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Working Together for a Better Beginning

“In states that make it a priority to educate our youngest children... studies show students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, form more stable families of their own. We know this works. So let’s do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind.”

—President Barack Obama, State of the Union, February 12, 2013

Early Childhood Development
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The Affordable Care Act
Visit www.healthcare.gov

Logo of Health Insurance Marketplace, Have health insurance questions? which is linked to https://www.healthcare.gov/quick-answers/?fromloc=MPBadget&utm_medium=widget&utm_content=120x130-en&utm_campaign=hopoy

Many congratulations to all who contributed to the 2014 Omnibus Appropriations bill that just passed both the House and Senate.

The young children of America are the real winners.

You will receive a lot of information on the bill in the weeks ahead. Below are just a few of the highlights that will impact the direction of our efforts at the federal level in the years ahead.

Head Start received an increase of $1.025 billion to restore the funding cut by the sequestration and provide programs with a cost-of-living increase.

- Of this increase, $500 million is set aside for new Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. New grants will allow new or existing Early Head Start programs to partner with local child care centers and family child care providers serving low-income infants and toddlers. We look forward to hearing from our partners in the next few weeks as this program is fully developed.

- The Child Care and Development Block Grant received a $154 million increase.

- The Administration for Children and Families will continue to jointly administer an additional $250,000,000 with the Department of Education Race to the Top funding to build capacity to develop, enhance, or expand high-quality preschool programs, including comprehensive services and family engagement.

Check out these ACF blogs
There is no doubt that 2014 will be a busy and exciting new year!

The best investments are made in the beginning when they have the greatest impact and the strength of any foundation determines how sound all later advancements will be. Thank you for partnering with us in these foundational efforts. We have much stimulating work ahead.

Watch for things to come by checking our [website](https://www.acf.hhs.gov) and signing up for our newsletter and updates.

Linda

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### Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships to Promote Quality Early Learning for Infants and Toddlers

The expansion of Early Head Start (EHS)-child care partnerships is a key component in President Obama’s Early Learning Plan. These partnerships will extend the provision of high quality early learning opportunities to more children from birth to age 3. Bolstering EHS-child care partnerships promises to build a more seamless system for providing high quality, full-day, full-year services to support children’s development and parents’ workforce needs.

A growing research base indicates the potential benefits of EHS-child care partnerships for improving the quality care for infants and toddlers. Promising descriptive studies found that child care providers partnering with Head Start (Schilder et al., 2009) and EHS (Edwards, 2002) demonstrated higher observed quality than comparison child care providers in Midwest states. Additionally, qualitative studies have begun documenting ways that existing EHS-child care partnerships support quality child care (Del Grosso et al., 2011; Paulsell et al., 2002), including:

- Facilitating improvements in child care providers’ credentials;
- Increasing EHS and child care providers’ awareness of available community resources and needs;
- Reducing child-teacher ratios and group sizes; and
- Enhancing the materials and supplies available to child care providers.

While this accumulating research is encouraging, there is still a lot to learn about how EHS-child care partnerships support quality care and meet the needs of low-income families. In the fall 2013, the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) awarded a contract to Mathematica Policy Research to carry out the Study of Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. This study will fill a gap in knowledge about the state of the field of EHS-child care partnerships and identify models or features of partnerships that expand access to high quality care for infants and toddlers; provide continuity of care; meet the needs of working families for child care; and improve outcomes for providers, families, and children. For more information, please contact Christine Fortunato at christine.fortunato@acf.hhs.gov.

Bureau’s efforts that set the foundation for today’s programs for children and families.

Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC)

A Public-Private Partnership Highlight

By Theresa Hawley, Executive Director, Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development, Illinois

Illinois is fortunate to have a long history of public-private partnership fueling our progress in early childhood systems building. Our efforts began in earnest 15 years ago with a Birth to Three Project, which was funded by a Robert Woods Johnson Foundation grant to the Ounce of Prevention Fund to build connections across agencies and programs that served infants and toddlers and their families. That effort soon became the Birth to Five Project, which has been supported for more than a decade by the Build Initiative and its many private donors. Today, the Illinois Early Learning Council staffing is funded by Early Learning Challenge Grant and MIECHV funds as well as private support from Grand Victoria Foundation and Build. It is no exaggeration to say that Illinois could not have achieved what it has achieved without its private sector partners!

Our state’s large and highly committed philanthropic sector has been especially helpful in supporting Illinois’ priorities as laid out in our Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant. For example, the Joyce Foundation is funding regional coaches around the state to support school districts as they implement our new kindergarten assessment system. These coaches are a critical part of our implementation plan that we were not able to fund with the reduced resources available to us as a second round grantee for RTT-ELC. Similarly, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation has worked very closely with both state and city agencies to ensure that the system-building efforts they are funding are aligned with the state’s RTT-ELC goals. They have provided resources for ground-breaking work to coordinate technical assistance across Head Start, Preschool for All (our state’s prekindergarten program), and child care in the City of Chicago—a project that would be difficult to fund with system-specific public funds. Other foundations have focused on areas where the RTT-ELC was not able to provide resources, such as early childhood mental health services, and developed their funding portfolio to complement what the state is able to do with public resources.

By continuing to work together, both public and private funders are determined to make ever greater progress toward fully meeting the needs of the young children and families in our state.

Find information on the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge here and here.

State Advisory Councils Complete Start Up Grants

In 2013 ACF continued its work with the early childhood State Advisory Councils (SAC) to complete the implementation of states’ 3-year start up grants. The SAC grants enabled states to lead the development and enhancement of high-quality,
This report recommends investing in early childhood through high-quality preschool programs and community support programs. This is an essential element to creating a more healthy country.


The Institute for Child Success released *"Pay for Success Financing for Early Childhood Programs: A Path Forward"*, a new report by Megan Golden and Joe Waters. This report explores the promise, challenges, and current landscape of early childhood Pay for Success Financing.

A new brief from Docs for Tots, *"Quality Early Learning Settings Can Transform Our Nation's Health: A Prescription for Growing Up Health,"* details how high-quality early care and education can improve health outcomes. The report uses prior research to highlight that high-quality early education can reduce smoking rates, alcohol and drug use; increase likelihood of regularly seeing a doctor or dentist; and engage in healthy behaviors. [Click here to view this brief.](#)

The United States Conference of Mayors’ (USCM) released its annual *“Hunger and Homelessness Survey: A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America’s Cities”*. 

ELC TA released a new publication *“Supporting Children Through Community-Based Coalitions.”* It is a guide to support newly forming community coalitions (sometimes referred to as councils or teams) in their work. It also shares examples of comprehensive early childhood systems so that children arrive at school ready to learn and prepared to excel. In order to head off challenges, ACF closely partnered with states to help them complete their SAC projects in a timely fashion and expend the no extension funding. Of the $100 million awarded to forty-nine states and territories, SAC grantees successfully expended 97% of the funds in implementing their early childhood systems development projects.

Now that the federal support has ended, states are working on sustaining their SACs by leveraging other state and private dollars, as well as other federal grant programs. In July, ACF convened the SACs in conjunction with the annual child care State and Territories Administrator Meeting for a face-to-face meeting to focus on the topic of sustainability. Over 30 SAC representatives from 24 states attended the face-to-face grantee meeting and brainstormed strategies for advancing their work. In September, ACF sent a letter of support encouraging governors in all grantee states to support SACs in sustaining their work. At this time all 49 grantees’ project periods have expired.

ACF is in the process of writing up a final report to discuss SAC accomplishments and deliverables to be published later in 2014. See the [SAC Progress Report](#) ACF published earlier this year.

### White Earth Nation Makes Great Progress in Building Stronger Early Childhood Systems

By: Moushumi Beltangady, Senior Policy Advisor

In December 2012, Linda Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development, wrote about the launch of the Tribal Early Learning Initiative (TELI), a partnership between ACF and four American Indian tribes. The purposes of the TELI are to: support tribes to fully and effectively coordinate tribal early learning and development programs to meet the needs of communities, children, and families; create and support seamless quality early childhood systems across programs serving young children and families; and raise the quality of services to children and families across the prenatal to age 5 continuum.

In the year since we began the TELI, we have seen the participating tribes make great strides in strengthening collaboration across Head Start/Early Head Start, Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), and Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (Tribal MIECHV) programs. In January, ACF will be bringing the four TELI tribes together to reflect on their efforts to date and plan for the future.

The White Earth Band of Chippewa, located in northwestern Minnesota, has leveraged the TELI opportunity to great success. Last year, White Earth Nation issued a tribal mandate that programs across the reservation work together to break down the silos of individual programs and begin working together in a true collaborative spirit for the benefit of the people. Tribal agencies have enthusiastically responded and created WE-CARE (White Earth Coordination, Assessment, Resources, Education).

Continue reading [here](#).

### Head Start Pilots Birth to Five Project
nine community coalitions from around the country, as well as additional resources and templates for communities beginning the work.

The National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) recently released The 50-State Child Care Licensing Study. NARA seeks to improve the overall quality of out-of-home child care by measuring the effectiveness of licensing policies and procedures and determining which regulations are best at protecting children from harm.

**Upcoming**

The Science of Children - Birth to Age 8: Public Session

On February 28, 2014, the IOM/NRC study committee will hold a public information-gathering session at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, DC to obtain input from stakeholders interested in the developmental science, care, and education of children from birth to age 8.

Online registration to attend in person or view by webcast will be available in late-January.

President Obama’s Early Learning Initiative called on the federal government to focus on creating a continuum of high quality early learning programs for children from birth to five. The Office of Head Start responded with the announcement early last year of a “birth-to-5” funding opportunity that gives grantees new flexibility to create a seamless birth-to-five program incorporating both Head Start and Early Head Start funding.

Previously, an organization had to submit separate applications to fund services for Head Start (preschool-aged children) and Early Head Start (pregnant women, infants, and toddlers). Under this new approach, applicants now have the freedom to submit one application to cover both programs. Additionally, in this pilot project, applicants can now design a birth-to-five program according to their own community’s needs.

The pilot program rolls out in Detroit, Baltimore, Washington D.C., Jersey City, and Sunflower County in Mississippi. Each of these locations was specifically chosen because, together, they represent a wide variety of geographic and demographic challenges and opportunities.

This is an exciting opportunity for Head Start and the Office of Early Childhood Development to push the President’s goal of a seamless continuum of care for our country’s youngest children forward. Look for more details in the months ahead!

**Developmental and Behavioral Screening Initiative**

Recent statistics indicate that as many as 1 in 4 children, ages 0-5, are at moderate or high risk for developmental, behavioral, or social delay (National Survey of Children’s Health, 2011-12). In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that about 1 in 6 children, ages 3-17, has a parent-reported diagnosis of developmental delay or disability such as autism, intellectual disability, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), hearing or vision impairment, or other developmental delay (CDC, 2011). Early identification of developmental delays is a critical step in providing children and families with the services and support they need to prevent further delay.

Making sure our youngest children are screened and given support early is a priority for the Departments of Health and Human Services and Education. That is why our agencies are teaming up on a coordinated effort to encourage developmental and behavioral screening and follow-up with support for children, families, and the providers who care for them. This initiative will include:

1. A compendium of screening instruments that meet specific validity and reliability criteria;
2. Companion guides, designed for providers from multiple sectors as well as the communities in which they live (e.g. early care and education providers; home visitors, pediatricians; social workers; behavioral health providers; early intervention specialists), to assist in selecting screening instruments;
3. A collection of resources, including CDC’s “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” Program and a family screening passport, to bring awareness to parents and providers about typical and atypical child development.

*Coming in March of 2014 to commemorate Developmental Disabilities Month!*
Innovations in Early Childhood

New Professional Development Resource Serves Military and Public Child Care and Education Workforce

By Dr. Cynthia Buettner, Associate Professor, Ohio State University

Over the next year and a half, fifteen core courses in the Department of Defense Child Development Virtual Laboratory School (VLS) will make their online debut. A partnership effort between the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the US Department of Agriculture, this comprehensive professional development system is being developed by a team at The Ohio State University (OSU) led by Dr. Cynthia K. Buettner. When complete, the VLS will become the primary training platform and record system for the more than 30,000 caregivers serving military dependent children and youth. The partnership between DOD and USDA taps the expertise in the land grant universities and the land grant mission to make that expertise available to the public as a public version of the VLS content will also be available to child and youth serving professionals outside the military system.

The initial core courses in the VLS correspond with the 13 competency standards of the Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) plus two additional courses on Child Abuse Prevention and Child Abuse Reporting. These fifteen courses are aligned across three functional tracks – Direct Care, Training/Coaching, and Management, with the Direct Care Courses specialized by developmental grouping – Infant/Toddler, Preschool, and School Age. A track for home-based care providers will be added in 2015. These core courses are aimed at personnel new to child and youth care and education. The development team envisions additional specialized courses and features in the future.

The VLS system is supported by high-quality video clips, “real world” learning materials, job-embedded activities, and built-in support for coaching and administration. The goal of the VLS system is to provide anytime, anywhere access to expert-created content and resources that are anchored in research and designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of child and youth educators and to improve the quality of children’s experiences.

Additional information is available from Dr. Buettner (Buettner.16@osu.edu), an Associate Professor in the Department of Human Sciences, OSU College of Education and Human Ecology.
The Early Childhood Development newsletter contains links to other websites and news articles. These links represent just a few examples of the numerous reference materials currently available to the public. The opinions expressed in any articles or web pages do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Administration for Children and Families. The inclusion of resources should not be construed or interpreted as an endorsement of any private organization or business listed herein.