

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE TOGETHER

2021 & 2022  
**ANNUAL REPORT**



Renewed Perspective:  
**ENGAGE FAMILIES.  
CULTIVATE HOPE.  
BUILD CONFIDENCE.**



## MISSION

EPU guides and strengthens families and children with unique needs through early intervention and supportive services that cultivate hope and resilience.

## PURPOSE

Primary Purpose: Young children (age 0-5) with unique needs and their families can thrive with early intervention and support.

- Investment in young children significantly improves outcomes.
- Focusing on young children reduces the need for intervention with older children.

Secondary Purpose: Parents and caregivers with training and support can help older children with unique needs achieve the best possible outcomes.

- Early intervention may have been unavailable, insufficient, or unknown.
- Educational and long-term systems of care can be difficult to navigate successfully without support.

## VISION

Families are the safe place for children with unique needs to find love, belonging, guidance, and support.

## EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

**Lowell J. Ens** – Chief Executive Officer

**Suzanne Ellis** – Chief Financial Officer

**Amanda Tripp** – Director of Development and Communications

**Kim Majors** – Director of Human Resources

**Lilith Assadourian** – Director of Early Childhood Services

**Dr. True Moua** – Director of Parent Education and Support

**Claudette Plascencia** – Director of Parenting Services

**Jacqui Cavallaro** – Director of Assessment Center for Children

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Fred Ford**, *President* – Champion Health Plan of California

**Belinda Brier**, *Treasurer* – Valley Children's Healthcare

**Jennifer Randles**, *Secretary* – California State University, Fresno

**Tracy Gong\***, *Fiesta Committee Co-Chair* – Valley Children's Healthcare

**Melissa Perez-Garcia\***, *Fiesta Committee Co-Chair* – Clovis Unified School District

**William Chaltraw Jr.**, *Former President* – Valley Children's Healthcare

**Malarie Silos\*** – Fresno Unified School District

**Bobby Bliatout** – Health and Life Organization, Inc.

**Brock Heasley\*** – Filmmaker

**Jennifer Davis\*** – Parent and Advocate

**Paul Peschel\*** – Hi-Desert Water District

*\*Denotes a parent or family member of a person with a disability.*





## RENEWED PERSPECTIVE

Dear Donors, Supporters, and Friends,

As I reflect on the past two years at Exceptional Parents Unlimited, it has been nothing short of incredible. In the middle of March 2020, our EPU team was suddenly immersed in an environment that we had never experienced in our 45 years of existence. As we navigated the pandemic that was affecting the entire world, we knew that this event would not only impact our clients that we serve on a daily basis, but our own employees, their families, and the lives of our many partners that we work with to accomplish our collective goals.

Now as we enter 2023, these experiences are finally starting to feel like they are in our rearview mirrors, and we have taken some time in this report to reflect on not only some of the challenges we experienced, but also the opportunities that presented themselves along the way. For children like Presley and her family, our teams adapted, and in many ways, expanded our capacity to serve them. We launched a new cloud-based database and became more technologically mobile to provide services in a more connected fashion, wherever our clients needed us to be. The opening of new offices in multiple counties has led to increased visibility in communities that we previously struggled to serve, and the expansion of service lines like the new Baby Clinic and our Child Development Center have allowed us to serve children and families in a new way.

Finally, our Board took the initiative to review, rethink, and redesign our Purpose, Mission, and Vision, and worked to ensure that our focus continued to support our now 46-year legacy of services and impact in Central California. This effort has given us renewed hope for the future, and a revitalized sense of purpose and passion for what we do, and maybe more importantly, how we do it.

For EPU, the pandemic stretched us, but it also gave us opportunities to enter this new season with excitement, and we are grateful for those that have supported and invested in us along the way. Stay tuned for what we have in store for 2023, and we are truly hopeful that you will play a significant part in seeing that vision become a reality!

Take care,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lowell J. Ens". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Lowell J. Ens  
Chief Executive Officer

*This Annual Report covers Fiscal Years 2021 and 2022. Stories and figures reflect both years except where otherwise noted.*

# EARLY INTERVENTION



## MEET PRESLEY

Presley's mom, Kimmie, noticed that Presley wasn't where she should have been for an almost 1-year-old. Presley's pediatrician listened to Kimmie's concerns and referred them to the Central Valley Regional Center for an assessment that determined Presley was eligible for Early Intervention Services.

This is where EPU stepped into their lives and development. Presley started with Early Intervention services with our EPIC (Engage, Play, Inspire, Connect) team. Her Early Childhood Specialist provided one-on-one direct support parent coaching to Presley's parents Kimmie and Eric.

Once Presley and her family started to receive services with EPIC, they were able to utilize a diverse range of necessary services quickly at EPU. As you will read, Presley and her parents were able to engage in programs that, like them, were adjusting to a new reality.

## REDESIGN: EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

As the pandemic wore on in 2020, it became clear that adaptations to our existing long-term services at EPU were necessary to both serve the families we are committed to working with, and to survive. Our Infant Family Program, an early intervention service for children under the age of 3, went from being mostly center-based in our main building, to 80% in-home services.

At first, most of the services were virtual, in an effort to maintain safety for both these vulnerable children and their families, and also for the safety of our own staff and their families. The new EPIC program was proposed to our partner, the Central Valley Regional Center, and approved to

start in October 2020. This redesign placed the focus of the work on serving families in their homes, with the occasional specialized services happening back at the EPU main building.

## EARLY INTERVENTION IMPACT FOR FY 2022

18,044

SERVICES PROVIDED

443

CHILDREN & FAMILIES SERVED

## BABY CLINIC

Assessments, like the one that Presley needed to determine her eligibility for services in the EPIC program, are as critical as early intervention services. It is not until the child is properly assessed that it can be determined what, if any, interventions are needed. The ability to have a child

assessed in a timely manner is crucial to receive services like those that Presley has received at EPU.

In 2021, the Central Valley Regional Center requested that EPU consider expanding our contract to assist in the backlog of assessment services that they were facing in the region. More young children were needing assessments than they could keep up with.

Through the expertise of several long-term EPU staff, and in collaboration with several contracted specialists, the Baby Clinic came to life at EPU on October 19, 2021. In just one year, EPU's Baby Clinic celebrated serving 390 children, with an amazing 90% attendance rate.

### **PRESLEY GROWS AND DEVELOPS WITH EPU**

While in the EPIC program, Kimmie expressed concern that Presley was behind on her speech and mobility. Presley was able to start speech therapy in EPU's Tot Talk program. A Speech Pathologist and Speech Therapy Interns worked directly with Presley. Over the course of the program, Presley's vocabulary expanded and Kimmie was coached on how to communicate with Presley to help engage her communication skills in a way to help her develop.

Listening to Kimmie's concerns, our Physical Therapist determined that Presley needed to work on her gross motor skills. She receives physical therapy sessions from EPU's Physical Therapist as well as Physical Therapy Interns from Fresno State. Presley loves the attention she gets when she interacts with the staff and interns during her fun-filled physical therapy sessions.

### **TOT TALK**

Just prior to the pandemic, EPU received grant funding from State Ability Central to initiate a "speech camp" concept. In collaboration with Fresno State, initially the Talk Team, and eventually Metamorphosis, Tot Talk was launched.

Through this program, children are able to receive early speech intervention services, and future Speech Therapists in university for their degree receive valuable internship hours under the watchful eye of licensed Speech Pathologists. This collaboration took a pause initially during COVID, but eventually was modified to provide a virtual service. Recently, Tot Talk, began its third year of services in-person at EPU offices.

### **PRESLEY'S FAMILY THRIVES**

Presley's parents, Kimmie and Eric, worked with their Early Childhood Specialist to set outcomes for Presley. As a team, they decided they wanted to work on Presley's communication, gross motor skills, and social-emotional development.

Presley now has over 200 words in her vocabulary, and she is learning to jump and climb steps. Her parents are so proud of how much progress she has made and the new skills they have acquired as a family. They have had the opportunity to meet other parents facing similar challenges. It is nice to see their entire family join the EPU family. We enjoy seeing the progress that they have all made and are confident in the skills they each now have.

Presley is a one-of-a-kind kiddo, but her story is not unique. EPU is here to meet families where they are and help with the necessary services and support. We have a remarkable team that keeps the family at the center of their work, as well as wonderful supporters in the community that keep EPU going. It takes all of us working together to help families like Presley's thrive.



# NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR EPU

Despite the challenges of the pandemic on typical services, the past few years also offered new opportunities to think outside the box. We've been able to explore new ways to deepen our impact by bringing the "EPU Way" through services in new communities.

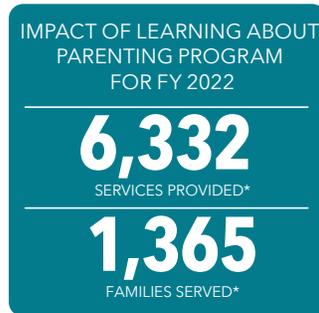
In late 2020, EPU was awarded a contract to provide Help Me Grow services in the County of Merced in collaboration with First 5 Merced County. This led to us having a permanent office in the City of Merced since of the summer of 2021.

As the EPU team worked to help build this network of care for young children, other opportunities presented themselves for expansion. In June of 2022, EPU was given the opportunity to become the Family Empowerment Center for the County of Madera and was awarded funding to expand similar services in both Fresno and Kings counties.

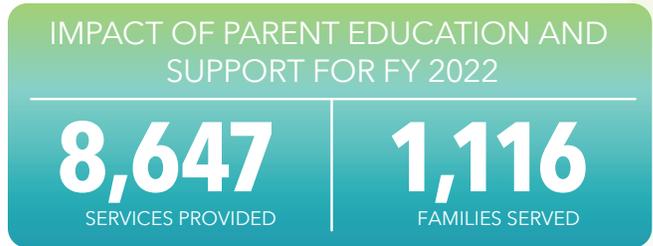


*Clovis NRC Ribbon cutting ceremony: EPU client, Frank, shares about the essential skills he received to become a better father and improve the wellbeing of his family at EPU's NRCs.*

Some systems of care continued to expand during the pandemic, like the Fresno County Neighborhood Resource Centers (NRC). These are drop-in locations offering an array of services focusing on parent education and support. EPU was awarded a new NRC location in Clovis, adding to the 2 we already had in southeast Fresno. We opened our new Clovis NRC on the campus of Willow Avenue Mennonite Church in July 2022.



*\*Families and Services provided at the NRCs are included in the LAP Impact because LAP is the Department that manages the NRCs*



*EPU founder Marion Karian cuts ribbon at Grand Opening of the Child Development Center.*

During the summer of 2021, EPU received licensing and funding to open our new Child Development Center, a full-day, full-year child care program for children ages 18-36 months. This project was envisioned by our founder, Marion, and required minimal effort to open up two new classrooms for these little ones to attend! Plans are in the works for further expansion of the program over time.

# EPU PARENT TRAINING AND INFORMATION CENTERS COVER:



Merced, Mariposa, Mono, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare, Inyo, San Luis Obispo, Kern, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties.

## AREAS WE SERVE:

- ☐ Help Me Grow Merced
- ☐ Family Empowerment Center Madera



- ☐ EPU Main Office & Child Development Center  
4440 N First St. Fresno CA 93726
- ☐ EPU's Neighborhood Resource Centers:
  - ☐ McKinley Family Center at Valley Dream Center  
1835 N Winery Ave. Fresno, CA 93703
  - ☐ Kings Canyon Family Center at United Way  
4949 E Kings Canyon Rd. Fresno, CA 93727
  - ☐ Willow Center at Willow Avenue Church  
2529 Willow Ave. Clovis, CA 93612
- ☐ Family Empowerment Center Kings

# ADDING TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Prior to the pandemic, EPU began exploring ways to better serve the community, especially children and families that did not meet the requirements of our existing funding streams.

One such area was the development of private insurance billable services, which required a lengthy approval process. Through the investment of CalViva Health and the Domus Mitis Foundation, EPU secured approvals from 6 different insurance providers, which expanded our ability to serve children and families from a variety of populations. This service began in the summer of 2022, with the hopes of expanding in the coming years to better and more comprehensively serve those in our community

ASSESSMENT CENTER FOR CHILDREN  
IMPACT FOR FY 2022  
(DOES NOT INCLUDE PRIVATE INSURANCE CLIENTS)

<h1 style="margin: 0;">2,774</h1> <p style="margin: 0; font-size: small;">HOURS OF SERVICES PROVIDED</p>	<h1 style="margin: 0;">238</h1> <p style="margin: 0; font-size: small;">FAMILIES SERVED</p>
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## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

	FY 2021	FY 2022
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Contributions & Grants	8,386,901	7,390,747
Program Service Revenue	1,586,696	1,770,002
Investment Income	14,339	(28,089)
Other Revenue	124,821	(71,374)
<i>Gains (realized and unrealized)-105,249</i>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,112,757</b>	<b>9,061,286</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Salaries & Benefits	6,552,947	6,017,675
Fundraising Expenses	164,399	87,117
Other Expenses	2,842,663	2,871,478
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,560,009</b>	<b>8,976,270</b>
Revenue less Expenses	552,748	85,016
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>4,865,489</b>	<b>4,683,270</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>1,919,924</b>	<b>1,652,689</b>
<b>Net Assets or Fund Balance</b>	<b>2,945,565</b>	<b>3,030,581</b>

# COVID-19

During the summer of 2020, EPU collaborated with several community nonprofit partners to develop the Disability Equity Project (DEP). With subsequent funding from the County of Fresno Department of Public Health and other funders, an initial 3-month project resulted in over \$3 million invested in services related to the pandemic.

Initially, education and outreach ensured that individuals with disabilities, including both children and adults, were aware of the ever-changing realities of the disease, and of resources that were available to them. An 800 number and website were established, and weekly calls with partner agencies resulted in a well-oiled system of care that continued through the of spring of 2022.

Eventually, testing and vaccination campaigns were added to the mix, as well as financial supports for those most impacted by the disease.

## OVER THE COURSE OF THIS PROJECT

<b>1,327</b> VACCINES ADMINISTERED	<b>41</b> CLINICS HELD	<b>6,205</b> PEOPLE EDUCATED
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## OWNING THE IMPACT OF COVID ON EPU

When COVID-19 shut down most businesses, we had to quickly reimagine how to provide our essential services and needed staff to quickly adapt as well as embrace these changes. This, of course, coincided with staff personally dealing with the stress and uncertainty of the pandemic. Since March of 2020, we have experienced 80% turnover in our staff.

While the pandemic has altered how we operate and the majority of our staff is new, it certainly has not changed the core of EPU. We are still here providing support and services for families facing incredible challenges. We have



found a renewed outlook and consider this next season to be an opportunity to embrace a refreshed perspective on the work that we do.

Here are some thoughts from a few of our employees, both new to the team and all-stars that have been around, sharing what it means to them to work at EPU:



**Facundo** - "I enjoy the people and environment at EPU. I enjoy working with like-minded people that share a common goal, to help diverse families in unique situations. I strongly believe that every child is one caring adult away from being a success story."

**Faith** - "I was excited to join a team of people whose work is grounded in passion and purpose. The EPU team cares for children and families as if they were their own. EPU provides hope for families' futures, as they did with my sister and family."

**Tricia** - "I love working here! It was always my dream to work with children with unique needs. When I started at EPU in 2011 it was a difficult time in my life. EPU gave me refuge and comfort as I navigated a challenging time. I see that we are able to do that for so many others through our work."



**Liliana** - "Starting a new career as a mental health clinician has been an adventure of humbling experiences. Getting up in the mornings to come to work has been filled with a positive outlook to meet families where they are, to provide and guide families towards hope. This role has made me grateful to be a resource to these families on their journey to their wellbeing. It is my goal to learn and grow with the EPU family."

# OUR SUPPORTERS

We are as grateful as ever for the support from our volunteers and donors. All this would not have been possible without the kindness and generosity of all the wonderful people that believe in our work.



Neal Howard at EPU's First Annual Gala of Light

**NEAL HOWARD - New monthly donor** "After attending the recent EPU Gala of Light, I realized how vital EPU services are to the children and families of the Central Valley. My wife and I attend many fundraisers each year. It is easy to make a one-time donation during the event thereby completing your involvement with the organization until the following year.

After making said single donation, I decided to contribute monthly so the critical EPU services could be given in a continuing and sustainable way. EPU has touched my heart because children deserve the opportunity to create a successful future for themselves and their families, without the effects of outside influences. Donating monthly will allow EPU to continue to engage, cultivate and build within the community."

**SUSAN MOORE - Donor and former client** "I donate to EPU because while we all struggle with different problems, I just know EPU will start you on a positive track."

**JONATHAN ZAMORA - Volunteer** "I choose to volunteer at EPU because of their vision. EPU wants families to feel confident in their ability to meet their child's needs. I believe one's confidence in their skill-set incentivizes them to implement their skill as a tool for the betterment of the whole family. EPU helps to bridge this gap for families and their child's needs."



## YOUR IMPACT

Join Neal, Susan, Jonathan, and many others in helping EPU provide services to children and families. At Exceptional Parents Unlimited, your donations and support provide so much more than services and resources; it helps provide a community for the families that we serve. Your tax-deductible gift allows us to provide invaluable resources to the children and families that turn to us for support and services. You can help us engage families, cultivate hope, and build confidence.

## MANY WAYS TO GIVE

Exceptional Parents Unlimited receives a portion of our financial support from private and public grants, as well as family foundations. We also accept gifts of stocks, IRA, crypto-currency, legacy gifts, and other forms of donations. If you would like to learn more about establishing a donation relationship with EPU, please contact our Director of Development, Amanda Tripp, at [ATripp@epuchildren.org](mailto:ATripp@epuchildren.org) or (559) 229-2000 x 1360.

## DONATE BY MAIL

Please Mail Donations to:  
Exceptional Parents Unlimited  
4440 N First St. Fresno, CA 93726

DONATE ONLINE:  
[www.epuchildren.org](http://www.epuchildren.org)



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

Our ability to adapt to the needs of those we serve during such a difficult time is largely due to the funders, donors, supporters, and friends that helped make it possible. It is because of people like you, and those listed below, that we are able to continue to engage families, cultivate hope, and build confidence.

Abby Goldberg  
Ability Central  
Aharon Davoyan  
Amanda Tripp & Jonathan Messier  
Angelica Ortega-Raley  
Anthem Blue Cross  
Backstory Creative  
Bernard & Marion Karian  
Beth Silver  
BMY Construction Group, Inc.  
Bob Lawson  
BOLT Wealth Management  
Brooke Frost  
C. A. Reding Company  
Cal West Rain Charities  
Caroline Moranda  
Cassabon Fung, LLP  
Central Valley Community Bank  
Chris Comstock  
Citizens Business Bank  
CORE Spaces + Design  
Councilmember Tyler Maxwell  
CZ& R LLP Carpenter, Zuckerman & Rowley  
DiBuduo & DeFendis Insurance Brokers  
Donna Rosenstein  
Ernie Balleste  
Fishman, Larsen, Callister  
Fred Ford  
Fresno Chaffee Zoo  
Fresno County Public Health Department  
Fresno Cycling Club  
Gary & Joyce Bedrosian  
Gary & Peggy Honn  
Goldberg Law Firm  
GSF Properties  
Hedrick's Chevrolet  
Henry Avila  
Hicks Pension Services  
Hoppe Law  
Jack & Nancy Baker  
James & Coke Hallowell  
James & Maria Titius  
Janice Kezirian & Dalton Bennett  
Jessica Gomez  
Johanna Ortega

Josephine Nalchajian  
Kaiser Foundation Health Plan  
Kanagawa Citrus Company  
Karen Podolsky  
Keith Rahn  
Lisa Casarez  
Lowell & Melissa Ens  
Malakan Diamond Co.  
Maribel Garcia & Paul Peschel  
Marjaree Mason Center  
Mark & Mary Beth Miller  
Marshal & Tracy Gong  
Marshall & Brenda Simms  
Marvin & Carolyn Bower  
Maury DeBenedetto & Linda Gleason  
Melissa Perez-Garcia  
Michael & Kimberly Goldring, Esq  
Michele Waldron  
Mike & Kris Aubry  
MPR Retirement  
Nancy Hatcher  
National Hardware  
Neal Howard  
Norman & Susan Moore  
Office of Assemblyman Jim Patterson  
Patricia & Richard Porter  
Patrick Ginn & Leonard Hackett  
PG&E Co.  
Phillip & Elena Cox  
Portfolio Advisors, Inc.  
Ralph Cross, Jr.  
Ramneek Bhullar  
Rebecca Gonzalez  
Regency Investment Advisors, Inc.  
Reva Guimont  
Richard Bonner  
Rotary Club of Fresno  
Sceptre & Sash  
Seal Rite Paving  
Sean Borchardt  
Stanislaus Community Foundation  
Steve Antonino  
Steve & Lisa Reding  
Susan Cardoza  
Suzanna Gamez

Table Mountain Casino  
Ted Moranda  
The Blackbaud Giving Fund  
The Fresno Center  
The Liberty Company Insurance Brokers, Inc.  
Thomas T. Lam & Shee Hing Chow  
Timothy & Suzanne Ellis  
Tony & Stacy Fazio  
Tony Mastro  
Valley Children's Healthcare  
W. Eugene Egerton  
Walmart Neighborhood Market  
Whitney, Thompson & Jeffcoach Law Firm  
William Chaltraw  
William Conville  
Wok & Grill  
WOW Productions  
Zenith Insurance Company

## Major Funders & Foundations

Arlen K. Bean Trust  
CalViva Health  
Central Valley Regional Center  
County of Fresno  
Domus Mitis Foundation  
Fansler Foundation  
First 5 Fresno County  
First 5 Merced County  
Fresno County Superintendent of Schools  
Fresno Unified School District  
Fresno Metro Ministry/FCHIP  
Isnardi Foundation  
Public Health Institute  
State of California  
U.S. Department of Education, OSEP



**SAVE THE DATE**

*Fiesta de los Niños*

Supporting the Work of  
Exceptional Parents  
Unlimited (EPU)

**May 20, 2023**



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**EXCEPTIONAL PARENTS UNLIMITED**

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