Building Comprehensive Early Childhood Systems

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Growing a Movement to Enhance Child Development

Established at the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), Project THRIVE provides public policy analysis and education to support State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS).

This work is supported through a cooperative agreement with the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, HRSA-DHHS.

Project THRIVE: Linking Policies to Improve Results

Improved Policy and Finance Context
- Better use of existing resources across programs and funding streams
- Improved coordination of eligibility and outreach processes
- Better mechanisms to integrate service systems
- Cross-system approaches to serving and supporting families

Improved Child / Family Services Across Systems
- Better implementation of critical components
- More children with medical homes linked to community systems of care
- Earlier identification of special health, developmental, social emotional, or other needs
- Cross-system training and professional development
- Better family support
- Services in settings families rely on and trust
- More access for those at highest risk

Improved Outcomes
- Improved child health and development
- Reduced family stress
- Improved parenting
- Improved employment attendance for parents

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What does it take to create an early childhood comprehensive system?

- State ECCS grants support “use of *leadership* and *convening powers* to foster the development of early childhood systems”
- Building early childhood comprehensive systems requires intentional efforts to *bridge the gaps* left between programs and services.

Building a System of Systems

The primary work of building a “system of systems” is to:

- Support integrated, cross-systems development through partnerships
- Use governance and structural mechanisms are needed to sustain comprehensive systems

Assessing State ECCS Progress: Systems Integration

- Birth-to-five focus (all ECCS projects)
- System-of-systems approach (22 strong)
- Cross-sector fiscal planning (15)
- Parallel emphasis across sectors (health, mental health, early care and education, parent education, family support) (43)
- Mechanisms for systems integration (30)
Assessing State ECCS Progress:
Governance and Structure

- Cross-sector stakeholder group (46)
- Support for local systems integration (37)
- Senior-level policy leaders involved (35)
- Public-private entity (funded) (24)
- Parent leaders engaged (33)
- Common system outcomes or indicators (25)

Charting State Progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance and Structures</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
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<td>Some State ECCS initiatives are high achievers.</td>
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What's in a System of Systems?

State Early Childhood Development System

- Early Learning
- Health, Mental Health and Nutrition
- Family Support
- Special Needs/Early Intervention
All children should have access to early care and education opportunities in nurturing environments where they can learn what they need to succeed in school and life.

All families should have economic and parenting supports to ensure that all children have nurturing and stable relationships with caring adults.
Children with special health care needs, disabilities, or developmental delays need to be identified as early as possible, assessed, and receive appropriate services.

All children need comprehensive health services that address vision, hearing, nutrition, behavioral, and oral health as well as medical needs.
### Early Childhood Systems Working Group

- Alliance for Early Childhood Finance [www.earlychildhoodfinance.org](http://www.earlychildhoodfinance.org)
- The Build Initiative [www.buildinitiative.org](http://www.buildinitiative.org)
- The Children’s Project [www.thechildrensproject.org](http://www.thechildrensproject.org)
- Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) [www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org)
- Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) [www.ccsso.org/earlychildhood](http://www.ccsso.org/earlychildhood)
- National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) [www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org)
- National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC) [www.nccic.org](http://www.nccic.org)
- National Council of State Legislatures (NCSL) [http://www.ncsl.org/programs/educ/EarlyEducation.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/programs/educ/EarlyEducation.htm)
- National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [http://www.nga.org/center](http://www.nga.org/center)
- Smart Start National Technical Assistance Center [www.nationalsmartstart.org](http://www.nationalsmartstart.org/)
- State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network (SECPTAN) [www.finebynine.org](http://www.finebynine.org)
- Zero to Three [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

### Strategies & Actions: Finance

- Conduct fiscal scans & fiscal mapping
- Look for ways to maximize existing funds
  - Matching federal dollars
  - Reducing duplication, sharing resources
- Get dedicated or alternative funding
  - New taxes, trust funds, etc.
  - Corporate and philanthropic funding

### Strategies & Actions: Mechanisms for Governance & Infrastructure

- Formal interagency groups
- Cross-system data analysis
- MOU & RFP mechanisms
- Consolidated functions in a “child development” or “early childhood” unit
- State support for local/regional systems
Strategies & Actions: Provider Support & Development

- Monitor performance against quality standards & benchmarks
- Cross-system, in-service training on early childhood development
- Resource and referral mechanisms
  - Among health, mental health, early care and education, family support, and others

Strategies & Actions: Political will

- Build support for investment
  - Use return on investment case
  - Show cost of remediation compared to prevention
  - Inform about importance of birth to three, to five, to eight years (brain science)
- Public engagement campaigns

Strategies & Actions: Shared accountability

- Common assessment tools
- Common quality standards
- Do more RBA & performance monitoring of system and evaluation of programs

What mechanisms and strategies support a comprehensive system?
Policy Thinking Across ECCS

Core Components

- 5 core components of ECCS Initiative:
  - Access to Health Care and Medical Homes
  - Social-Emotional Development and Mental Health
  - Early Care and Education Services
  - Parenting Education
  - Family Support Services

State Policy Choices to Promote Access

- Medicaid/SCHIP income eligibility at or above 200% of poverty (41 states in 2006).
- Medicaid/SCHIP 12-month continuous eligibility
- Medicaid/SCHIP presumptive eligibility/temporary coverage during eligibility determinations (12 states in 2005).
- Supplement federal WIC funds to reduce waiting lists for pregnant women and young children (9 states in 2006)

Source: Improving the Odds

Health/Medical Home + Mental Health/Social-Emotional

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State Policy Choices to Promote Quality

- Achieve national benchmark that 80% of children in Medicaid receive at least one EPSDT screen annually (7 states in 2005 for toddler and preschool age children).
- EPSDT periodic visits schedules consistent with AAP standards/Bright Futures guidelines.
- Require use of objective developmental screening tools in EPSDT/SCHIP.

Source: Improving the Odds

Special Needs & More Vulnerable

State Policy Choices to Promote Access

- IDEA Part C Early Intervention Program eligibility includes at-risk children (6 states in 2006).
- IDEA option to provide early intervention services for children birth to five (no states).
- CAPTA requirement to refer all children birth to three with substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect to Part C implemented statewide.
- Title V Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) includes children with physical, developmental, and mental health conditions.

Source: Improving the Odds
### Special Needs & More Vulnerable

#### State Policy Choices to Promote Quality
- Permit use the DC:0-3 for Medicaid/SCHIP reimbursement (5 states in 2006).
- Require newborn screening for 28 recommended conditions (18 states in 2006).
- Require newborn hearing screening (30 states in 2006).

### Early Care and Education

#### State Policy Choices to Promote Quality
- Child care subsidies eligibility at or above 200% of poverty (16 states in 2006).
- Child care subsidy - annual redetermination/continuous eligibility (20 states in 2006).
- Refundable state dependent care tax credit (13 states in 2005).
- Supplement federal Head Start funds to reduce waiting lists (16 states in 2006).
- State-funded pre-kindergarten program (39 states in 2006).

#### State Policy Choices to Promote Access
- Require adult-child ratios and maximum class size for infants, toddlers, and 3-4 year olds consistent with professional standards. (8 states for toddlers and 14 states for 4-year-olds in 2005).
- Implement child care quality rating system.
- Implement early learning standards or developmental guidelines for infants and toddlers (19 states in 2005).
- Develop statewide capacity for Parent Information Center for children with disabilities and special health care needs.
- Use state “warm-lines” and “hot-lines” to provide extended parent resource and referral.
- Support local family resource centers with state funding.
State Policy Choices to Promote Quality

- Paid family (medical/ maternity) leave (6 states in 2004).
- TANF work-requirement exemption for single parents from pregnancy until child reaches age 1 (28 states in 2003).
- TANF reduced work requirements for parents with children under age 6 (18 states in 2003).
- State allowance for parents in school to qualify for child care subsidies (45 states in 2005).
- State personal income tax exemption for single-parent families living below the poverty level (36 states in 2006).
- State maintenance of co-payments for child care subsidies at or below 10% of family income (28 states in 2006).

Source: Improving the Odds  www.nccp.org

For more information or questions, contact us at thrive@nccp.org

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