



**CASE  
STUDY**

## The ABK Collaborative, Tearing Down Employment Barriers While Teaching the Teachers

The Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) offers programs that help residents build job skills, but HACP discovered a problem. For parents working nontraditional hours or looking for new jobs, lack of access to child care created a significant barrier to participation. That gap inspired creation of the ABK Collaborative, a multi-faceted public-private partnership that offers families access to quality care while giving college students studying early education real-life experience in the art of dynamic learning.

**The Need:** Focus groups and surveys revealed that lack of child care options hindered HACP residents working second- and third-shift jobs or looking for new and better jobs from joining job training and employment programs. In fact, problems with child care, including the lack of care outside the 8-to-5 workday and the need for working parents to cobble together arrangements, costs the Pennsylvania economy \$3.47 billion a year, according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. Those problems also force parents to leave their jobs or postpone training and education that could advance their careers.

**The Business Investment:** The collective convenes three unique institutions. HACP provides high-quality housing for 20,000 Pittsburghers while also helping them achieve self-sufficiency. ABK Learning & Development Center is a Keystone STARS 4 provider located in HACP's Bedford Dwellings community – and a rare provider of 24/7 child care. Duquesne University's Leading Teacher Program, within the School of Education, instills students with a foundation of leadership, diversity, and technology.



**The Innovation:** ABK owner Lesley Crawford was inspired, in part, to offer child care 24/7 by the plight of her daughter, a certified nurse assistant and young mother forced to work late shifts because her more senior colleagues had dibs on daylight hours. The addition of drop-in care supports parents who need reliable child care while they take job training or attend interviews. The collaborative further enhances the quality of ABK's care with Duquesne undergraduate and graduate students in early childhood education who work as teachers and also develop educational curriculum, activities, and materials.



**How It's Done:** Duquesne's preservice teachers learn asset-based mindsets as they build hands-on experience in engaging students and finding the strengths in every community. ABK Learning & Development Center receives invaluable support from Duquesne and HACP with training, technology, academics, and connecting families with resources. Working parents participating in HACP training and job programs have access to child care at the ABK Center.



**How It's Funded:** Funding is provided by the Heinz Foundation and HACP/Clean Slate E3 nonprofit affiliate funds.



**The Impact:** HACP removed a barrier for families working nontraditional hours or seeking job advancement. Duquesne University created pathways to hands-on learning for its students while reinforcing its commitment to reach with competence and cultural sensitivity into marginalized communities. And, ABK Learning & Development Center joins a flourishing collaborative with new partners who share a common vision – or as Lesley Crawford put it, “Where have these people been all my life?”

**Get Involved:** Most Pennsylvania employers want to help helping working families address child care needs, but 70 percent don't know that they have access to helpful resources. The Case Studies in Caring series explores award-winning business initiatives created with available resources that are custom-crafted to meet local child care needs in their communities and workforces. Join the movement to invest in caring by contacting the Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission at [info@paearlylearning.com](mailto:info@paearlylearning.com) or visit [www.investmentsincaringpa.com](http://www.investmentsincaringpa.com).