care sites, United Way and Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department so clinic staff could better connect local families with vital resources that influence their health and well-being. These partnerships continued in 2024. Top resource referrals included housing, food and clothing/diaper assistance. We’re expanding our work so family referrals are rapid and referring teams can receive feedback on how families have been supported. There’s amazing work happening in our community and we’re excited to be part of it.

In 2025, we look forward to advancing specific disease prevention strategies with our community and health partners so children can thrive.





Supporting student health and well-being

Children learn best when they're healthy. The Bessler Center at Mary Bridge Children's is partnering to advance health and wellness for kids where they learn and play — increasing health care access, reducing absenteeism, supporting parents and teams in providing coordinated care of complex illness and enhancing health equity. Our 2024 highlights included:

- Development of a school health website providing disease specific education and resources to our state district nurses.
- Continued education and training for school nurses on adolescent health, behavioral health, playground safety, toileting support of children with special needs and many other requested topics.
- Expansion of our school-based health clinics (SBHCs) and school-based partnerships with local community programs.

In 2024, the Bessler Center provided education and training to over 180 nurses who hold responsibility for the school health and well-being of more than 125,000 students. Our training enrollment increased by 70 percent and will be further expanded in 2025.

Engaging in collective impact

There are no cookie cutter solutions to the complex health care challenges our communities face. Rather, communities must come together and prioritize the issues facing them, working to co-develop strategies with a common agenda, shared metrics and continuous communication.

To respond to these needs, community members must be invited to co-create solutions and receive support to remain at the table(s) where health care decisions are made. The Bessler Center is fortunate to have the support of Mary Bridge Children's as it's backbone agency in our collective impact efforts. In 2025, we look forward to further partnerships so children within our community can be the healthiest in the nation.



Local health statistics and how we're taking action

50.1%

of Non-Hispanic other Pacific Island parents have inadequate prenatal care (compared to 28.4% of WA population)

11.7%

of Black infants are born with low birth weight (compared to 6.5% of WA population)

49%

of qualifying families are enrolled in WA WIC services (U.S. range for state enrollment is 34.6% to 71.6%)

49.1%

of children under 35 months receive the recommended vaccinations for preventative disease (compared to 56.6% of WA population)

Partnering for health outcomes

- "Healthy Births, Healthy Babies" summit
- Expanded health partnerships
- School-based health centers collaborative

Advancing community supports

- 10% increase in access to Mary Bridge Children's WIC
- 70% increase in school nurse education and training
- >125,000 students benefiting from advanced school health supports

Sustaining community efforts

- \$311,000 invested into community programs addressing prenatal, infant and school-based health

Thank you to our partners

Broad and diverse partnerships are fundamental to the work of the Bessler Center. In 2024, we've been invited into multiple interagency work groups, boards and countywide teams, all serving children and families to promote equitable health and wellness. We're immeasurably grateful for the opportunities that have and will continue to be created by linking arms with those dedicated to meaningful and vital changes for children — allowing us to learn, grow and serve more families. So much is possible when we remove barriers, listen and take action together.

A special note of thanks to our state and local health departments, Pierce County Early Childhood Network, Family Connects, Pierce County Perinatal Collaborative, United Way of Pierce County, the Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, our Pierce County school districts, the School Nurse Organization of Washington, the Washington School Based Health Alliance and all leading in the area of culturally relevant care such as Black Infant Health, Being the Village, Shades of Divinity, Voces de Familia, Hummingbird Indigenous Family Services and so many more.

Most importantly, thank you to the parents and families who have joined with us, shared their experiences and offered wisdom and expertise to help our community's families thrive.





The Bessler Center Mary Bridge Children's



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