

Position and Candidate Specification



CEO & President

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Founded in 1979, Child Trends is the nation's leading research organization focused exclusively on improving the lives of children and youth, especially those who are most vulnerable. The organization ensures that all kids thrive by conducting nonpartisan research and partnering with practitioners and policymakers to apply that knowledge. It is Child Trends' belief that programs and policies that serve children and youth are most effective when they are grounded in deep knowledge of child and youth development and informed by data and evidence.

Child Trends' staff of nearly 250 works within a remote-friendly environment in multiple locations across the country, including its main offices in Bethesda, Maryland; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The team includes professionals who are social scientists, statisticians, social workers, and communications specialists who work diligently, with passion and rigor, on behalf of all children in America. Community, state, and federal policymakers and practitioners rely on their cutting-edge research, independent analyses, actionable recommendations, and clear communications to improve policies and interventions that serve children and their families. Partnerships with these stakeholders are two-way, with learning happening in both directions.

If it affects children and youth, Child Trends studies it. The organization's experts research early childhood development, child welfare, juvenile justice, school climate, reproductive health, family formation, and youth development. Children at all developmental stages are studied, from infancy to early adulthood, in the places where they live, learn, and play. Child Trends' 360-degree perspective encompasses the whole child, which includes their health and safety, cognition and academic success; their social and emotional well-being; and the ways in which race, ethnicity, family income, sexual orientation and gender identity, and ability affect their well-being. The organization brings both established methodologies and new approaches to the work; data analyses, program and implementation evaluations, tools, and other resources strengthen a broad array of child- and youth-serving programs nationwide.

Child Trends has a proven track record of impact. For 40 years, it has been the nation's most respected source for research and data on children and youth. Child Trends' research helps set the national agenda on child well-being, shapes federal, state, and local policies that affect children and their families, and elevates important issues for vulnerable groups of children and youth. In recent years, Child Trends created an Impact Plan that succeeded in expanding the organization's efforts to address child poverty and racism -- two key issues that cut across all its research areas.

Six general strategies help ensure that Child Trends has powerful and lasting impact:

- Groundbreaking work to develop, analyze, integrate, share, and explain data from both traditional and new sources
- Deep partnerships with states to design and test innovative solutions to vexing problems
- Empowering communities with data tools and greater evidence
- Strong communications and outreach capacity to inform policy, engage stakeholders, and raise public awareness
- Rapid responses to acute research needs in the field
- Embracing and promoting an informed racial equity perspective in child/youth research

KEY CHILD TRENDS SERVICES

Child Trends actively collaborates with its clients and offers strategic guidance to help them meet their goals. The organization conducts independent, actionable research that describes and analyzes how children, youth, and families are faring; provides evidence-based technical assistance to programs; clearly communicates findings to policymakers and practitioners in accessible and actionable ways; and conducts a range of activities to help organizations improve the efficacy of their direct services.

Data Analysis

Child Trends excels at spotting, analyzing, and explaining trends that affect children’s well-being and has long been the nation’s “go-to” resource for tracking and understanding a wide range of data on children, youth, and families. The organization possesses extensive knowledge of the federal statistical system; experience and expertise in survey development; and analyzing the resulting data; deep experience integrating and analyzing administrative data; and exploring “big” data and new data.

Evaluation

Child Trends is committed to developing and expanding the evidence base for effective programs and policies serving children, youth, and families. Evaluation can serve programs at all stages of development, from initial goal-setting and data collection to continuous improvement to rigorous impact studies. At Child Trends, evaluation approaches fit clients’ needs—not the other way around—drawing from a full array of evaluation tools and approaches.

Capacity Building and Technical Assistance

Child Trends’ training and technical assistance provides data-driven, evidence-based support to bolster organizations’ and providers’ capacity to improve the well-being of families and children. The organization manages multi-million-dollar federal technical assistance centers, works with state and local public agencies, and partners with initiatives focused on community change.

Promoting Racial Equity through Research

Public policies, cultural norms, and institutional discrimination have contributed (and continue to contribute) to disparate outcomes for children and youth of color. These systemic and structural barriers shape the experiences and limit the life trajectories of many individuals, families, and communities. For these reasons, Child Trends is committed to bringing a strong equity perspective to its research and communications work, paying special attention to the effects of structural racism. While this isn’t the only perspective applied, it is a critical contextual factor across all of Child Trends’ work. Child Trends is the preeminent research center on Hispanic children and families, leading National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families for nine years. In more recent years, the organization has grown impressive research portfolios on Black and Indigenous children and youth. Across all its work, Child Trends seeks to engage stakeholders who are representative of the populations studied as participants in the research process. The organization also seeks to ensure that the work is relevant and useful to the communities served. Since evaluation and research are inherently rooted in culture, staff are expected to be knowledgeable about a range of diverse cultures, and all staff are provided with resources and support to cultivate a sophisticated understanding of structural barriers. Child Trends considers lived experience and knowledge of relevant historical contexts when assembling research teams and seek to ensure that its measures are valid for the populations studied. When possible, researchers disaggregate data by race and ethnicity and seek to understand and explain the structural factors that may contribute to racial or ethnic disparities. When communicating research, staff take special care to provide the context for the findings,

such as cultural or community factors or public policies, and to report findings in such a way that do not perpetuate stigma, or other harmful narratives.

Policy Analysis and Engagement

Federal, state, and local policies influence the lives of children and families. Policies shape how government agencies, and the programs they administer, support children’s development, health, and safety. They dictate, for example, which families qualify for a child care subsidy, how much money is available to fund child welfare services, and what data schools are required to report publicly. Child Trends understands the policy environment, and its public policy staff work closely with policymakers on both sides of the political aisle to ensure that they have the research and data necessary to make informed decisions. Child Trends products respond to questions raised by policymakers and bring new issues and developments to the attention of the public policy community.

Strategic Communications

The Child Trends communications team has deep experience with strategic planning and implementation, including digital, social, traditional media, and stakeholder outreach. The team has strong relationships with major national media outlets, and Child Trends’ work is regularly featured in the national media. The organization tailors dissemination to audiences’ needs so that the right information goes to the right people. In addition to promoting its own products, Child Trends provides communications services to federal offices and to other clients.

FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Nearly 250 staff members
- About \$34 million annual revenue for 2022
- Approximately 65% of total revenue is generated from federal and state grants and contracts
- Partnerships include 32 states and over 80 communities and programs

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and President of Child Trends will lead the nonprofit's mission of improving the lives of children and youth by conducting quality, nonpartisan research around factors affecting their well-being. With deep conviction and commitment to the belief that all children, particularly the most vulnerable, deserve access to the best outcomes, the CEO will establish a vision and facilitate collaboration, problem-solving, and decision-making to propel Child Trends to courageously and ambitiously meet the moment. The CEO will possess the strategic acumen required to set and prioritize goals, the operational skills to oversee successful execution through complexity, and the agility to be responsive within a dynamic environment.

The next leader will bring a deep understanding of and respect for research with the ability to apply findings and connect them with policy and broader impact. They will have a deep commitment to maintaining Child Trends' nonpartisan position, ensuring that the organization's research speaks to decision makers of different political affiliations and that its recommendations are based in research and data, not politics and ideology. They will bring a nuanced understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), underserved populations, and social justice issues, with a systems-level perspective on how to leverage research to drive lasting change for children and families. The CEO will also serve as the organization's external ambassador, enabling Child Trends to drive impact at scale by forging partnerships and supporting revenue generation, both earned and philanthropic.

The CEO will be a courageous and innovative leader of Child Trends' team. In addition to placing a priority on the retention, development, motivation and expansion of a high-performing staff, the next leader will guide and leverage an organizational culture and core values, including a deep commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, that reflect the issues facing society and the research sector today and in the future.

Location is flexible.

KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Reports to Board of Directors

Direct reports Chief Operating Officer
Chief Strategy Officer
Vice President for Strategic Communications and Outreach
Vice President for Public Policy and Engagement
Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Vice President for Finance and Accounting

Other key relationships Federal, State, District, and Community Leaders
Leaders of National Child and Youth Organizations
Philanthropic Partners

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- In collaboration with the Board of Directors and the Child Trends team, refine and focus a clear vision and future direction for organizational impact and develop a focused set of priorities, plans, and actions to achieve that impact.
- Maintain and enhance Child Trends' strong reputation as a nonpartisan leader within the research sector; build upon, and continuously improve upon, the legacy of systems-level impact through high-quality research.
- Serve as the external spokesperson, relationship builder, and fundraiser across a wide array of stakeholders and partners.
- Lead Child Trends' continued journey for improvement and pursue meaningful and lasting efforts to integrate the work of racial justice into Child Trends' programming/operations and pursue diversity, equity, and inclusion within and beyond the organization.
- Build on the organization's sound financial base; sustain engagement of partners and funders to determine the optimal mix of funding sources, including the pursuit of unrestricted work and resources.
- Oversee the organization's infrastructure, staffing, processes, and culture amidst rapid growth, ensuring that its financial, human, intellectual and fiduciary capital are deployed to their highest and best use.
- Partner with the Board of Directors to ensure continued engagement and alignment on the organization's direction and contribute to Board development and building.

IDEAL EXPERIENCE

Inspiring and Enterprising Leader

A track record of successfully driving results and growth within diverse and complex organizations. Experience building and leading high performing teams.

Communication and Relationship Building

Experience serving as an inspiring, credible, and compelling communicator and relationship builder to a range of internal and external stakeholders with diverse experiences and viewpoints, and a demonstrated history of effective communication in organizational and change management contexts.

Development and Revenue Generation

A track record of successful fundraising and resource management, including cultivating and stewarding major donors and external partners.

Research Experience

Fundamental understanding of, and/or appreciation for, exceptional research at institutions that partner with entities at the federal, state, district, and/or local level; familiarity with the current landscape of research and the ability to apply findings and connect them with policy audiences.

Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Tangible commitment to racial equity, and experience promoting a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture.

Mission Orientation

Leadership experience within, and personal commitment to, organizations aligned with Child Trend's mission and values.

CRITICAL LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

Strategic Agility

- Demonstrates the ability to balance short-term decision-making while conveying a long-term vision for how Child Trends can evolve to drive greater impact and results.
- Implements and assesses strategies based on continuous evaluation, learning, and experimentation.
- Thinks and plans at least 3-5 years ahead of the current strategy.

Leading People

- Embodies empathy, poise, and compassion; effectively manages in a way that encourages open communication throughout the organization.

- Invests in professional development and actively seeks ways to diversify management and broader team.
- Demonstrates a deep commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Embraces learning and being challenged; collaborative yet courageous decision maker.
- Capacity for Board building, development, and alignment.

Collaborating and Influencing

- Articulates the Child Trends mission, value proposition, and impact effectively and with passion; serves as an authentic and compelling spokesperson in a way that brings the organization a new level of visibility.
- Cultivates, builds, and leverages a wide range of relationships, common values, and motivations with current and potential donors and partners, ultimately growing Child Trends' revenues and influence to enable greater impact.

Driving Results

- Acts to surpass Child Trends' goals, seizing opportunities to extend the limits of what is possible.
- Continually raises the bar on setting ambitious yet achievable goals for Child Trends.
- Seeks new challenges; energized by being innovative and seeking transformational opportunities that increase Child Trends' impact and reach.

OTHER PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Infectious passion for Child Trends' commitment to racial equity and mission of improving the lives of vulnerable children and families.
- Political savvy that preserves Child Trends' nonpartisan stance and stays true to the science in a polarized world.
- Decisive, honest, and transparent; high integrity.

APPLICATIONS AND NOMINATIONS

To express interest or to nominate a potential candidate for the Child Trends CEO position, please email ChildTrends@SpencerStuart.com.