



Providing affordable child care, no matter what

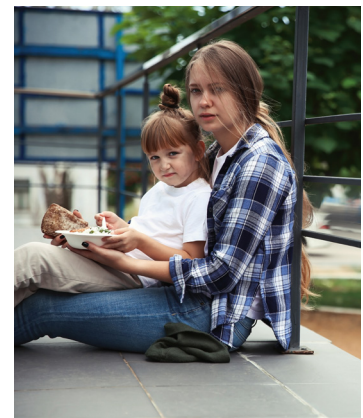


Hendricks County organization serves families experiencing homelessness

For families experiencing homelessness, finding affordable, steady child care is crucial.

“Without child care, it is extremely difficult to find a job that can keep a family stable in these trying times,” said Julie Randall, executive director of Family Promise of Hendricks County. Family Promise is an organization that works to transform the lives of families experiencing homelessness and poverty in Hendricks County.

“I had all these moms who were homeless in our program who wanted to work but couldn’t because they lacked child care,” Randall said. “Child care was either full, too expensive or parents had to wait too long to qualify for Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) assistance.”



“We knew we had to do something on our own to help these families who had to work. This was what our community needed.”

Julie Randall, Executive Director of Family Promise of Hendricks County

That community need led to the creation of TOTally Kids Childcare at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, a registered ministry that works to care for children of all backgrounds. Most of the children served come from families that are experiencing homelessness.

With the help of Family Promise, the program was started three years ago with the mission of helping those in need to obtain affordable child care, no matter what. There is a sliding scale for those who qualify and a free option paid by Family Promise for families that are in its residential program for homelessness.

“We’re not a regular day care here,” said Randall. “We don’t want to be known as a regular day care. If parents can’t pay, they will pay us when they can. If children need clothes, we’ll help them. Our main goal is giving children the security and stability they need.”



TOTally Kids opened with two classrooms serving five children and eventually increased to five classrooms and 30 available seats. In 2021, the organization received a Closing the Gap grant from Early Learning Indiana to increase access. The funding allowed TOTally Kids to open three more classrooms and add 35 additional seats.

“The Closing the Gap grant created an opportunity for us to always get kids into care immediately,” said Randall. “We have the space available to care for more children so their parents can go to work.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the level of need by 85% at Family Promise. Each day, 15 to 20 families call the organization asking for assistance. In 2021, Family Promise served 90 families through child care at TOTally Kids.

“There are so many more children and families that need our help,” said Randall. “If other doors would open up for child care, it would alleviate the worry some parents have. Affordability matters for these parents.”

Randall said TOTally Kids works closely with Child Care Answers (CCA). CCA provided support on how to set up classrooms and develop a curriculum and is helping TOTally Kids work towards a high-quality rating on Paths to QUALITY™.

“We are in constant communication,” Randall said of CCA. “The knowledge they’ve given us has been invaluable.”

Family Promise and TOTally Kids are working together to give an underserved population affordable child care, which is key in helping move families from poverty to sustainable independence.

“Stability is the most important part of what we do, and we are making a direct impact by providing affordable child care to those who need it most,” said Randall.