

DRAFT Early Childhood Comprehensive System Checklist

This checklist is a product of Project THRIVE at NCCP and is based on concepts from our work, the Build Initiative, and the National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices, as well as the core system elements promoted by the Early Childhood Systems Working Group. It is designed to help states build, advance, and sustain early childhood comprehensive systems. Building a comprehensive early childhood "system of systems" requires intentional efforts to bridge the gaps created by "siloed" programs and poorly integrated funding streams. Leaders of early childhood comprehensive systems need to know where the levers are and what mechanisms are needed to support their work. *Figure 1* shows the component functions of systems building. Checklist questions point to key milestones and activities.

PLANNING, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT TO SUPPORT AN INTEGRATED SYSTEM DESIGN

Has/does your state:

- Developed a shared vision for a "system of systems" in terms of early childhood services and supports?
- Developed a cross-sector plan, based on a comprehensive needs assessment? Are there mechanisms for continually updating the plan (planning cycle)? Is there more than one early childhood systems plan (e.g., one ECCS, one for Pre-K, another for developmental screening)?
- Give equal emphasis to the core components in the state's planning, activities, and committee representation? (i.e., no one area such as early care and education dominates the initiative)?
- Include a focus on children birth to five?
- Set out shared goals linked to specific strategies?

Figure 1. Early Childhood System Components



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GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Has/does your state:

- Involve senior state officials (such as governor, cabinet-level executives, or legislators) in development, oversight, and management of early childhood system?
- Formally constituted a cross sector early childhood systems development group? Does it include a variety of stakeholders? Is there one or more than one such group?
- Created a public-private entity working on early childhood systems development (e.g., a separately incorporated agency, with funding)?
- Authorized a unit of government to focus on early childhood? Does this entity have responsibility for a cross-system focus and include elements from the multiple components of an early childhood system?
- Offer structures or supports for local early childhood systems development? For example, is your state providing funding, technical assistance, or other guidance to develop county-level or regional systems?
- Engage parent leaders in the early childhood system planning or leadership group? Support parent involvement across system efforts?



COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC WILL

Has/does your state:

- Have ongoing efforts to generate public and political will (i.e., public understands and supports early childhood policies and system)?
- Developed targeted public education campaigns that reach multiple stakeholders with consistent messages?
- Made effective use of media and communications strategies? Use multiple channels of communication, including free and paid media, Internet-based electronic messaging, and provider-based outreach?
- Developed a public policy agenda and/or promoted policy development?
- Have early childhood systems champions working in the state?
- Has your state worked with advocates and/or developed advocacy strategies? Engaged traditional child advocates?

PROVIDER / PRACTITIONER SUPPORT

Has/does your state:

- Offer or require cross-system training for practitioners regarding the core body of knowledge regarding early childhood development and evidence-based practice?
- Designed and implemented cross-program and cross-system strategies to assure effective referrals and follow-up? For example, forms to support effective referrals?

- Developed formal agreements with higher education systems to promote access to quality professional development?
- Offer or required Professional development that includes cross-sector certifications or credentials promoting career development?
- Have rate/compensation structures that promote use of an array of qualified professionals?

FINANCING AND BUDGETS

Has/does your state:

- Developed a financial scan or children's budget related to early childhood?
- Developed and implemented strategies to pool, blend, or braid funding?
- Identified private sector resources available to support the early childhood system?
- Made budget decisions that reflect a commitment to quality? For example, paying for child care that meets quality standards and well-child health visits with age-appropriate developmental screening?
- Targeted resources to higher risk populations?

STANDARDS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Has/does your state:

- Developed memoranda of understand (MOU), interagency service agreements (ISA), or other administrative mechanisms that formalize cross-system agreements about sharing money, staff, or responsibility?

- Developed shared standards that support the system of systems? For example, common standards for pre-kindergarten, Head Start, and other early care and education programs for three and four year olds?
- Developed approaches for linking data? For example, integrated data bases that provide information about health, development, and educational status?

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND RESULTS ACCOUNTABILITY

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Has/does your state:

- Planned or begun an evaluation of early childhood systems efforts?
- Agreed upon the goals for early childhood systems (e.g. all children ready for school)?
- Developed accountability mechanisms?
- Committed to using a results-based accountability framework (e.g., a framework with indicators and supportive data systems)?
- Set out indicators/benchmarks to monitor results (e.g. children ready for school in all domains based on kindergarten assessment data)? Do your state's indicators meet the Friedman tests for communication, data, and proxy power?
- Does your state have both process measures (e.g. "what are we doing") and performance measures ("how well are we doing it")?
- Have data systems in place or under development to support your system-building efforts?