

The logo for the 2019 VOICE for Children award features the year "2019" in a blue sans-serif font, followed by the word "VOICE" in a large, blue, stylized font where the letter "O" is a large circle with a vertical line through it, and "for Children" in a blue cursive font.

**Dr. Essence Allen-Presley**

**2019 VOICE for Children Award**

Dr. Allen-Presley has over 15 years of experience in the field of education. Dr. Essence Allen-Presley is the current owner of I.C.U. STEM Academy, a STAR 4 child care program in Delaware County. She is the founder and President of The Childcare Institute of America (TCIOA), which is the non-profit umbrella for several organizations including the Education Institute for Early Intervention, a career institute for early childhood professionals.

Dr. Allen-Presley currently works for Widener University as an Assistant Professor of Teaching and the Program Coordinator for Special Education. Dr. Allen-Presley has contracted with several companies including Milagre Kids, 1199c, Community College of Philadelphia, and Penn Literacy Network. Her previous roles include Director of Direct Service and Special Projects at Elwyn Institute and School District of Philadelphia where she served in various teaching and administrative positions for 11 years.

Dr. Allen-Presley collaborates and trains child care programs and various organizations throughout the region on multiple ways to enhance their services to children with special needs and behavior challenges in early learning programs. Dr. Allen-Presley published a book in 2015 titled, *The Influence of Attachment Theory Professional Development on the Day-to-Day Interactions between Early Childhood Professionals and Infants in Childcare Facilities*. The book examined whether providing professional development on attachment to early child care professionals (ECP) influences the day-to-day interactions with the infants in their care. To date, professional development and formal education is lacking at the pre-kindergarten level of early childhood education and early intervention, which was her motivation for starting a career institute.

Dr. Allen-Presley continues to advocate at the local and state level to increase the training and education of early child care professionals around special education. Dr. Allen-Presley has presented at various conferences, lectures, and seminars throughout the city of Philadelphia and in the state of Pennsylvania. She understands the need for quality child care programs and its impact on school readiness in the K-12 system.

Dr. Allen-Presley earned her doctoral degree in Education Leadership from Saint Joseph University. She holds two master's degrees, one in Urban and Regional Planning and in Special Education. She also holds a Special Education, K-12 Leadership, Special Education and Curriculum & Instruction Supervisory Certificates in the state of Pennsylvania. Dr. Allen-Presley was born in the Philadelphia and graduated from Strawberry Mansion High School.