and suffers from the complications of being poor — knowing want and hunger, chronic disease, terror, destitution, violence, and despair. Often they are newcomers to our shores, struggling alone in fear and isolation.

*Each night, over 25,000 New York City children have no home at all, no place to lay their heads.*

Since 1986, the Association to Benefit Children (ABC) has responded to each assault on childhood by tirelessly working to combat and alleviate poverty’s corrosive effects on children and their families. ABC creates nationally replicable, cost-effective, comprehensive, humane program models that meet the complex needs of each family member while fighting to ensure all children a loving family, safe housing, high-quality education, adequate health care, nutritious food, and *the promise of a bright future.*
ABC speaks out on behalf of vulnerable children amplifying each small voice into a resounding chorus calling for change.

**INCLUSIONARY EDUCATION FOR PRESCHOOLERS WITH DISABILITIES**

ABC’s educational advocacy began with Merricat’s Castle School — the national model for preschool education — which established the right to inclusionary preschool education for young children with disabilities. All of ABC’s preschools proudly champion this model.

**ANTI-HUNGER**

During the prosperous ‘80s, when large numbers of hungry children began appearing in the shadows, searching for leftovers in dumpsters outside supermarkets, ABC publicly exposed the growing hunger crisis while simultaneously developing a model, cost-effective, emergency food program. Tapping into existing resources, ABC established the Yorkville Soup Kitchen in a city public school. Utilizing the school’s facilities and personnel made it possible to replicate the kitchen across the city. Tens of thousands of nutritious meals were prepared for hungry children and families daily in the same kitchens that were already providing meals for school children.

**HEALTH CARE REFORM**

In the mid-1990s, when crucial progress had been made in the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, ABC focused its efforts on the critical need for early identification, counseling, and treatment. ABC’s two 1995 class action lawsuits secured counseling, testing, and treatment — first for children in foster care and then for all children — resulting in a substantial reduction in the number of infants born with HIV.

Since 1987, ABC has fought for improved children’s health and mental health care, winning an important victory in federal court in 2002 for all homeless children who suffer from asthma who are now guaranteed outpatient treatment for that medical condition is diagnosed before it becomes medically more complex, costlier to treat, and permanently disabling. ABC launched Fast Break in 1996 as New York City’s first mobile mental health crisis and disaster team specifically designed to provide children living in poverty access to treatment.

**FAMILY RIGHTS and MODEL HOUSING**

Advocacy on behalf of families began with a campaign for services for the most vulnerable, those battling to stay afloat and intact, with a class action suit filed in 1985, which sought to compel the state to provide preventive services such as housing and day care without opening child-protective cases. Continuing this critical work, ABC’s Preventive Services program, All Children’s House, brings these essential services to desperate and seriously at-risk families.

In the mid-1980s, as neighborhoods gentrified and vacancies in low-income housing all but disappeared, ABC exposed the deplorable conditions homeless families faced living in abandoned buildings, squalid, dangerous, and expensive “welfare hotels” and barracks-style shelters. ABC set the standard for decent transitional housing by using that same funding the government had squandered to transform a dilapidated building in East Harlem into Rosie and Harry’s Place. This cost-effective, temporary housing program became the replicable model throughout the state and the country. And, as the first to secure government funding that had not been used before to build permanent supportive housing, ABC broke new ground in creating a housing model for homeless families living with HIV/AIDS.

Since 1987, ABC has fought alongside the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty through a national class action lawsuit brought to ensure the enactment of the McKinney Vento Act. In recent years, ABC has renewed its efforts to preserve the integrity of McKinney Vento, which remains the only major federal legislation designed to prevent and end homelessness in the United States.

By the late ‘80s, cheap street cocaine and AIDS were sweeping through urban neighborhoods, leaving the poor especially hard-hit. Women were routinely arrested, incarcerated, and had their parental rights terminated. Unprecedented numbers of their infants were warehoused in hospital wards, left there to languish for months on end, often tethered to their cribs to “keep them safe.” To end this cruel and expensive practice, ABC brought two class-action lawsuits in 1987 and 1991 against the city and state. This landmark litigation, coupled with ABC’s efforts to educate the public, helped rescue “boarder babies” across the nation. ABC created Cody Gifford House as a replicable model program, which demonstrated that medically-fragile infants, entitled to and in great need of stable loving families, could live safely and happily at home.

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ASSOCIATION TO BENEFIT CHILDREN

EDUCATION PROGRAMS
YOUTH PROGRAMS
FAMILY PROGRAMS
PREVENTIVE & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING
The centerpiece of ABC’s “whole family” approach is early childhood education, which lays the groundwork for future success and imparts school-readiness tools along with life-skills such as patience, tenderness, civility, and fortitude. While each of ABC’s schools has its own special focus, all treasure every single child’s individuality and infinite potential, encourage optimum development, celebrate diversity in all its forms, honor children’s shared humanity, and recognize parents as central to their children’s well-being and achievements.
ABC has launched its newest early childhood education program at the Keith Haring School. Adorned with Keith Haring’s colorful and joyous silhouettes which illustrate the young students’ determination, this nurturing Early Intervention program serves children from the formerly homeless families with HIV/AIDS living in ABC’s supportive housing program, children with HIV/AIDS, children from families affected by HIV/AIDS, as well as serving young children from the community. Children with developmental disabilities and delays and serious medical conditions receive occupational, physical, and speech therapies, and mental health counseling in a safe and stimulating setting. Child-directed activity centers promote social, emotional, physical, and cognitive learning. Parents, who are key to their children’s optimum development, are engaged in educational and support programs on-site and through the program’s home-based Keith Haring School.

At Cody Gifford House, offers early intervention services to disadvantaged infants and toddlers who struggle with severe developmental disabilities and delays and serious medical conditions. Children, birth to age three, receive their many therapies as they play and learn with one another and with nurturing and attentive teachers. Home-based early intervention services further expand the reach of this vital program by bringing these therapies and the lessons of the classroom right into the homes of many more children. Services are also offered to parents to support them in their roles as the primary educators during these early years.

At Merricit’s Castle School, typically-developing children and children with special needs, children of privilege and children who live in poverty, all grow and learn together in three warm, nurturing preschool classrooms and outside in the school’s beautiful garden playground. The process of early learning is a joyful journey of social, cognitive, emotional, creative, and physical development, each explored through an inventive curriculum full of adventure and discovery.

At Cassidy’s Place, preschoolers who live in poverty and have serious developmental and medical disabilities and those who are homeless, in foster care, have suffered abuse, violence, and neglect are able to play, learn, and thrive in nine dynamic classrooms and two outdoor play spaces. Blending Head Start, Preschool Special Education, and Universal Pre-Kindergarten, Cassidy’s Place offers its young students a full day of learning and exploration in a safe and stimulating setting that is further augmented with comprehensive wrap-around support services for each child and every family member.
The Graham School at Echo Park includes ten early childhood education classrooms that together offer a full day of high-quality Child Care, Preschool Special Education, Early Head Start, Head Start, and Universal Pre-Kindergarten for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers from the East Harlem community. Priority is given to children who are in the greatest need and are the most seriously at-risk. The complex needs of every child and each family member are further met through easy access to the comprehensive services available on-site at Echo Park, ABC’s one-stop multi-service family center.

The Graham School classrooms’ curricula also benefit from their proximity to an inviting young children’s library, the Healey Technology Center, as well as Milt’s Soccer, Harry Roepers’ Gym, Chantelle’s Rec Room, and Bunny’s Playground – a large, safe, rooftop play-space that is graced by a whimsical mural of a New York City re-imagined with Echo Park at its vibrant center.
ABC’s year-round youth programs rescue seriously at-risk children and adolescents who are homeless, have severe disabilities, are medically fragile, and have experienced emotional distress, abuse, neglect, and violence. Elementary through high school age children who might otherwise be imperiled by the lure of the streets and the pressures of their peers, are free to play, learn, and develop positive self-esteem out of harm’s way in a stimulating and nurturing environment. During the summer months, Rosie and Harry’s Camp ensures some of the city’s most vulnerable children the safe, enjoyable activities that every boy and girl needs and deserves. The Youth Alliance Program offers high-risk youth ages 10 to 21 recreational programming plus comprehensive year-round academic support, enrichment activities, vocational and college preparatory workshops, therapeutic groups, and mentoring support, including coordination with parents and schools.

Throughout the year, an accredited internship program prepares vocationally-bound, severely disabled high school students for the working world by offering supervised, hands-on experience in infant care, early childhood education, library arts, building repair and maintenance, clerical skills, and culinary arts training.
At The Open Door, ABC’s family resource center for the East Harlem community located at Echo Park, isolated and destitute parents are given instruction in English as a Second Language; work toward receiving their General Equivalency High School diploma; participate in literacy, financial, parenting skills, nutrition, fitness, and job training workshops; and take part in trauma, torture, and domestic violence support groups. These programs not only benefit the parents directly, allowing them to form social connections, build job and life skills, and improve confidence, but they also contribute immensely to the well-being of their young children raised by parents who are now imbued with a sense of worth and equipped with the tools that will make them better parents. The Open Door also makes available resources such as legal advocacy, medical screenings and treatment for chronic illnesses like diabetes and asthma, guidance in applying for citizenship, and assistance in obtaining entitlements such as housing subsidies and food stamps.

Thanks to ABC’s devoted volunteers, Echo Park opens its doors to the community on Saturdays during the school year and fills its classrooms with an array of enriching activities for children and their parents; many of whom have no connection to any network of services. Under the supervision of ABC’s skilled, multi-lingual professionals and staffed by dedicated volunteers, children play, enjoy drama, music, soccer, arts and crafts, cooking, dance, and yoga while their parents receive the educational opportunities they’ve longed for coupled with high quality care for their infants and children. The families participate in English as a Second Language instruction, literacy classes, preparation for the high school equivalency exam, computer classes, parent support groups, financial planning advice, immigration consultation, coordination of translation services, housing assistance, legal advocacy, assistance accessing benefits, connections to health care, counseling and support, educational evaluations, and help navigating the school system. Everyone who comes through this Open Door enjoys a warm, hearty, delicious, and nutritious meal, has a place at the table and a slice of the American Dream.
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

ABC's Supportive Housing Program sustains and strengthens families weakened by chronic illness and crushing poverty by offering them bright and spacious permanent apartments, along with on-site day care, case management, and psychiatric, educational, and recreational services. This residential oasis serves as a replicable model for permanent, supportive housing for homeless families living with HIV infection and AIDS. Inside these walls, families, who were homeless and otherwise might be living in squalor, are rebuilding their lives with dignity, appropriate medical care, and a hopeful future.

FAMILY PRESERVATION

For two decades, ABC's All Children's House has provided families at risk of losing children to foster care with the tools needed to break cycles of abuse and neglect and promote long-term stability. All Children's House families are some of the City's most vulnerable, having been violated, abandoned, abused, neglected, even tortured. All Children's House therapists provide case management services, family counseling, advocacy, parent support groups, parent education, budgeting management, educational advocacy and legal assistance, health care, housing and child care referrals, to meet more concrete needs.

Last year, in partnership with the New York City Administration for Children's Services, ABC launched a new child-safety initiative through All Children's House, transforming its entire preventive services program into an evidence-based, trauma-informed “Child-Parent Psychotherapy” treatment intervention center focused on families with very young children, age birth to five. While children, birth to five, have the highest morbidity and mortality rates from abuse by their parents or caregivers, they also possess immense resilience and great potential for growth and development. Early intervention is not only urgent but also most effective. Highly trained, licensed, professional therapists respond directly to families — be it in a crowded apartment, a domestic violence or other homeless shelter — where they encourage opportunities for delight, empathy, and tenderness with the goal of forging parent-infant bonds so invincible that they become a protective shield against toxic stress. For parents and their children who have experienced trauma, or who are at risk of experiencing abuse or neglect, the Child-Parent Psychotherapy model engenders a secure attachment that restores a sense of trust and safety. By offering Child-Parent Psychotherapy in the context of a child welfare system, in an urban setting as complex as New York City, the All Children's House model is breaking new ground and creating a blueprint for its replication in large cities throughout the country.

MOBILE MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC

ABC’s Fast Break — New York City’s first mobile mental health crisis and disaster clinic for children — is specifically designed to extend mental health services to children who are destitute, living in poverty, in shelters, and on the street. Based at Echo Park, but nimble enough to go anywhere quickly, Fast Break strives to keep children out of emergency rooms and costly and restrictive institutions. Skilled therapists, led by a child psychiatrist, stabilize crises and go on to engage in short- or longer-term therapy when appropriate. The Fast Break Team is also called on to provide mental health interventions, assessments, counseling, and therapeutic childcare. ABC’s Early Recognition and Screening Initiative (Swoosh), brings vital screening, and psycho-education to parents and teachers, and related mental health services to children through partnerships with child care centers, schools, after school programs, summer camps, neonatal and pediatric clinics, primary care physicians, and health fairs. By incorporating mental health awareness into routine health checkups, thereby removing the stigma of mental health care, Fast Break is often able to intervene before emotional and behavioral vulnerabilities become problems. Families Lead Our Way (FLOW) supports parents of children with special challenges, including autism. Fast Break recently further expanded its services by establishing a school-based mobile response team in five public middle schools, the first of its kind in Manhattan. The team offers mental health screenings and crisis intervention to students who are experiencing emotional distress. Training and capacity-building are provided for faculty and parents along with help in developing and implementing protocols and policies that focus on promoting social-emotional wellness within the particular culture of each school.
At ABC, volunteers are treasured partners. Over 1,600 volunteers — including students, homemakers, bankers, lawyers, poets, musicians, doctors, artists, chefs, teachers, retirees, and many more from all walks of life — share their time, talents, interests, and skills to help make a critical difference in the lives of ABC’s children and families.

ABC’s ongoing evaluation processes are tailored to the specific services, goals, and outcomes of each of its programs. ABC gathers qualitative and quantitative data using various evaluation instruments including standardized assessment tools and custom-designed surveys through which the progress of each child and each family is measured. ABC also collaborates with independent evaluators such as Philliber Research Associates, underwritten by the Robin Hood Foundation, to issue evaluation reports to disseminate our results.

The richness and breadth of ABC’s education programs fully prepare children for school and success.
We Thank You So Very Much

On behalf of the children and families, ABC is deeply grateful to its supporters.

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Charity Navigator has awarded ABC four out of a possible four stars. In earning a four-star rating for the sixth consecutive time, ABC has demonstrated exceptional financial health, governance and other best practices. Only a small percent of the charities rated have achieved six consecutive four-star ratings, which indicates that ABC outperforms most other charities in America.