



HHC's Åsa Fanelli with Dr. Sherri Killins, Commissioner of the MA Dept. of Early Education and Care and Shannon Rudisill, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



Expanding Horizons ON A NATIONAL SCALE



Yvette Sanchez Fuentes,
Director of the Office of Head Start

At Horizons for Homeless Children (HHC), we believe that serving homeless children and families requires more than offering critical support services. It means advocating for this population, while sharing our knowledge and dedication on the issue of child and family homelessness. We understand systemic change takes concerted effort, and we seek to educate others throughout the nation who are learning to serve young homeless children as well.

This focus has established HHC as a thought leader on the challenges affecting homeless children and families and has gained the attention of lawmakers and authorities on homelessness across the nation.

To continue to establish ourselves at a national level, this year HHC hosted our 6th *Young Children Without Homes* National Conference in Washington, DC. Service providers from across the country gathered to hear the latest research and best practices on how to best support homeless children and families.

As part of the two-day conference, HHC followed knowledge with action by hosting an Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill. Participants urged elected officials to support initiatives that impact homeless children and families. Fully coordinated by HHC, including a comprehensive advocacy training, our first ever Capitol Hill Advocacy Day allowed conference participants to speak directly to lawmakers about the policies and regulations that affect the at-risk populations they serve.

Connecting with lawmakers and talks of further budget cuts incited a "healthy indignation" in these fledgling advocates,

and many expressed a desire to continue their efforts post-conference. Said HHC's Åsa Fanelli: "When the attendees are telling me, 'I know now I can write an email, or pick up the phone and call my legislator,' that's the ripple-effect we're looking for. That's how change is made."

Our own Policy and Advocacy team have made inroads with federal as well as Massachusetts lawmakers, speaking to them on the issues that deeply affect homeless families and sharing their stories with the people who can institute change. These efforts have been rewarded with an invitation to become a member of the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness Advisory Board, which grants HHC a seat at the table on conversations surrounding family homelessness.

As a nation, we're struggling with record numbers of citizens experiencing poverty and homelessness. As an agency, we hope to lead lawmakers and service providers in establishing the policies and practices that will best serve the hundreds of thousands of homeless children and families in the US. Together, we can expand the horizons, and brighten the futures, of American families experiencing homelessness.