

Currently across the country there is an unprecedented interest in developing plans to improve and coordinate early childhood services in order to achieve an effective early care and education system. In the last few years system-planning initiatives have been sponsored and supported by federal, state, county and city governments as well as foundations and national organizations. Many states are involved in multiple planning initiatives and are interested in finding ways to integrate efforts and achieve a continuum of quality early care and education for all children birth to five. This document provides an overview of system planning efforts and includes considerations for states and communities who want to assess whether their planning efforts will meet the needs of children under three.

Assessing System Planning Efforts for Services for Infants and Toddlers

Most of the current early childhood system-planning initiatives are for children birth to five but there are efforts that focus on birth to three, pre-k, (4 yr olds) or extend planning efforts into the early school years. In order to insure a balanced approach to system planning that is inclusive of children under three, it is recommended that planning groups consider:

Does the early childhood system development effort include:

- Representation from infant/toddler programs,
- Data/information on infants, toddlers, and their families,
- Goals/objectives/benchmarks specific to infants and toddlers,
- An assessment of all early childhood system elements and their interrelationship, and
- An analysis of the effects of system change on services to children under three?

Key Birth to Three Planning Initiatives

———— National Infant & Toddler Child Care Initiative ————

Background: The National Infant & Toddler Child Care Initiative at ZERO TO THREE is a project of the Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services. It began in 2002 and is designed to support State and Territory Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) administrators in their efforts to effect system-wide improvements in infant and toddler child care. A total of 20 States and Territories have participated in the Initiative to date.

Purpose: The primary purpose of the National Infant & Toddler Child Care Initiative is to provide planning, resources, and development services to State and Territory teams to improve early care and education systems so they can more effectively meet the needs of infants and toddlers.

Activities: The Initiative provides strategic planning supports to CCDF administrators and their teams to assess and improve child care services to infants and toddlers. States and Territories can

receive technical assistance, consultation and financial support to develop and implement short and long-term action plans. Participants also receive assistance to evaluate progress towards their goals. The Initiative also collects and disseminates information on infant and toddler child care initiatives, investments, and issues.

Funding: Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services

Participating States/Territories: AR, AZ, CT, DC, GU, KS, LA, ME, MI, MN, MO, MT, NC, NJ, SC, SD, TN, VA, WA, WV

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Key Birth to Five Planning Initiatives

———— *Build Initiative* ————

Background: The Build Initiative was created in 2002 by the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative, a consortium of national and local foundations. The Build Initiative partnership states were selected based on a number of criteria including their readiness to build comprehensive systems for early care and education. Initially each selected state received a \$350,000 grant to support planning through May 2004. In 2003, Build selected additional states to become Learning Partners. The Learning Partner states do not receive funding but are offered an opportunity to participate in conference calls and meetings with the grantee states.

Purpose: The Build Initiative's mission is to help each state build a coordinated system of programs, policies and services that is responsive to the needs of families, careful in the use of private and public resources, and effective in preparing our youngest children for a successful future.

Activities: Teams that lead the planning and implementation efforts in each state are made up of state agency officials,

business and community leaders, parents, advocates and others who work with children. Funds are used to support states' efforts to:

- reform existing state systems,
- test new models,
- connect programs and services that operate in isolation and/or at cross purposes, and
- help ensure that all young children have access to early learning systems that result in school readiness.

Grantee States: IL, MN, NJ, OH, PA

Learning Partner States: HI, MI, OK, WA

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———— *State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grants* ————

Background: The Maternal and Child Health Bureau's system planning grants began in 2003 and were made available to Title V Agencies in 59 States and Territories. Efforts are now underway in 49 States and 2 Territories with another round of applications planned for 2005 to include the remaining eligible grantees. Planning grants are \$100,000 per year and available for a 2 year period. States and Territories may also apply for implementation funding.

Purpose: To support States to plan, develop and ultimately implement collaborations and partnerships that support families and communities in their development of children that are healthy and ready to learn at school entry.

Goal 1: To provide leadership to the development of cross service systems integration partnerships in support of children in early childhood and enhance their ability to enter school healthy and ready to learn.

Goal 2: To support States and communities in their efforts to build early childhood service systems that *address the following* five critical components:

- access to medical homes
- social-emotional development of young children
- early care and education
- parenting education
- family support

Activities: States are asked to form teams composed of early childhood system leaders to develop a plan to address some or all of the five critical components as well as:

- Promote participation in accessing medical homes for *all* children
- (Together) address the social/emotional needs of *all* children
- Integrate Child Care Health Consultants into other system partners programs
- Weave accepted child care standards into other early care and education system partners programs
- Partner with family support & parent education efforts

Funding: Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Department of Health and Human Services

Grantees: all States (except SC and SD); PR, Palau, DC

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Key Birth to Five Planning Initiatives *CONTINUED*

——— *Smart Start National Technical Assistance Center* ———

Background: The National Technical Assistance Center provides grants valued at approximately \$100,000 in technical assistance to up to ten communities and States to support the development and implementation of comprehensive, community-based early childhood initiatives. The technical assistance provided under the grants program focuses on the knowledge gained and the lessons learned through North Carolina's Smart Start Initiative. Grants are available for a period of up to eighteen months following notification of the grant award.

Purpose: Smart Start's National Technical Assistance Center is available to assist communities and States in the development, implementation and integration of comprehensive community-based early childhood initiatives.

Activities: In the initial phase, information is obtained regarding the current status of the grantee's efforts to develop an early childhood initiative. Upon completion of the

assessment, a technical assistance plan and goals are developed in coordination with key leaders of the grantee. A range of resources is then made available to each grantee including access to consultants, staff, site visits, publications, list serve access and participation in the Smart Start conference.

Funding: David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Triad Foundation

Grantees: States: AL, CO, IA, OK, SC, VT

Communities: Memphis

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State, County and City Early Childhood and School Readiness Initiatives

Background: In the last few years national organizations for state, county and city officials have developed supports for their members interested in improving early care and education services in their jurisdiction. The following organizations have encouraged system-planning initiatives:

——— *National Governors Association (NGA)* ———

In the final report of the NGA Task Force on School Readiness (2005) a set of recommendations to Governors begins with encouragement to develop "a vision and strategic plan for school readiness that considers the role of families, schools, and communities and that addresses the developmental needs of children beginning before birth to kindergarten (and beyond)" Several Governors have begun the visioning and planning process using a variety of planning supports including the Maternal and Child Health systems planning grants and the Build Initiative. Both Michigan and Arizona have made birth to

three services an integral part of the Governor's initiative and have incorporated their work with the National Infant & Toddler Child Care Initiative into their state plans.

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——— *National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)* ———

The National Conference of State Legislatures provides assistance to state legislatures on child care and early education issues through policy analysis, technical assistance, meetings and response to requests for information from legislators and legislative staff. The NCSL publication, *Early Education in the States: A year in Review-2004*, reports that six state legislatures (CO, GA, LA, MA, MO, SD) enacted laws in 2004 to establish new entities or directed current entities to conduct early care and education planning or studies. Three of the states (LA, MO, SD) participate in the National Infant & Toddler Child Care

Initiative and have incorporated their infant and toddler child care strategic planning efforts into the legislative initiatives.

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———— National Association of Counties (NACO) ————

The National Association of Counties provides resources to county officials interested in innovative and collaborative strategies to address the needs of children from birth to age five and their families. In their publication, *Model Program Strategies: County Early Care and Education Programs* they recommend that counties use long-term planning to ensure the effectiveness and quality of services

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———— National League of Cities (NLC) ————

The Institute for Youth, Education and Families, an entity of the National League of Cities provides resources to municipal officials to promote early childhood system development including a community assessment tool and an action kit. NLC reports that over 100 municipal officials have committed to creating early childhood plans for their cities.

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Resources

Lombardi et al. *Building Bridges from PreKindergarten to Infants and Toddlers: A Preliminary Look at Issues in Four States*. The Trust for Early Education and the ZERO TO THREE Policy Center; 2004. at <http://www.zerotothree.org/policy/>

National Infant & Toddler Child Care Initiative, *Early Care and Education Systems that Support Quality Care for Babies and Toddlers: Key Elements and Characteristics at* (<http://nccic.org/itcc>)

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, *A Governor's Guide to School Readiness: Building the Foundation for Bright Futures* (Washington D.C.: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2005) at <http://www.nga.org/cda/files/0501TaskForceReadiness.pdf>
National League of Cities. *Early Childhood Needs and Resources Community Assessment Tool*. at http://www.nlc.org/nlc_org/site/files/reports/cityassess.doc.

Parlakian R, ZERO TO THREE Policy Center. *Growing Up Healthy: What Local Governments Can Do to Support Young Children and Their Families* in partnership with the National Association of Counties and the National League of Cities at <http://www.zerotothree.org/policy/>.

Rudermann M, Grason, H *Early Childhood System Building Tool*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Los Angeles, CA: The National Center for Infant and Early Childhood Health Policy; 2004. at <http://www.healthychild.ucla.edu/PUBLICATIONS/Documents/ECTool.pdf>

Tullis E, Sutherland C, Uyeda K, Halfon N. *From Resources to Results for Children and Families: A Strategic Planning Guide for State Level Early Childhood System-Building Initiatives*. In Halfon N, Rice T, and Inkelas M, eds. *Building State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Series, No. 6*, National Center for Infant and Early Childhood Health Policy; 2004. at <http://www.healthychild.ucla.edu/NationalCenter/print%20copy%20strategic%20planning2-26-04.pdf>