



United Way of  
Greater New Haven

United Way of Greater New Haven's

# EARLY HEAD START 2018 REPORT



## SIERRA

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**As a single mother of two girls,  
Sierra's plate is full.**

Add in her part-time job, full-time college course load, and her schedule is jam-packed. While her shift as a hospitality worker ends, her role as a mother never stops.

And homework? Well, her girls come first. Sierra finds time after putting her little ones to bed—sometimes even staying up until 3 in the morning to finish before her back-to-back classes. Her hard work shows—she's made the Dean's List.

Her goal is to become an English teacher, and she's set to graduate next May. She's ambitious, determined, and always on-the-go.

And 22-year-old Sierra wouldn't trade it for anything.



## THE PHONE CALL THAT CHANGED IT ALL

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**When Sierra was pregnant with her oldest daughter Khloe, her mother was diagnosed with epilepsy.**

Because of her mother's ailing health, living at home with her baby and mother wasn't an option. Her only other choice was to move in with her father and step-mother.

Having lived with her mom her whole life, this took some adjusting, especially with a newborn.

Soon thereafter, Sierra learned about United Way partner organization Elizabeth Celotto Child Care Center, a childcare center for parenting teens attending New Haven Public Schools. She enrolled Khloe and was able to continue earning her high school diploma. Over the years, she built a relationship with Robin Moore-Evans, the director.

Time went on. Khloe, now 5, went to preschool, and Sierra began taking classes at Southern Connecticut State University. During her sophomore year at SCSU, Sierra became pregnant with her second daughter, Zoe.





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I knew Sierra had big goals for herself and children, and now she's making her dreams come true.



Never wanting to be a burden on anyone, Sierra admits that she was going to drop out of college to care for her girls.

“I don’t think I’ve said this to anyone, but if I could not find childcare for Zoe, I was not going back to Southern. That would have been it for me.”

But then Robin called her.

She was calling to check up on Sierra since the birth of her second baby, and let her know that Celotto had transitioned to an Early Head Start center. Although Sierra was not in high school any longer, the board made an exception.

“When I called Sierra, she told me that she was looking for childcare. I thought—with no hesitation—to contact my board of directors to request the enrollment of Sierra’s youngest, Zoe. I knew Sierra had big goals for herself and children, and now she’s making her dreams come true,” said Robin.

Days later, Zoe was enrolled and began attending at 6 weeks old.

If Sierra hadn’t received that phone call from Robin, and support from our caring community, her future could have been very different.



## EARLY HEAD START

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**Sierra knows first-hand the positive impact United Way's Early Head Start program has on a community and the tremendous benefits for children and families.**

At 2 and a half years old, Zoe can already count to ten, identify colors, and has excellent verbal communication and social skills.

In order to be prepared for kindergarten, children enrolled in Early Head Start are assessed three times a year using Teaching Strategies Gold: a seamless assessment tool based on 38 research-based objectives that include predictors of school success.

Ongoing child observations are used to evaluate a child's developmental level and progress in outcomes aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Child Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five.

At the end of this program year, all of the children in United Way's Early Head Start program who were assessed met or exceeded appropriate expectations for their age.

Early Head Start does more than prepare children for school academically. The program connects children and families to services to help them become and stay healthy—ensuring children are at their best and able to learn.

The program's team is responsible for connecting families to medical and dental services, including assisting in scheduling appointments and securing follow-ups.

In 2018, 100% of children in United Way's Early Head Start program had both a medical and dental "home"—a primary care provider and dentist. 100% of children were also up-to-date on their child well visits, and age-appropriate immunizations.



Early Head Start also encourages involvement from parents like Sierra—whether it is volunteering in the classroom, or serving on the Early Head Start Policy Council.

The council is comprised of parents of children currently enrolled, and community representatives. The council is responsible for making decisions for the direction of the program—from reviewing finances and allocating certain funds, to evaluating enrollment and student attendance.

Sierra is the current Policy Council Chairperson, and feels empowered that she has a say in her youngest daughter's education.

“The most surprising thing I've learned is how much parents have a voice. A lot of stuff that happens behind the scenes has to be approved of through parents,” said Sierra.







## UNITED WAY'S INVOLVEMENT

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**Through United Way's Early Head Start program, children enter school better prepared, as they benefit from an enhanced learning environment and nurturing care provided in a year-round, high-quality program.**


Celotto's transition to the Early Head Start program means a high-quality curriculum for all students. From the materials in the classroom, to the staff training and resources available, these upgrades have helped enhance the educational experience for both children and families.

Through Early Head Start, childcare partners offer services for children and their families that might not otherwise be provided. For example, prior to Celotto's transition to an Early Head Start program, the center closed when the school year ended. Now, families remain connected and receive home visits throughout the summer months.

These services can help fill gaps for families.

This complex program, managed by United Way, served a total of 144 infants, toddlers, and their families from New Haven, West Haven, and Hamden in 2017-2018.

The need for high quality care remains high, as United Way's Early Head Start program served only 6% of the estimated eligible infants and toddlers through 88 total funded slots in the area.



“  
The reason why  
I was able to  
make it to where  
I am is because  
I had support.”

## PASSING IT ON

**Sierra dreams of starting her own non-profit organization someday.**

“When you’re a mom, you kind of feel isolated, but it’s not because you want to be.”

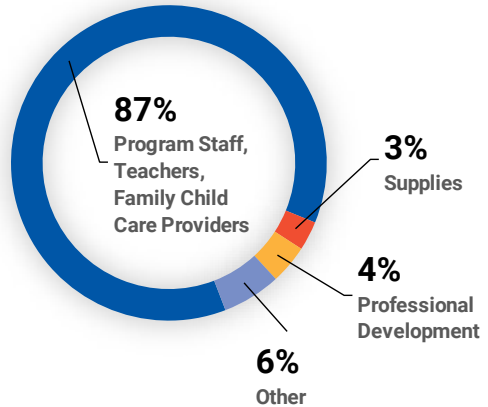
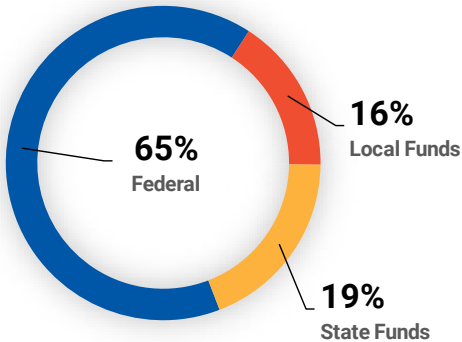
Her idea for a new non-profit would include monthly support group meetings for teenage mothers. Sierra envisions workshops promoting health and nutrition, including cooking healthy dinners, as well as other relevant topics that are valuable for young mothers.

“The reason why I was able to make it to where I am is because I had support. So I need to pass down the knowledge to others.” ●

## FUNDING DETAILS

Total Revenue: \$2,445,088.41

Total Expenses: \$2,444,727.41



By using local dollars to leverage federal funds, United Way works with several community partners to implement the program.

Funds are used to support the cost of high quality infant toddler care, including but not limited to the salaries for staff, teachers, and family child care providers, the purchase of health and educational supplies, as well as tuition for college classes towards earning credentials for program staff.

Local funds provide the match required by the program and may include cash contributions, donated materials and supplies, as well as volunteer time and hours—all helping to make the program successful.

***For more details about United Way and Early Head Start, including past years' reports, school readiness data, and results from the most recent review by the Secretary and the financial audit, visit: [uwgnh.org/EHS](http://uwgnh.org/EHS)***



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