At a time when orphanages and almshouses were the preferred placement options for poor and homeless children, Dr. Charles Loring Brace (Children’s Aid) and a group of social reformers in New York believed that children should be raised in a family home. Thus in 1853 he conceptualized the “Orphan Train” movement, which placed New York orphaned children with families across the country. CHSofNJ met these Orphan Trains at its first stop in Trenton to remove some children to find them caring homes in New Jersey. CHSofNJ was one of twenty six regions to which Reverend Martin Van Buren Van Arsdaled, Children’s Home & Aid of Illinois, sent twenty-six junior Reverends to serve local homeless children in families. Our founder, Reverend Martin T. Lamb came to New Jersey in 1894.


Rev. Lamb founded CHSofNJ, which initially served all of New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania, with the mission to find loving families for children, to protect children from harm, and to help parents find better ways to be parents when they could keep their children. Thus, began our services for children in need of families.

1901 – The first home for orphaned children in Trenton opened.

Reverend Lamb rented a house on Chambers Street in Trenton, NJ, in which children would temporarily reside until their placement into caring permanent families.

1909 – Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) is established.

CHSofNJ joined with other Children’s Home Society agencies and child service agencies to create one national voice for children, known as the CWLA. This reflected a publicly-awakened concern for the Nation’s homeless and neglected children with their first White House Conference on the care of dependent children.

1922 – The William McKinley Receiving Home opens in Trenton, NJ.

Rev. John C. Stock, CHSofNJ’s Executive Director from 1913-1953, purchased a plot of land in downtown Trenton to build a receiving home. The William McKinley Receiving Home was large enough to house up to 60 children until homes could be found.

1940 – CHSofNJ’s Foster Care program begins.

This free program provided safe, caring licensed foster families for children in need until they could be reunited with their birth parents or be placed with a permanent, loving adoptive family.

1949 – CHSofNJ introduces our Birth Parent Counseling program.

The program connects parents-to-be, who are unsure about being able to parent, with a caring and knowledgeable CHSofNJ counselor to help them understand all of their options and make thoughtful plans for their baby after birth either under temporary CHSofNJ foster care or in a loving adoptive home.
1950 – CHSofNJ expands to larger facility in Trenton. As CHSofNJ continues to grow, the agency relocates to 929 Parkside Avenue, a much larger facility behind the old McKinley Receiving Home.

1963 – CHSofNJ Auxiliary Board is founded. A remarkable group of women from Trenton, NJ, led by Shirley Thomas Hartig, form CHSofNJ’s Auxiliary Board to promote the agency’s work and support the babies of CHSofNJ’s Infant Foster Care program. The equally dynamic Bucks Auxiliary of Pennsylvania was later founded to support adoption with their annual Red Rose Day Event.

1975 – CHSofNJ’s Intensive Services Program (ISP) begins. ISP is a therapeutic treatment program for parents who have had their children removed from their care as a result of domestic abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or abandonment. The program provides intensive individual and couples counseling, therapeutic parenting group, and, with their child(ren), supervised visitation.

1974 – USDA Launches Child and Adult Care Food Program. A contract with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) starts the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), providing reimbursement for nourishing meals and snacks served to children receiving residential child care in registered private family day-care homes in Trenton.

1987 – CHSofNJ launches our KIKS program. The Kids Intervention with Kids in School (KIKS) school-based youth development and primary prevention program utilizes peer leaders as positive role models for pre-adolescents and interactive youth development curriculum. In 2004, KIKS was nationally awarded Most Promising Practice by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

1980 – CHSofNJ becomes sponsoring agency for CCR&R services in Ocean County. The Ocean County Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) program provides free community referrals to anyone seeking child care or information related to their family’s specific needs, such as resources for children with special needs or information on housing, health insurance, or food insecurity. Our staff also recruits, trains, monitors and investigates complaints against registered child care providers. Eligible families may receive child care subsidies. Additionally, professional development, CPR, First Aid training, and state and/or federally-mandated health and safety training opportunities are offered to the Child Care and Education communities.

1980 – CHSofNJ begins Pre & Post Adoption Counseling services. Made possible through a contract with the Division of Child Protection & Permanency (DCP&P), CHSofNJ provides counseling for foster children and adoptive parents to help them work through their feelings related to the adoption.
1990 – CHSofNJ introduces Extended Family Care.
The Extended Family Care program partnered with DCP&P, formerly known as DYFS, to provide young and teen girls a place to stay during their pregnancy, and after their baby’s birth. Young teen moms were given help with parenting skills in that same foster home until mother turned 21 years old.

2000 – CHSofNJ’s Kinship Navigator Program is implemented.
The program is designed to help grandparents and aunts and uncles navigate the various government programs and local resources to find the support needed to maintain a safe and stable home environment for the grandchild or kin they voluntarily offered to raise.

The Child’s Futures Center provided support and linkage to family resources for neighborhood families. The Center later became CHSofNJ’s two Family Success Centers (North and South Ward) in Trenton.

2003 – CHSofNJ becomes sole-provider of Early Head Start (EHS) Home-Based services in Trenton.
EHS is a comprehensive prenatal and early childhood home-visiting education program for low-income pregnant women and their families ages birth to age three. EHS is designed to enhance the development of infants and toddlers by strengthening parents’ knowledge and skills to become the best parents they all want to be.

2007 – CHSofNJ’s begins Ocean Reunification Program and Ocean Therapeutic Visitation programs.
These trauma-informed programs are contracted through DCP&P to provide a variety of counseling services (individual and/or Couples, Group, and therapeutic visitation) to families involved in the Child Welfare system and have been separated due to child abuse or neglect. Ocean Reunification services are geared toward addressing the issues that lead to removal and will enable family to safely reuniting when possible. Ocean Therapeutic Visitation service are designed to support the family in maintaining a good relationship during their separation, so families can reunite.

2010 – CHSofNJ launches CUNA, and later Body & Soul.
CUNA is a holistic prenatal health and education workshop that serves as an educational program taught in Spanish utilizing March of Dimes curricula. Body & Soul is taught in English and is culturally-sensitive to the specific needs of African-American women, with a focus on healthy lifestyle choices and promoting harmony between mind, body and soul to reduce stress and support a healthy pregnancy and life.

2012 – CHSofNJ opened the doors of our Ocean County Family Success Center (FSC) in Toms River, NJ.
FSCs are funded by the NJ Department of Children and Families (NJDCF), and work to strengthen families through child and family support programming, community resource referrals, and educational workshops. Staff provided critical support after Hurricane Sandy’s devastation.
2012 – CHSofNJ introduces the federally-funded 21st CCLC program.
The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) afterschool program is operated in collaboration with Trenton Public Schools. The free program operates every day that school is in full session and welcomes students to enroll regardless of their level of academic ability.

2012 – TEDI merges into CHSofNJ.
Trenton Education Dance Institute (TEDI), a youth development arts education program that began as a National Dance Institute (NDI) residency program in Trenton Public Schools in 1989 through the inspiration and leadership of Richard Bilotti, Carol Belt, and a passionate founding Board, joins CHSofNJ’s family of school-based programs. NYC Principal Dancer Jacques d’Amboise founded NDI with the belief that dance had the distinct power to teach young people the life skills needed to succeed in life, such as confidence, self-discipline, perseverance, concentration, team work, cooperation, and pride in personal achievement. This inspired program kindles a love of the arts in everyone it touches. TEDI’s mission and CHSofNJ’s mission is the same; to focus on youth development.

2012 – CHSofNJ becomes the sponsoring agency for the Mercer County WIC program.
CHSofNJ’s Mercer County Women, Infants and Children (WIC) supplemental nutrition and breastfeeding support program helps pregnant and postpartum women with vouchers for healthy food for themselves and their infants and toddlers.

2013 – CHSofNJ launches The Calming after the Storm.
This trauma-informed counseling program operated from 2013 – 2014 helping Ocean County residents cope with the emotional devastation of Super storm Sandy.

2014 – CHSofNJ Sandy Homeowners Renters Assistance Program begins.
The Sandy Homeowners Renters Assistance Program (SHRAP) operated from 2014 – 2015, helped families in Ocean County repair their property and begin to return to normalcy following Superstorm Sandy.

2014 – CHSofNJ launches the Improving Pregnancy Outcomes Program.
The Improving Pregnancy Outcomes (IPO) Program: Every Woman Counts, provides a variety of free health services and support to teens and women of childbearing age in Ocean County. Today this program has evolved into Healthy Women and Healthy Families Program.

Providing 169 more Trenton infants and toddlers with quality early child care and 45 Trenton pregnant mothers with maternal care services.

Today – CHSofNJ touched more than 84,000 lives in 2018 across NJ.
CHSofNJ provides a comprehensive continuum of services to help at-risk children and families thrive and survive.