

Supporting Children Through Community-Based Coalitions

December 2013

“Don’t ever think that a small group of dedicated individuals cannot change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

— Margaret Mead

The development of an early childhood system, both in states and communities, is an exciting venture, requiring coordination among people and programs from many disciplines and organizations, including community stakeholders who do not have a professional role related to children and families.

Supporting Children Through Community-Based Coalitions is a guide to support newly forming community coalitions in their work. The guide explores

1. why coalitions are important to impacting change;
2. what coalitions need to be successful;
3. how to get started; and
4. what an action plan should include.

It also shares examples of nine community coalitions (sometimes referred to as councils or teams) from around the country, as well as additional resources and templates for communities beginning the work.

INTRODUCTION

Community coalitions play a critical role in improving the lives of young children and their families. The following facts highlight the tremendous need for communities to unite around supporting young children and families:

- 80 percent of brain development occurs by the age of 3 and 90 percent of brain development occurs by the age of 5.ⁱ
- In 2011, the average annual cost of center-based infant care was more than the annual in-state tuition at public four-year colleges in 35 states and the District of Columbia.ⁱⁱ
- In 2011, 46 percent of children under the age of 5 lived in low-income families.ⁱⁱⁱ

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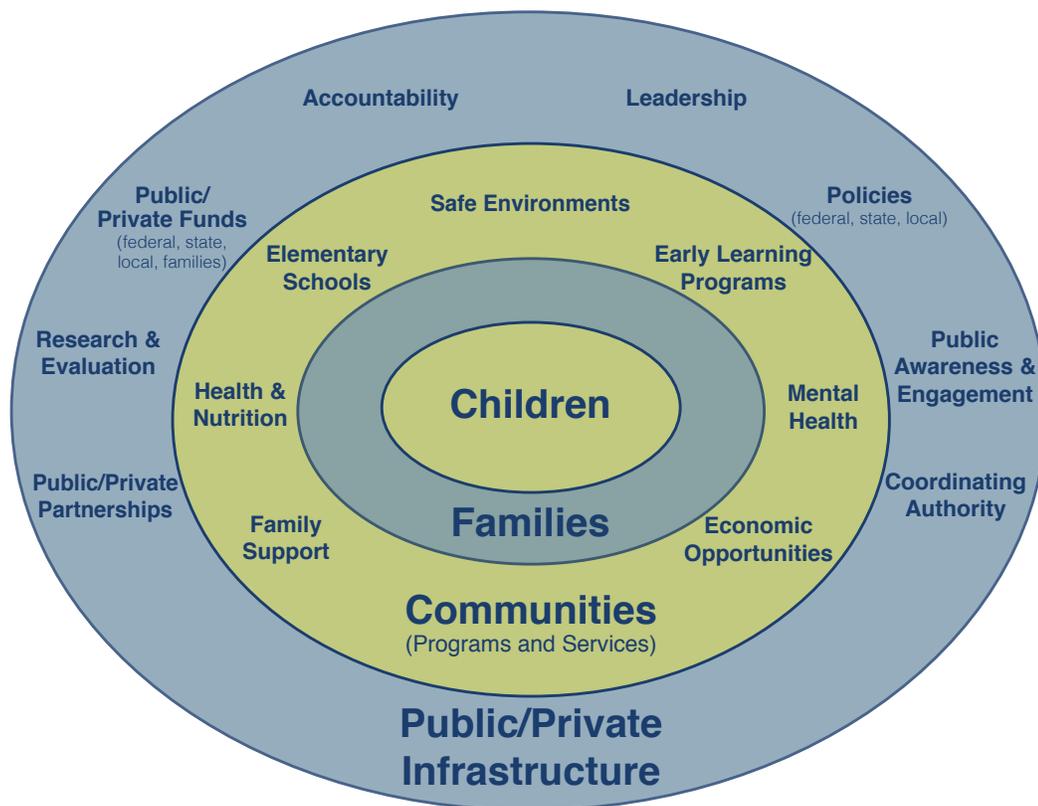


Figure 1. An Early Childhood System

Developing a state early childhood system requires all communities and the state to work together. Because of the complexity of a state early childhood system (Figure 1), each community council will begin in different places, collaborating with different individuals.

The National Academy of Sciences’ pivotal publication *From Neurons to Neighborhoods* made a number of recommendations, one of which was directed at the need for coordinated early childhood programs and policies: “[T]he time is long overdue for state and local decision makers to take bold actions to design and implement coordinated, functionally effective infrastructure to reduce the long-standing fragmentation of early childhood policies and programs.”^{iv}

By establishing community coalitions and developing an action plan, communities will be able to choose initiatives that address the needs identified within each community and launch an action plan tailored to the community and its unique needs.

WHY ARE LOCALLY BASED COALITIONS NEEDED?

Individuals and organizations at the local level are best able to understand the strengths, needs, and challenges of the children and families in their community. Community members will be able to “identify intervention strategies that are feasible and most appropriate within the community context.”^v

Local groups can be well positioned to knit together fragmented, isolated systems and services for children and families. They can identify and create efficiencies, reduce duplication, align and coordinate programs and services, and share resources. Most importantly, they have the potential to create an environment that can change the trajectory of and positively impact children’s school readiness and success. In other words, there can be a collective impact that can extend to the larger population.

WHAT DO COALITIONS NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL?

In developing a community coalition, it is important to consider questions such as: How does the group do its work so that goals can be achieved? What is needed to effect change?

There is no single right way for community coalitions to do their work. Within community coalitions that are able to *effect change*, however, there is a set of characteristics, or capacities, that is *integral to their success*. They are: member and leader capacity, organizational capacity, and community capacity. These characteristics are inter-related and interactive; change in one area impacts the others.

Member/Leader Capacity includes having effective leadership and core skills, knowledge, and attitudes among members that are critical to collaborative activities and provide the motivation to collaborate.

Organizational Capacity includes the creation of a positive working environment and implementation of a coalition structure that supports effective communication, strong relationships among members, and continuous improvement; ensures sufficient resources; and is task oriented.

Community Capacity includes the extent to which the coalition addresses community needs, involves outside organizations and community members in supporting coalition activities, and improves the capacity of these external partners.

Allowing these capacities to fully develop requires patience; growing them will require time and effort. (See Appendix B for specific capacity-building resources.)

CREATING LOCAL COALITIONS: HOW TO GET STARTED

If your state is supporting this effort, it will likely suggest the types of members to have on your council. If you are starting a coalition without that support, you will need to determine your mission and goals and how broad-based you want the group. One decision will be to define early childhood—what children and programs do you want to serve? Some early childhood coalitions work on issues related to children birth to kindergarten entry; others are prenatal to age 5; some are birth to age 8. Locally based coalitions typically engage broad support from across the community based on the definition of early childhood. Membership should be well rounded and could include persons from center-based child care and preschool, family child care, school-age care, Head Start, public schools, higher education, workforce, parents, faith-based organizations, local government (health and social services), businesses, nonprofits, and foundations. Regardless of the size of a coalition, engage members in meaningful work, acknowledge their contributions, and create opportunities to build trusting relationships—these are central to the group’s success.

Strive, a nonprofit organization focused on the student achievement crisis in the urban Cincinnati and northern Kentucky area, has been successful in its goal of improving student achievement success in three large public school districts, in over a dozen critical areas.

Why? Because a core group of community leaders decided to abandon their individual agendas in favor of a collective approach to improving student achievement. “These leaders realized that fixing one point on the educational continuum ... wouldn’t make much difference unless all parts of the continuum improved at the same time.”^{vi}

“Effective and coordinated local early childhood systems work rests on clear conceptual vision and administrative organization.”^{vii}

(Clifford, 2012)

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

Early in a coalition's work, an action plan is needed to guide the work both short term and long term. The plan should be based on data from the community that identifies areas of strength, areas for improvement, and areas where opportunities may exist. Many coalitions use community-based assessments to collect this information. Other sources of data include the Census, KIDS COUNT, workforce surveys, the resource and referral agency, fiscal mapping, school districts, key informant interviews, and focus groups with various stakeholders.

Some important things to remember as you develop the plan:

- If you are part of a state structure, be sure to align your work to the state goals
- Be realistic in planning so you can have some early successes
- Use a committee structure to help divide the work
- Build momentum over time by celebrating successes along the way
- Develop an evaluation plan to assess your progress

Questions to Use When Considering/Determining Activities

1. Is this activity relevant to your coalition's current goals?
 - a. Is it a priority/area for action?
 - b. Do you have data that demonstrate the need?
 2. Is this activity relevant to your community?
 3. Does this activity support/help achieve one of your goals?
 - a. If yes, is it worth pursuing?
 - b. Is there consensus/agreement among coalition members that this activity will contribute to achievement of a goal?
 - c. Is the related goal a top priority?
 - d. Are there other activities that might achieve a greater impact?
 4. Are the steps required to pursue this activity something your coalition has the capacity to pursue?
 - a. Have you engaged all the relevant partners to assist with this activity?
-

PROFILES OF COMMUNITY-BASED COALITIONS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY

This section highlights nine community-based coalitions. Together, they illustrate the diversity of these partnerships: some are part of a well-funded state structure, while others are locally grown with little to no state resources. However, all coalitions work on issues related to children, families, schools, early learning programs, and communities.

The scope of work a coalition selects should tie into its mission, goals, and objectives. This section provides information on their visions, missions, goals, benchmarks, evaluation plans, and more. Appendix A includes examples of activities and initiatives that local coalitions have sponsored over the past few years.

CENTRAL PIMA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL, ARIZONA

This regional partnership council is part of Arizona's First Things First Initiative. The community coalitions develop their specific goals and strategies based on the state's vision and mission.

Vision: All of Arizona's children are ready to succeed in school and in life.

Mission: First Things First is one of the critical partners in creating a family-centered, comprehensive, collaborative, and high-quality early childhood system that supports the development, health, and early education of all Arizona's children birth through age 5.

Below are listed a few of the strategies the Partnership Council funds to help meet its goals:

- Quality and Access—provides scholarships to children to attend high-quality programs; on-site coaching for providers; expands slots by recruiting new providers.
- Professional Development—TEACH scholarships; financial incentives to providers; high-quality training.
- Health—intervention services; mental health consultation; health consultation; case management for coordinated health care.
- Family Support—parent education; home visitation.
- Evaluation—there is a strong evaluation component to determine effectiveness and impact related to all of the projects.
- Community Awareness—outreach activities including media campaigns and other materials to increase parent and community member awareness about the importance of the early years and how to support young children.

Evaluation: First Things First has contracted for two regional evaluation studies: (1) *Early Childhood Workforce Development*, and (2) *Regional Family Support Strategies*. A major aim of both studies is to consider how programs or programmatic approaches contribute to an overall strategic effort. These studies will provide useful information for the FTF Board and Regional Partnership Councils; facilitate and strengthen knowledge-building efforts; and result in quality information to improve services and service delivery.

Website: www.azftf.gov/RC017/pages/default.aspx

EARLY CHILDHOOD FORUM OF CENTRAL ILLINOIS, ILLINOIS

This partnership began in 1998 and has had little to no funding, demonstrating that communities can collaborate and share information with the public and policy makers on an ongoing basis without state support and with a limited budget.

Membership: Member agencies include early learning programs, health departments, universities, faith community, public schools, after-school programs, the media, and other non-profit organizations. They have recently established an executive committee to manage business between meetings. The Early Childhood Forum (ECF) rotates its monthly meeting locations to learn about the various members' organizations.

Mission: The Early Childhood Forum of Central Illinois unites the early childhood community serving families with children ages birth to 8. This unique collaboration will provide opportunities for professional growth and development, provide advocacy for issues impacting children, and promote public awareness of children's needs.

Value Statement: We value the quality of life for all children and families by advocating the needs of young children prenatal through age eight.

Philosophy: We support lifelong learning through partnerships that provide quality programs and services.

Objectives: Objectives of the Forum include sharing ideas, training opportunities, and activities throughout the community, and providing awareness to the community and legislators of the needs of children.

Over the years, the ECF has successfully provided many community activities. It holds large conferences for early childhood professionals, including kindergarten teachers. In addition, it participates in activities sponsored by other entities. A very successful endeavor each year is its legislative breakfast for their local legislators.

Evaluation: Since ECF operates without funding, its evaluation is limited, but it does track the number of legislators and city officials it shares information with, how many pamphlets it distributes to community members, how many new members it gets, and any increase in attendance at monthly meetings.

Contact: Bonnie Jones at BJones@twfsp.org.

JEFFERSON COUNTY COMMUNITY EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL (JCCECC), KENTUCKY

Community Early Childhood Councils (CECCs) are volunteer committees that involve cross-sector collaboration to ensure that every child in the Commonwealth of Kentucky arrives to school ready and eager to learn.

Membership: JCCECC, like other CECCs statewide, collaborates with community partners to ensure school readiness. Members on the council include representatives from local child care programs, Head Start, and state-funded preschool; higher education; faith community; health care programs; early intervention programs; and other local agencies and activist groups.

Mission: To ensure all children are ready for kindergarten, JCCECC provides support to the local “Help Me Grow” initiative by providing parents access to the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) in order to individually screen and interpret results for their own child and also partner with local organizations to continue community-wide screenings using the ASQ.

Activities:

- After completing the ASQ, parents and caregivers will better understand how their child is progressing and will be provided with steps to ensure school readiness.
- Community partners will provide trainings on family engagement and professional development to enhance social/emotional readiness.
- Parents and caregivers will be connected to appropriate resources to support their child’s educational success, including First Steps, Kentucky’s early intervention program.

By supporting high-quality learning environments, engaging families, and providing access to data, JCCECC will increase school readiness in our community.

Evaluation: The Kentucky Governor’s Office of Early Childhood requires each CECC to provide a Year End Report that details the work of the fiscal year.

Website: kidsnow.ky.gov

GREAT START SHIAWASSEE, MICHIGAN

Great Start Shiawassee is part of Great Start Michigan—a statewide initiative to foster school readiness and life success for young children.

Vision: A Great Start to assure that every child in Shiawassee County is safe, healthy, and eager to succeed in school and life.

Mission: The purpose of Great Start Shiawassee is to assure a coordinated system of community resources and supports to assist all our families in providing a great start for their children from birth through age 5.

Challenge: Create a Great Start Early Childhood System, which provides a single, comprehensive, and coordinated network of public and private services and supports working together in our community to enhance outcomes for children and families.

Goals and Associated Objectives: These goals and activities serve as the foundation for an Action Agenda that further delineates objectives and next steps, resource needs, progress measures, roles and responsibilities, and target dates for reaching them.

Goal: Infants, young children, and their families are physically healthy

Objective 1: Increase access to medical and dental care

Objective 2: Develop integrated response to childhood obesity

Objective 3: Actualize interagency team of evaluation and services to families with young children

Goal: Parents have a continuum of services and supports ranging from parent education, to parents as leaders who advocate for their own children as well as the needs of other young children

Objective 1: Increase the range of Parenting Education options and make them easily accessible

Objective 2: Parents have the tools they need to guide their child's learning and advocate for all children

Goal: Families have access to high-quality early care and education

Objective 1: Increase the number of quality child care slots available across geographic locations

Objective 2: Increase number of children receiving free/reduced cost preschool throughout the country

Goal: Families have the resources and information to support their family's basic needs and support their children's learning and development

Objective 1: Actualize interagency team of evaluation and services to families with young children

Objective 2: Increase knowledge of resources and services available

Recent Accomplishments: Great Start Shiawassee developed a system with physicians that resulted in over 1,000 developmental screenings and established a common referral system for all at-risk children and children from birth to 3; sent 242 4-year-olds to preschool; established Federally Funded Health Center; and partnered with Human Services and Mental Health Departments to fund positions working with families with young children, and co-located all services in one building.

Website: www.greatstartshiawassee.org/

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP OF THE OZARKS, SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI

This partnership is an example of an early childhood initiative that is part of a larger community effort relating to all children and families.

Partners: Community Partnership of the Ozarks is governed by a 33-member Board of Directors, which consists of representatives from local government, the faith community, public schools, the University, local businesses, civic organizations, the media, and other non-profit organizations.

There are four divisions within the Partnership:

- Substance Abuse and Violence Prevention
- Community and Neighborhood Development
- Children and Child Well-Being
- Affordable Housing and Homeless Prevention

The five core outcomes of the Partnership are:

- Children, families, and community members are safe and healthy
- Children are kindergarten-ready and succeeding in school
- Youth are ready to enter productive adulthood
- Parents are working
- Neighborhoods are strong and thriving

There is a community team of early childhood professionals that make up an Early Childhood and Education Collaborative, which works to achieve the second outcome: Children are kindergarten-ready and succeeding in school. This team is made up of professionals from Parents as Teachers, Health Department, Child Care Aware, Head Start, Early Childhood Special Education, local providers, etc. This working group carries out the community activities related to early childhood, while the Board of Directors helps set the overall goals and responds to the ideas of the Collaborative. They have had health fairs and play days for families, banquets to recognize early childhood professionals, training for the early childhood community, and many more activities.

Website: www.commpartnership.org

DOWN EAST PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN OF NASH AND EDGEcombe COUNTIES (DEPC), ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA

This regional partnership is part of NC Smart Start and is celebrating 20 years of addressing the needs of children and families in their communities. Its responsibilities include coordination of all early childhood programs and services in the two-county region, in partnerships with public and private agencies and organizations.

Partners: DEPC's Board of Directors and working committees are made up of parents, child care providers, representatives from the school systems and human service agencies, members of the faith community, and local business and government.

Mission: To build a strong foundation for children and families by advocating and supporting both high-quality early care and education and a coordinated system of community resources.

Vision: We believe that all children and their families can reach their full potential when surrounded by a united and supportive community.

Activities: Currently, DEPC is funding many important programs, including:

- Early Childhood Transition Programs: These programs are in both counties and are evidence-informed family engagement models administered by the public schools that work with elementary schools, early care providers, and families to facilitate a smooth transition for children into kindergarten.
- Flex Funds for Nash and Edgecombe Counties: The funds provide emergency family support to help families in crisis and to prevent out-of-home placement for children from families being served by the County Department of Social Services.
- Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC): The self-assessment is offered through Nash County Health Department and improves the health of young children by encouraging positive modifications in nutrition and physical activity policies and practices of child care facilities.
- Raising a Reader: Raising a Reader is an evidence-based early literacy initiative administered by Braswell Memorial Library. The program prioritizes literacy skill development through daily book sharing between parents and their young children.
- WAGE\$ Salary Supplement Program: The program provides education-based salary supplements to child care professionals. By rewarding staff for continued educational attainment and longevity within child care facilities, this evidence-informed model increases the quality and continuity of care.
- Williford Family Resource Center: The center provides services for families on site at Williford Elementary School in Rocky Mount. Services include the 16-week Incredible Years parenting education series. Additional services include the facilitation of parent-child interactive playgroups for families of toddlers and preschool aged children.

Website: www.depc.org

CUYAHOGA COUNTY FAMILY AND CHILDREN FIRST COUNCIL, CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

Vision: Cuyahoga County will be a community comprised of strong, stable families, with each being able to provide for the basic needs, health, and education of its members. Families will utilize their unique strengths, heritage, and culture in the pursuit of opportunities that will nurture and enrich their lives. Those needing assistance in strengthening parental functioning or maintaining family stability shall have convenient access to culturally sensitive health, education, and social services. Such services will be available through an integrated system of care that includes public agencies, private providers, schools, and general community organizations. Through the development and strengthening of personal support networks, families will become involved in community activities and organizations, thus contributing to community-building efforts and sustaining viable family life.

Mission: As the planning entity for Cuyahoga County, the Family & Children First Council (FCFC) promotes a collaborative system of care emphasizing coordination across a continuum of family-centered, neighborhood-based, and culturally competent services to ensure the well-being of every child, and to preserve and strengthen families in their communities.

Goals and Values: Cuyahoga County's capacity to develop and deliver an effective service continuum can be evidenced through the FCFC. All the major public child-serving agencies are members of the Council.

Elements of FCFC's Approach:

- Broad and inclusive visions of what children need to thrive and to be healthy and safe.
- What it will take for all families and communities to meet those needs.

- A countywide system of providing information to all families with children, prenatal through age 18.
- Full scale of quality services to all children and their families.
- Coordinated and cooperative public system infrastructure that promotes cross-system collaboration—at the policy, programmatic, and case levels.

Approach to Service Coordination: Each county develops a service coordination plan. Service Coordination ensures that families receive the services they need, when they need them, to resolve a problem or address a crisis. All the child-/family-serving public systems have agreed on expectations of effective service coordination at the case or program-planning level.

Further Reading: Franklin J. Hickman, an attorney and advocate for people with disabilities and families with special needs, wrote an article entitled “What Your Local Family and Children First Council Can Do for You,” available at www.hickman-lowder.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=216&Itemid=17.

Website: fcfc.cuyahogacounty.us

POTTSTOWN EARLY ACTION FOR KINDERGARTEN INITIATIVE (PEAK), POTTSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

PEAK is an initiative of the Pottstown School District and community agencies that work together to impact families and improve the readiness of children entering kindergarten. This is accomplished through the five inter-related strategies of community outreach; family engagement; quality improvement and work force development; health and wellness; and kindergarten transition.

Partners: PEAK has eight managing partners, including representatives from the school district, early learning programs, Pottstown Family Center, health and wellness foundation, and United Way. The PEAK Managing Partners provide advice and guidance on budgets and strategic directions. In addition, the PEAK initiative has two collaborating partner groups (PA Pre-K Counts and Community Partners) that work with PEAK to meet its goals.

Mission: Every child in Pottstown will enter kindergarten ready to learn and achieve.

Goals:

- Every 3- and 4-year-old child has access to high-quality child care, early childhood education, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten.
- Every parent of young children has access to the high-quality skill building and resources needed to prepare them to be their child’s first “teacher” and to prepare their children for success in school.
- Every child has access to health and wellness services to ensure that they are prepared to maximize their potential in school.

Each summer, the partners select annual goals, outcomes, and activities for each of the strategy areas for the PEAK initiative.

Activities: Some of the major activities in the past couple of years have been:

- Community Outreach: Month of the Young Child activities; annual luncheon; local and regional community talks; website development; and marketing materials.
- Family Engagement: workshops; volunteer programs; informational resources; collaboration with school district to have Parent Literacy Nights.

- Quality Improvement: Increase number of children scoring on “Benchmark” on the kindergarten assessment; leadership training; CDA classes; and support community college classes.
- Health and Wellness: provide vision, hearing, and dental screenings; nutrition lessons; behavior management support specialist to work with teachers in addressing violent and aggressive behavior.
- Kindergarten Transition: joint professional development; cross-classroom visits (preschool and K teachers); summer transition class for at-risk children; and assessment information to kindergarten teachers.

Website: www.peakonline.org

SMART BEGINNINGS GREATER RICHMOND, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

Partners: Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond (SBGR) is part of the Virginia’s Smart Beginnings statewide model and facilitated in Greater Richmond and Petersburg by United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg and the Greater Richmond Chamber. SBGR is a local coalition of public and private organizations, businesses, and citizens working together to ensure that the region’s children enter school healthy, well cared for, and ready to succeed in school and in life. SBGR represents six counties and three cities. It operates on the premise that when children from birth to age 5 have quality early childhood experiences, the whole community benefits.

The region’s early childhood work is guided by the Regional Plan for Children’s School Readiness (the Plan) created by SBGR. The Plan provides a tool for strategic planning, coordinating efforts, achieving economies of scale, and measuring progress. The Leadership Council monitors the Plan, leads public engagement and outreach efforts, reports to the public on the progress of the Plan, and votes on recommendations by the coalition regarding strategy and policy direction. The Plan is available at www.yourunitedway.org/sites/yourunitedway.org/files/images/SB_School_Readiness_Plan_as_of_05_01_10.pdf.

Mission: The non-partisan steward and capacity-builder for advancing school readiness in the Commonwealth.

Vision: Every Virginia child is prepared for school, laying the foundation for workforce and life success.

Structure: SBGR’s organizational structure includes a leadership council, a school readiness committee, and Action Teams (Ready Families, Ready Health, Ready Early Care & Education, and Ready Schools).

- Leadership Council: This group of high-level private sector, public, and nonprofit leaders, staffed by the presidents of the United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg and the Greater Richmond Chamber, leads the region’s early childhood efforts and is accountable for the Plan.
- School Readiness Committee: Implementation of the Plan is directed by a sub-committee of the Leadership Council called the School Readiness Committee. This committee includes director-level representatives of the Leadership Council and regional nonprofit, public, and private organizations. The School Readiness Committee provides strategic direction for the Plan; coordinates implementation of the five goals through Action Teams; and approves outcomes and timelines, monitors progress on a quarterly basis, and reports to the Leadership Council.
- Action Teams: Four Action Teams lead the implementation of goals and local planning efforts. Action Teams provide guidance and direction to partners to accomplish each goal, help identify resources and networks, and share progress and system needs with the School Readiness Committee and each other.

Website: www.yourunitedway.org/smart-beginnings

APPENDIX A. EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES FROM THE NINE COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Ready Families

Community Team	State	Initiative	Activity Description and Website
Cuyahoga County Families & Children First Council (FCFC)	OH	Parent Advisory Committee (PAC)	<p>The need for advocacy on children's issues is ongoing. The most passionate and educated advocates about those issues are the parents of children. The Cuyahoga County FCFC has attempted to fill that need through the organization of the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC).</p> <p>The PAC consists of civic-minded parents interested in sharing information, concerns, and suggestions to improve the lives of children, families and their community. The goal is to strengthen families and communities by providing information, education and support. Through information sharing and relationship building, the PAC will be able to champion the needs of all families in Cuyahoga County.</p> <p>The major focus of the PAC will be developing its members' leadership skills in order to prepare them for relationship building with community leaders to advance the needs of children. Research suggests that improving family functioning through the introduction of leadership skills, family bonding activities, relationship building within one's neighborhood and the community at-large, and reinforcing positive social behaviors can reduce problem behaviors in children. This parent forum will allow the membership to share concerns occurring in their individual communities and allow group problem solving to create a resolution.</p> <p>Website: fcfc.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/parents.aspx</p>
Great Start Shiawassee	MI	Parenting Education	<p>Parents have a continuum of services and supports ranging from parent education to parents as leaders who advocate for their own children, as well as the needs of other young children. The objective is to increase the range of Parenting Education options and make them easily accessible. Agencies continue to create a network to exchange information and resources and identify gaps in services.</p> <p>Next steps include: 1) A Request for Proposal for "strong families/safe children" work looped DVDs of brain development and other topics focused around five points of the star in waiting rooms, and 2) establish consistent messaging and consistent words among key agencies.</p> <p>Website: www.greatstartshiawassee.org/attachments/File/StrategicPlan2011Final2.pdf</p>
Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten Initiative (PEAK)	PA	Kindergarten Readiness Checklist	<p>PEAK provides a Kindergarten Readiness checklist online for families. The one-page list helps families determine if their child is ready for kindergarten. Knowing what the child can and cannot do will give parents some tips on helping the child become more ready to be successful in kindergarten.</p> <p>Website: www.peakonline.org/pdf/KindergartenReadinessChecklist.pdf</p>

Ready Families

Community Team	State	Initiative	Activity Description and Website
Jefferson County Community Early Childhood Council	KY	Parenting Education	<p>This Council distributes the school readiness definition to community members, holds family engagement trainings for providers, increases family engagement in school readiness activities through the Cradle School Program, and screens children from low income neighborhoods by providing manipulatives for neighborhood networking events. In addition, they have family companion documents to the KY Early Childhood Standards (Parent Guide for Children Birth to Three and Parent Guide for Children Ages Three to Four). The Parent Guides help parents identify daily activities they can do with their children to support their achievement of the Early Childhood Standards. The guides are available in both English and Spanish.</p> <p>Website: kidsnow.ky.gov/engaging-families/Pages/default.aspx</p>
Community Partnership of the Ozarks	MO	Parenting Education	<p>Community Partnership's Early Childhood Division, along with more than 30 community agencies devoted to children and families, hosts Community Wide Play Day each spring on the last Saturday in April. The goal of Community Wide Play Day is to provide a positive, interactive, voluntary, free opportunity for children and families to interact and learn through play. Each year, the event draws more than 2,000 children and their families. The activities available at Play Day allow children to stretch their muscles and minds while they explore creative expression. Parents also receive inexpensive or free play ideas to do at home, which encourage healthy brain development in growing children. In addition, each child who attends Play Day receives a free book.</p> <p>Website: www.commpartnership.org/what-we-do/by-division/children-and-child-well-being/community-wide-play-day/</p>

Ready Elementary Schools

Community Team	State	Initiative	Activity Description and Website
Down East Partnership for Children (DEPC)	NC	Ready Schools Toolkit	<p>Connecting with Early Care Providers: A principal and kindergarten teacher visit early learning programs within their elementary school feeder patterns to meet with parents, share information about kindergarten and kindergarten registration, and read to the children.</p> <p>Website: www.depc.org/FINAL_Ready_Schools_Toolkit_5_25_11.pdf</p>
Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond (SBGR)	VA	Regional Kindergarten Readiness and Registration Campaign	<p>One goal is to promote the enrollment of incoming kindergartners by the first day of school. Many parents don't realize that on-time registration for kindergarten is in the spring. Late registration leads to problems for schools, families, and children: attendance delays, missed orientation, and confusion for children as they begin their academic experience. In 2010, an estimated 4,000 kindergartners were not registered on time—enough children to fill about eight elementary schools.</p> <p>SBGR worked with five school systems to identify a common kindergarten registration date and began planning a kindergarten readiness and registration campaign. By January 2011, 10 school systems in the region agreed on the common date. The campaign kicked off with a press conference, gained momentum with nearly four months of broad media coverage, and culminated with a successful spring registration day with 8,355 children registered. Principals and school administrators indicate that the kindergarten readiness/ registration campaign was a success. They report that more parents were better prepared with proper documentation and increased awareness of the process in general.</p> <p>The Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond Regional Plan is available at www.yourunitedway.org/sites/yourunitedway.org/files/images/SB_School_Readiness_Plan_as_of_05_01_10.pdf</p> <p>The Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond Results Brochure is available at www.yourunitedway.org/sites/yourunitedway.org/files/images/SB_2012_Results%20Brochure.pdf</p>

Ready Elementary Schools

Community Team	State	Initiative	Activity Description and Website
Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten Initiative (PEAK)	PA	Kindergarten Transition	<p>An important goal of PEAK is to provide children and families with a smooth transition to kindergarten. PEAK supports this effort through activities that form connections among teachers, children, families, and the community. It holds joint professional development and cross-classroom visits (preschool and kindergarten teachers); summer transition classes for at-risk children; and provide assessment information to kindergarten teachers.</p> <p>The PEAK Annual Report I is available at www.peakonline.org/pdf/PEAK_AR_0912.pdf</p> <p>The PEAK Outcomes 2011-2012 is available at www.peakonline.org/pdf/PEAK%20Outcomes%20Report%202011-2012.pdf</p> <p>PEAK Background & Strategies is available at www.peakonline.org/pdf/PEAK%20Replication%20June%202010.pdf</p>
Down East Partnership for Children (DEPC)	NC	Ready Schools Toolkit	<p>“A Ready School works to meet the unique needs of all children and families they serve. It provides an inviting atmosphere, values and respects all children and their families, and is a place where children succeed. It is committed to high quality in all domains of learning and teaching and has deep connections with parents and its community. It prepares children for success in work and life in the 21st century.”</p> <p>The Ready Schools Initiative is helping elementary schools increase their capacity to be ready for all children. DEPC implemented a Ready Schools Innovation Award (RSIA) process to help elementary schools assess, develop and implement a work plan to become a Ready School. A Ready School provides an inviting atmosphere, values and respects all children and their families, and is a place where children succeed. It is also committed to high quality in all areas of learning and teaching and has deep connections with parents and the community.</p> <p>To date, 16 of the 19 area public elementary schools have participated in RSIA. Working with a school-community team, participating schools assess their Ready School practices. Schools that have completed the process show improvement in the areas of leaders and leadership; transitions; family, school and community partnerships; respecting diversity; assessing progress; and engaging environments.</p> <p>Website: www.depc.org/FINAL_Ready_Schools_Toolkit_5_25_11.pdf</p>
Down East Partnership for Children (DEPC)	NC		<p>The Ready Schools Community Team at Baskerville Elementary School met monthly and included school staff, parents, PTA leaders, and faith-based, college, and business representatives. Some activities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an appreciation dinner for all volunteers who had supported the school; • an All Pro Dads Chapter where dads and male role models attended before-school breakfasts; and • \$50 Wal-Mart gift cards and a Wal-Mart-funded reception for the teachers at Baskerville. <p>Website: www.depc.org/depcannual_report2012.pdf</p>

Ready Early Learning Providers

Community Team	State	Initiative	Activity Description and Website
Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten Initiative (PEAK)	PA	Quality Improvement and Work Force Development	<p>In order to ensure high-quality child care and early childhood education, the partners recognized that supporting and enhancing early childhood education classrooms and staff was paramount. The quality improvement work focuses on the two inter-related areas of improving classroom instructional practices and work force development. Some of the strategies they use include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors' Support Group • Monthly newsletters and other resources • Teacher mini-grants • Career counseling • Outreach to family, friends, and neighbors <p>Website: www.peakonline.org/pdf/PEAK%20Replication%20June%202010.pdf (Page 8)</p>
Central Pima Regional Partnership Council	AZ	Quality Improvement	<p>For a small investment from the partnership, the Council works with the local health department and Cooperative Extension to provide qualified health professionals who assist child care providers in achieving high standards related to health and safety for the children in their care. The website shows how the Council intertwines funding from many other agencies to provide services to the children, families, and providers in the Central Pima Region. Although they get more state resources for their councils, the partnership leverages significant outside resources.</p> <p>Website: http://www.azftf.gov/Pages/default.aspx</p>
Community Partnership of the Ozarks	MO	Workforce Development	<p>FLIP IT® is a four-step supportive strategy, developed by Devereux Center for Resilient Children, to help young children learn about their feelings, gain self-control, and reduce challenging behaviors. FLIP IT® is a strengths-based, common sense, and effective strategy that systematically and comprehensively uses embedded instruction within planned and routine activities. FLIP IT® teaches adults to respond positively to everyday challenges and challenging behaviors in children ages three to eight. Feelings, Limits, Inquiries, and Prompts make up the easy mnemonic strategy that takes just a few minutes from start to finish. FLIP IT® includes teaching the concept, modeling, rehearsing, role-playing, prompting, and providing feedback to children when the behavior occurs.</p> <p>Website: www.commpartnership.org/</p>
Early Childhood Forum of Central IL	IL	Workforce Development	<p>The Forum provides at least yearly training events for the early childhood professionals on these topics and more:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do We Play in Peoria – Importance of Play • For Me, For You, For Later – professionals, parents, & preschoolers financial education • 1, 2, 3 – teacher math training for preschoolers <p>Although it does not have a website to review, this council has been operating for 20 years with little to no budget.</p>

Ready Communities

Community Team	State	Initiative	Activity Description and Website
Great Start Shiawassee	MI	Screening and Referral Services	<p>The team developed a system with physicians that resulted in over 1,000 developmental screenings and established a common referral system for all at-risk children, birth to age 3; sent 242 4-year-olds to preschool; established Federally Funded Health Center; and partnered with Human Services and Mental Health Departments to fund positions working with families with young children, and co-located all services in one building.</p> <p>Website: www.greatstartshiawassee.org/</p>
Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten Initiative (PEAK)	PA	Community Outreach	<p>PEAK seeks to engage the business community, elected officials, and community agencies in supporting quality early education. PEAK partners work with other agencies on community outreach events and in providing support to the early learning sites. PEAK also uses a marketing campaign to promote the message of the benefits of early learning. Some strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce for business and civic outreach • Distribute 500 books to community children during the One Book for Every Young Child Campaign • Legislative outreach • Partnership with Pottstown Police Department and Family Literacy Center for Cops 'n Kids • Partnership with Pottstown Public Library for family events <p>Website: www.peakonline.org/pdf/PEAK%20Replication%20June%202010.pdf (page 6)</p>
Early Childhood Forum of Central IL	IL	Community and Legislator Education	<p>The EC Forum of Central IL unites the early childhood community serving families with children, ages birth to 8. For many years, they have held a legislator's breakfast for local elected members of their general assembly. They also have many activities that educate community members about the importance of the early years. Some of these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Wide Day of Play—collaboration with PNC Bank and Park District to bring awareness of the importance of children getting outside to play (obesity prevention and importance of play) • Women's Lifestyle Show—booth to market importance of early childhood education • Hands Around the Courthouse—early childhood activity to market the importance of early childhood education • Success In Action—Legislative awareness of successes as reported by parents <p>The forum does not have a website to review, but has been operating for 20 years with little to no budget.</p>
Down East Partnership for Children (DEPC)	NC	Community Education	<p>The Faith-Based Initiative is a network of faith institutions created to expand community support for early care and education. The network engages a diverse group of churches, faith institutions, and community partners through a series of educational forums that focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building strong collaborative efforts around early care and education • Building Faith-Based School Partnerships • Building a Faith-Based Educational Network <p>Website: www.depc.org/Pages/Comm-FaithBasedForums.html</p>

APPENDIX B. CAPACITY-BUILDING RESOURCES

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE COALITIONS

This document is an adaptation from the already adapted document from the Altarum Institute's literature review for the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation: "Building Effective Early Childhood Coalitions," which was adapted from Foster-Fishman et al., 2001. See systemexchange.msu.edu/upload/collab_capacity.pdf.

Member and Leadership Capacity Characteristics: Member/Leader Capacity—includes having effective leadership and core skills, knowledge, and attitudes among members that are critical to collaborative activities and provide the motivation to collaborate.

Attitudes

- Holds positive attitudes about collaboration and other stakeholders
- Committed to collaboration as an idea
- Believes benefits of collaboration will offset costs
- Committed to target issues or target programs
- Views others as legitimate, capable, and experienced
- Respects different perspectives
- Holds positive attitude about self

Skills and Knowledge

- Ability to work collaboratively with others
- Effective communication
- Broad understanding of problem domain
- Ability to create and build effective programs
- Understands problem, intervention, community
- Knowledgeable and skilled in policy, politics, and community change; grant writing; and evaluation
- Knowledgeable about coalition member roles/responsibilities, committee work

Organizational Capacity Characteristics: Organizational capacity includes the creation of a positive working environment and implementation of a coalition structure that supports effective communication, strong relationships among members, and continuous improvement, ensuring sufficient resources and a task-oriented coalition.

- Organizational or group processes: conflict resolution, decision making, and clear mission
- Develops a positive working climate: cohesive, cooperative, trusting, open, and honest
- Develops a shared vision and solutions
- Promotes power sharing
- Task-oriented work environment
- Detailed, focused work plan with work groups/committee structure
- Effective communication (internal communication system)
- Continuous improvement orientation (seeks input, external information/expertise)
- Develops monitoring system and adapts to evaluation information

Community Capacity Characteristics: Community capacity includes the extent to which the coalition addresses community needs, involves outside organizations and community members in supporting coalition activities, and improves the capacity of these external partners.

- Consider the organizational or group characteristics and climate
- Create linkages to other groups
- Develop positive external relationships
- Engage community residents and parents in planning and implementation processes
- Link with key community leaders and policy makers
- Obtain sufficient financial resources to implement new programs and operate the coalition
- Coalition addresses unmet community needs; serves a unique purpose

RESOURCES FROM VIRGINIA

The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) has a number of helpful publications, including tools and worksheets, on its website: www.smartbeginnings.org/home/about/about-smart-beginnings.aspx.

Evidence-Based Directory: The directory includes models and practices to guide the work of coalitions.

Building an Effective Comprehensive Early Childhood System: This document compiles a number of helpful publications, including:

Literature Review (pp. 1-71): The literature review highlights research on early childhood coalition building including characteristics of effective coalitions, frameworks, current research on systems change, the development of an evaluation plan and examples of comprehensive community efforts.

Supporting Community-Level Early Childhood Systems Building: Findings from Interviews with Community and State Leaders (July 2010) (pp. 72-105)

Smart Beginnings Logic Model and Theory of Change (pp. 106-107)

Leadership Toolkit (pp.120-131):

- Self-Assessment: Leadership Trait Questionnaire
- Assessing Leadership Within the Leadership Council
- Self-Assessment: Developing Coalition Members
- Developing Leadership Goals

Membership Toolkit (pp. 132-152):

- Inclusion Criteria Checklist
- Assessing Inclusiveness of the Leadership
- Member Skills & Assets Matrix
- Self-Assessment: Membership Engagement
- Promoting Membership Engagement
- Developing Member Guidelines
- Sample Membership Memorandum of Understanding

Structure and Governance Toolkit (pp. 153-172):

- Vision and Mission Worksheets
- Operational Structure Checklist
- Bylaw Development
- Meeting and Agenda Reporting

Guide to Community Assessment and Strategic Planning Toolkit:

- Community Assessment Tools, including 1) Community Assessment Checklist, 2) Indicator Grid, 3) Community Assessment Template, 4) Sample Surveys, and 5) Interview and Focus Group Discussion Guide (pp. 173-248).
- Strategic Planning Tools, including 1) Strategic Planning Checklist, 2) Strategic Planning Template, and 3) Activities and Outcomes Form for Planning and Reporting and Spotlight Decision Making (pp. 249-282).

Public Engagement and Stakeholder Involvement Toolkit (pp. 283-298):

- Developing Communication Strategies
- New Partners Tracking Tool
- SB Initiative Integration with the Community

Sustainability and Finance Toolkit (pp. 299-307):

- Sustaining Impact
- Tracking and Planning for Opportunities

RESOURCES FROM OHIO

Ohio's Family and Children First (FCFC) has developed a shared planning model document that provides local FCFCs with a step-by-step process for developing a plan, including priorities, outcomes indicators, strategies, and reporting. Templates for planning and reporting are provided.

The document is available at fcb.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Home/Building%20Community%20Capacity/Shared%20Plan%20Guidance%2011.22.10.pdf.

WEBSITES FOR STATE-LEVEL ORGANIZATIONS RELATED TO COMMUNITY COALITIONS

- Arizona - www.azftf.gov
- Illinois - ilearlychildhoodcollab.org/programs/community-coalition/description/
- Kentucky - kidsnow.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx
- Michigan - www.greatstartforkids.org
- Missouri - www.mofact.org/community-partnerships
- North Carolina - www.smartstart.org
- Ohio - www.fcb.ohio.gov
- Pennsylvania - papromiseforchildren.com
- Virginia - www.smartbeginnings.org

ENDNOTES

- ⁱ This resource is available at www.eceworks.org/node/14.
- ⁱⁱ National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies. (2012). *Parents and the high cost of child care: 2012 Report*. Retrieved November 22, 2012 from www.naccrra.org/publications/naccrra-publications/2012/8/parents-and-the-high-cost-of-child-care-2012-report.
- ⁱⁱⁱ National Center for Children in Poverty. (2010). *United States demographics of poor children*. Retrieved December 19, 2012 from nccp.org/profiles/US_profile_7.html.
- ^{iv} National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Committee on Integrating Science of Early Childhood Development. J.P. Shonkoff & D.A. Phillips (Eds.) Board on Children, Youth and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- ^v Kania, J. and Kramer, M. (2011, Winter). Collective impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 36-41.
- ^{vi} Ibid.
- ^{vii} Clifford, D. (2012). Local level systems building. In S.L. Kagan & K. Kauerz (Eds.), *Early childhood systems building: Transforming early learning*. New York: Teachers College Press.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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