



— About —

The team behind Talk With Me Baby is a collaboration of six leadership organizations, all working to bring the concept of language nutrition into public awareness and educate caregivers on the importance of talking with their baby every day, in an effort to close the word gap.

WHO WE ARE

Talk With Me Baby is a partnership of six lead organizations that are committed to ensuring that every newborn in Georgia receives essential language nutrition and has the opportunity to reach their full potential. The lead partners are: the Georgia Department of Public Health and Department of Education, Emory University's School of Nursing and Department of Pediatrics, the Marcus Autism Center at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, the Atlanta Speech School's Rollins Center for Language and Literacy, and Get Georgia Reading - Georgia's Campaign for Grade Level Reading. As leaders in the field of health, education, and policy, these partners understand the impact that abundant "language nutrition" has on early brain development and how it sets the stage for success in school and the workplace which in turn affects health and well-being.

Together, the Talk With Me Baby partners are targeting the large scale workforces that already interact with new and expectant parents, including nurses, WIC nutritionists, early learning educators, and more, and preparing employees in these fields to coach families in how and why to provide their babies with the "language nutrition" they need to support early brain development.

Capitalizing on the strengths, resources, and statewide reach of the lead partners, Talk With Me Baby is working closely with the state agencies that oversee early care and learning, child welfare, and Medicaid; healthcare leaders in pediatrics and obstetrics and gynecology; health insurance companies; hospital systems; the state's public broadcasting organization; other university partners; corporate partners and other nonprofit agencies.

All parents want to do what is best for their children. Talk With Me Baby is designed to reach parents and caregivers across the state, introducing them to the joys and power of talking with their baby!

OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM



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Brenda Fitzgerald, MD
Commissioner, Georgia Department of Public Health



Kenney Moore, PhD
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Jennifer L. Stapel-Wax, PsyD
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Arianne B. Weldon, MPH
Director, Get Georgia Reading Campaign



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Executive Director, Atlanta Speech School

OUR STORY

With science demonstrating the importance of language nutrition on early brain development, the Talk With Me Baby lead partner organizations began coming together in mid-2013 to explore strategies for addressing what they viewed as a public health crisis – that the majority of Georgia’s children were not receiving language-rich adult-child interactions during their infancy and, as a result, these children were failing to meet critical milestones of educational and lifelong success. That year, just over one-third of Georgia’s third graders were proficient readers and the state’s graduation rate was 72 percent. Without a high school diploma, these youth would be more likely to struggle to support themselves and to have poor health outcomes.

The science was clear about what babies need – language nutrition – but a question remained: how to ensure that every child receives language nutrition.

The Georgia Department of Public Health, led by Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald, began collaborating with the Marcus Autism Center at Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, one of the nation’s leading experts in language acquisition; the Atlanta Speech School’s Rollins Center for Language and Literacy, the nation’s most comprehensive center for language and literacy development; Emory University’s School of Nursing and Department of Pediatrics; the Georgia Department of Education; and Get Georgia Reading – Georgia’s Campaign for Grade Level Reading.

Drawing on public and private investments, this cross-sector coalition is beginning with a focus on two large-scale workforces of trusted professionals that already serve most parents and babies – nurses and WIC nutritionists who see 99 and 50 percent of all new and expectant parents in Georgia, respectively. By integrating language nutrition coaching as a core competency in these two workforces, Talk With Me Baby is transforming parents and caregivers into conversational partners with their infants to provide the early language exposure that will support critical brain development paving the way for reading proficiency by the end of third grade, high school graduation, and a successful and healthy life.