



# Family Start Learning & Support Services 2018 Annual Report



# Transforming Communities Through Family Engagement

Family Start Learning & Support Services (FAST), a division of the UIC Center for Literacy, empowers and strengthens Chicago Early Learning families through our partnership with the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services. FAST provides families with learning and support services across the city of Chicago. To make this possible, our staff travels to the Chicago Early Learning sites to provide parents with employment-readiness, family literacy, and financial literacy workshops. Further, we operate multiple sites across the city that offer high school equivalency and English language classes, youth employment opportunities, and support services for families and educators of children with autism and developmental delays. FAST serves Chicago Early Learning programs focusing on the highest need areas of city.

**OUR MISSION:**  
Provide families  
with access to high  
quality, research-based  
learning opportunities in  
collaboration with partners  
and community-based  
organizations.

**OUR VISION:**  
Break the cycle of poverty  
and collectively strengthen  
communities through family  
learning services.

Our key program components are: Adult Education & Career Transition, Parent & Youth Outreach, and Resource Center for Autism & Developmental Delays. The development of each of these FAST programs is based upon the knowledge that engaging parents in meaningful education, training, and advancement opportunities directly impacts their children as well. In addition to the extensive research that supports parent's education as a significant predictor of children's academic achievement, parent unemployment and the associated economic and psychological stress can have long-lasting adverse effects on children's development.

FAST recognizes meaningful impact depends on focusing on the family as a unit. By actively engaging parents and utilizing community resources FAST helps build stronger relationships between parents and children and impact the learning and development of the whole family. Therefore, each of FAST's key programs strives to engage participants not only as adult learners but also as parents of young children. FAST's approach is to facilitate programs that address the needs and goals of the adult family members while supporting the adult's role as a parent who impacts the growth and development of children. By engaging parents in programs that acknowledge the importance of such intergenerational learning and by continually seeking out partnerships to enhance community resources, FAST is transforming the Chicago Early Learning community.

# 2018 Program Highlights

**24** Students obtained a high-school equivalency, and **5** students entered employment.

**84** Chicago Early Learning sites, representing **21** delegate agencies, were provided on-site workshops to promote family engagement.

**2,498** Parents participated in literacy development workshops, **96%** of whom demonstrated knowledge gains on post workshop assessments.

**235** Teens provided early literacy and conflict resolution activities through the Youth Outreach program.

**30** Trainings provided to **490** Chicago Early Learning families and staff helped to support the learning of children with developmental delays and autism.

**2,309** Chicago Early Learning families and staff visited FAST's Resource Center for Autism & Developmental Delays



# How Family Start Works:

## Education

High school equivalency  
English language  
development  
Financial literacy  
College & career readiness

## Opportunity

Teen Summer Employment:  
One Summer Chicago  
Chicago Peace  
Ambassadors  
AmeriCorps project MORE  
Community leadership  
through COFI

## Support

Referrals for:  
Disability support  
Transitions to  
employment  
Assistance with:  
FAFSA  
College & job  
applications

**Families Engaged  
Communities Transformed**





## Easterseals benefits from RCADD\* Trainings

Since October 2015, Resource Center for Autism & Developmental Delays has been providing in-service trainings and workshops to Easterseals of Metropolitan Chicago Head Start. At their Child Development Center, Easterseals provides comprehensive and inclusive support to young children of all abilities. In order to support the professional development of their staff and positive outcomes for the families they serve, the Easterseals team has routinely sought out trainings from the Resource Center for Autism & Developmental Delays. In particular, Easterseals team members mention the “Tips & Tools for Homes and Schools” and “Understanding Autism” as being particularly useful in their support of families raising children with developmental disabilities. Further, as a staff they have had the opportunity to create visual aids and activities to promote early learning in the classroom. In the words of Easterseals paraprofessional Rebeca Villegas, “It makes me extremely happy to recommend the Resource Center for Autism & Developmental Delays and the wonderful staff.” Resource Center for Autism & Developmental Delays continues to transform the Chicago community through family engagement.

\*The Resource Center for Autism & Developmental Delays provides support for those who care for, teach, and serve children with Autism Spectrum Disorder or other developmental delays.

# Supporting Parents

Edgardo Ramirez is a parent from El Valor Cantu Childcare Center in the Little Village neighborhood of Chicago. After attending numerous workshops facilitated by FAST's Parent Outreach team\*, Edgardo was inspired to get more involved in his children's education, improve his finances, and seek a better job. Edgardo is supporting his children's education by helping with their homework, reading to them daily, and volunteering at their school. Parent Outreach led financial literacy workshops assisted him with creating a family budget and tracking his spending. Most recently he visited our male involvement office to get assistance with writing a resume. Soon after, he applied and interviewed for an open Workshop Facilitator position and as of December 17, 2018, Edgardo has joined the Parent Outreach program staff as a workshop facilitator. He will bring his rich experience as a parent and community member to help engage and support Chicago Early Learning families.

\*The Parent Outreach program provides trainings to help parents create a better future for their families.

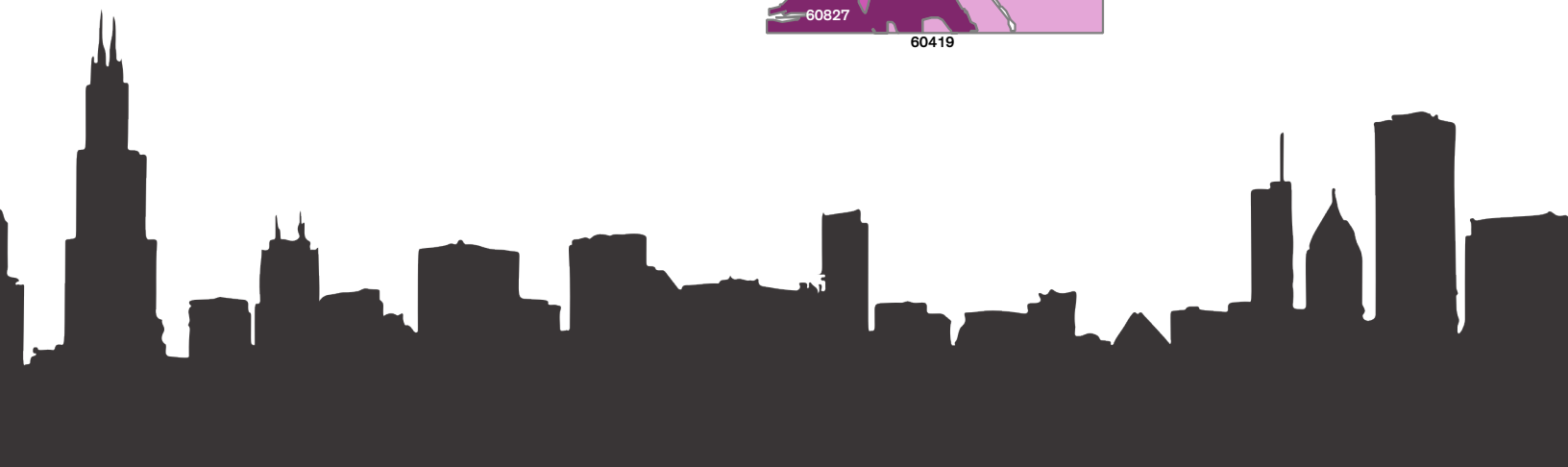
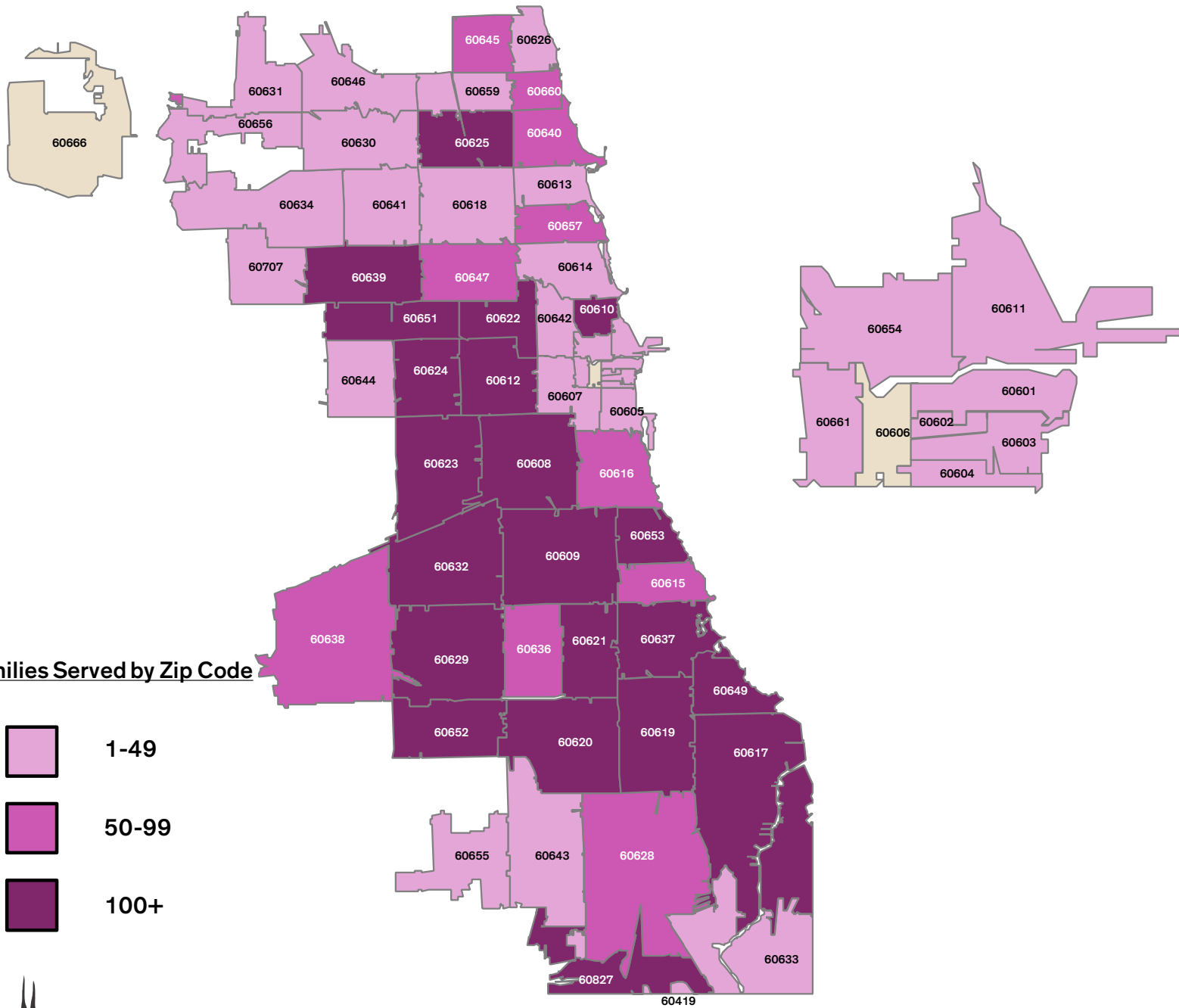
\*\*Adult Education provides high school equivalency and English language classes for parents.



Gary Johnson is a father who began attending FAST's Adult Education and Career Transition\*\* in the fall of 2017 with the goal of being able to complete his high school equivalency by the time his eldest daughter graduated from high school. Over the school year he overcame many challenges including increasing this reading level from an eight grade to a twelfth-grade equivalent. He took part in a new program where students work together to support each other's post-secondary goals. He remained positive in the face of setbacks and worked to encourage those around him. In June of 2018, he was able to pass the GED exam and achieve his goal of graduating with his eldest daughter. Because of his hard work and positive attitude, he was selected as the keynote speaker at the FAST High School equivalency graduation ceremony in July of 2018. He is currently nearing completion of a program to obtain his CDL license to drive trucks and serving as an inspiration to his family, friends, and fellow students.



# Engaging Families Citywide



Interested in getting involved?

There are many ways to show your support for the UIC Center for Literacy:

**GIVE** – Visit <http://cfl.ed.uic.edu/donate/> to make an online donation. Invest in our efforts to transform the Chicago community through family engagement today!

**VOLUNTEER** – Contact our Community Engagement Office at (312) 355-4227 to learn about short and long-term volunteer opportunities including: tutoring, special events, office support, and more.

**PARTNER** – Contact our Partnership Agreement Office at (312) 996-1561 to learn more about receiving FAST services.

**CONNECT** – Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @UICLiteracy for updates, announcements, and events.

