

2016

ANNUAL REPORT

Early Childhood Iowa





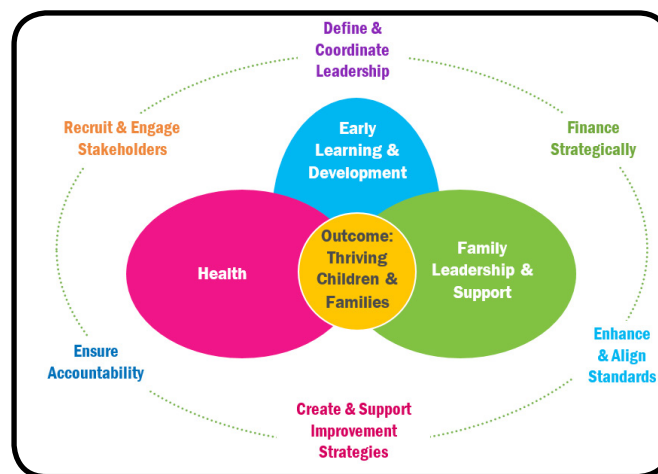
Message from the ECI State Board Chair

At the Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) State Board level, we believe there are a wide range of programs and services that Iowan's identify with when they think of 'early childhood'. It is our goal to work towards a vision that includes a common set of high-quality services that make up a comprehensive system to support young children and their families. We want kids to be successful in both school and life and we know it starts in the early years. In our system framework, we focus services around Health, Mental Health and Nutrition; Early Learning; Family Support and Special Needs and Early Intervention.

As we move on our journey, the ECI State Board is dedicated to its role as the only policy-making board that focuses on kids 0-5 and cuts across all state agencies. Board members volunteer and individually build awareness about the importance of the early years.

As ECI matures, we continually promote quality in early childhood programs and services, no matter the funding source, or geographic area, across the state.

ECI is founded on the premise that government and communities can work together so that 'every child, beginning at birth, will be healthy and successful'. ECI coordinates efforts that support a strong foundation at all levels. In addition to the state system, the model of Early Childhood Iowa includes local decision-making and partnerships to support programs that have successful outcomes. There are currently 38 ECI Area boards that cover the entire state.



As a nation, we are reminded about the importance of investing early. A child's quality of life and the contributions he or she will make to society can be

directly traced to the first few years of life. High quality early education yields higher graduation rates, reduced crime, higher earnings, and better jobs. As a result, quality early education for at-risk children can produce an annual rate of return as high as 16%. (Grunewald, R. and Rolnick, A. (2006). A Proposal for Achieving High Returns on Early Childhood Development.)

Respectfully Submitted,

David Arens

David Arens, Chairperson
Early Childhood Iowa State Board

Early Childhood Iowa Overview

The vision for Early Childhood Iowa is, *“Every child, beginning at birth, will be healthy and successful.”* There is no single strategy to make this happen. It takes a system of systems for a child to reach their potential. These individual systems include early care, health and education. The ECI State Board, the ECI Stakeholder Alliance and local ECI Area Boards are charged with developing, supporting and maintaining effective, efficient and integrated systems.

[Click here to learn more about the ECI System](#)

ECI was first approved in legislation in 1998 but was known then as Iowa Community Empowerment. In 2008, state policy makers enacted Early Childhood Iowa for state system development. In 2010 the two initiatives were brought together under the banner of Early Childhood Iowa.

Founding Legislation

ECI (then Iowa Community Empowerment) established five results to be achieved at both the state and local level and utilized the Accountable Government Act as the standard for measuring progress toward accountability. A result was defined as *“the effect desired for all Iowans.”* The results described in legislation are:

- Healthy Children
- Children Ready to Succeed in School
- Safe and Supportive Communities
- Secure and Nurturing Families
- Secure and Nurturing Early Learning Environments

Current Reality

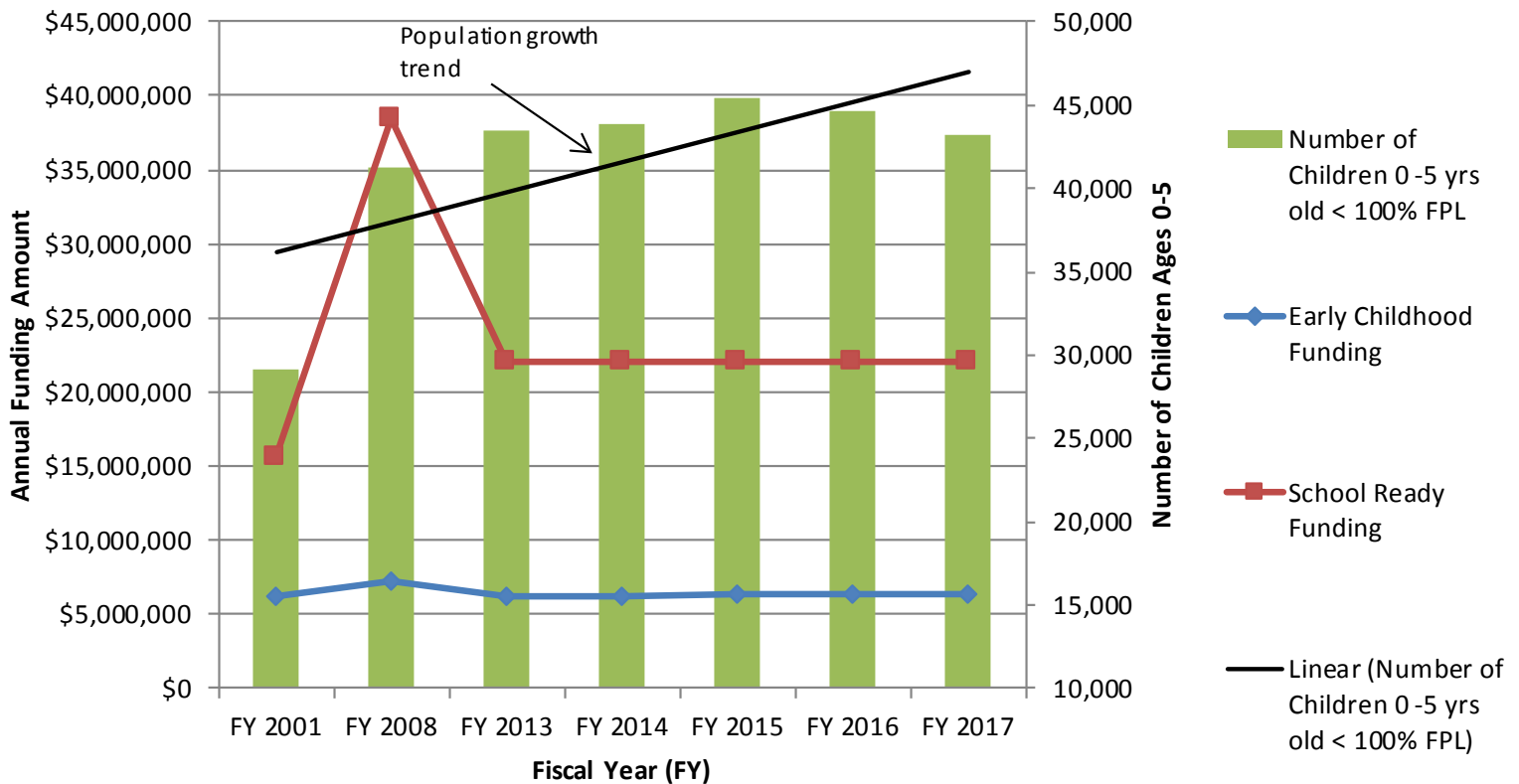
Iowa’s programs, policies, and systems are inadequate to do all the work necessary. In order to achieve the results, ECI underwent a process with over 150 early childhood stakeholders providing input to create a system-wide strategic plan and the goals below focus and will guide their work with limited resources in developing an integrated and quality early childhood system of systems for young children and their families.

The three identified goals are:

- Establish and Promote a Solid Infrastructure to Advance the Early Childhood System
- Ensure Access to High Quality Services for Young Children and their Families
- Build Public Will for Supporting Young Children and their Families

[Click here to read ECI’s 2016-2018 Strategic Plan](#)

History of ECI's Funding Support



This graph reflects the annual School Ready (red) and Early Childhood (blue) funding. These funds are allocated to ECI Area decision-making boards. Both funding sources have been status quo since FY '13. The green bars represent the actual number of children ages 0-5 living at less than 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL). The black line shows Iowa's population growth trend for children ages 0-5 living at less than 100% of the FPL.

Although ECI funds serve varying levels of at-risk populations with these funding sources, many of the planning boards are finding it increasingly difficult to address the needs because of no funding increases overall.

ECI recognizes and partners with other early childhood programs and funding partners to create a comprehensive early childhood system. Although there haven't been increases to ECI, the system has seen increases in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program, 1st Five Healthy Mental Development Initiative and the Child Care Assistance program.

Successful Collaboration in Early Learning and Development

When the Sioux City Community School District began to implement the Statewide Voluntary Preschool program, they partnered with child care centers. Prior to the Sioux City Preschool Initiative (PI), providers worked in their own silos (with a few exceptions) and did not talk or even know each other. Many thought of each other as competitors. This collaboration is breaking down all of those walls. Partners in the PI work toward common goals of quality preschool that gets kids ready for kindergarten.

The school district partners with 12 community preschool and childcare centers to offer State Wide Voluntary Preschool to over 750 four-year olds in 55 classrooms throughout Sioux City. This partnership also includes support from the Area Education Agency through professional development for staff who support the children in those classrooms. Even though there are struggles (i.e. child care centers' capacity to have back-up staff so others can participate in professional development), everyone continues to keep trying to find ways to make it work.

One of the community partners, Erika McWell at the Crittendon Center said, "I have to tell you I am a 'poster person' for promoting the collaboration with the school district for this program. Along with the opportunity to serve four-year-old children, this collaboration paved the way for several other benefits. For example, the amount of professional development available for our teaching staff is just unheard of. If not for this program we could be spending a ton more

dollars on training our certified teachers. As a non-profit agency, we wouldn't have been able to pay our certified teachers at the school district rate of pay without this union. The on-going support that we are able to receive through the district teaching coach is continuing to make us a higher quality program."

Matt Ohman, Executive Director for the Siouxland Human Investment Partnership added, "The quality piece, which was really lacking in our community, has been driven up considerably. As a community, we chose to utilize existing providers and enhance their quality rather than starting our own programs and driving private providers out of business."

Child care is positively impacted in this Iowa community, as many of the providers in the Preschool Initiative also provide child care at their centers. The quality piece is probably most significant change – ECI funding is utilized to help providers in this program: for training and other professional development necessary for all staff (excluding those covered by PI), scholarships to extend the free 10 hours of preschool into a full day for low income students, and quality improvement projects that help centers to better navigate DHS licensing and QRS.

Success in Family Leadership and Support

Rebecca and Andy Pratt were in their 50s when they gained custody of their two granddaughters Skyler, age two, and Sierra, just one. Both girls had seen abuse and neglect in their lives and were removed from their mother's care. With notice of a job relocation, the family abandoned their support system in Missouri and relocated to Council Bluffs, Iowa. They received a call from the FAMILY, Inc. Care for Kids program, Iowa's EPSDT program. During this Care for Kids call the Grandma found out about the area pediatricians and dentists and learned of the early childhood and family support services available in the community. Indicating interest in additional information the Pratt family was referred to FAMILY's home visitation program, Parents as Teachers.



Upon notice of the family's interest in home visitation and family support services, a referral was made to Pottawattamie County's coordinated intake program, the Child & Family Resource Network. The primary goal of CFRN is to implement a coordinated intake process that allows for continuous communication and eliminates duplication of services. This family-centered referral process ensures that families are only referred to one agency at a time. It was determined FAMILY's Parents as Teachers (PAT) program appeared to be the best fit for the Pratt family.

Enrollment in the PAT program immediately connected the Pratts to resources in the community. Not knowing the extent of the abuse and what the girls' needs were, first priority for the PAT parent educator was to complete an Ages & Stages Questionnaire for developmental screening. The ASQ results indicated concerns that Sierra was presenting some developmental delays. A referral was made to Early ACCESS for Sierra, who qualified for services. Upon receiving early intervention services she is now walking and talking, her seizures/tantrums have decreased, and she is developmentally on track. In addition, the parent educator assisted the Pratts in navigating the Head Start enrollment process to help get Skyler, who would be turning 3, get into preschool. Skyler started preschool at Head Start this Fall and then transferred to her neighborhood preschool at Kreft Elementary.

Additional care coordination through the Care for Kids program facilitated the connection to a medical home with a pediatrician in Council Bluffs. Information was also shared about the importance of early dental care and the Dentist by 1 program materials. Based on this recommendation, Sierra, a 1 year old with seizures and developmental delays, was given a full dental screening.

Furthermore, Grandma and the girls attend FAMILY, Inc.'s parent support groups, educational classes and community-based events. This allows the girls to be involved in outside socialization. They have found that taking advantage of these group connection opportunities is a great way to meet other families and learn more about their new community.

With the support from FAMILY Inc., the Pratt family has been able to make some significant changes that will place the grandparents and children on a path towards success – they are involved in their neighborhood school, have built friendships in the community and would say they have found a “Home and FAMILY” in Council Bluffs!

Professionalizing the Field



ECI partners are working together to host an online website to assist persons in early care and learning fields to be explore options to improve their knowledge and skills. Face-to-face training, online training, scholarships and college credit options are available through the website.

Click [here](#) to explore the early care and education teacher role website.

Family Support

In State Fiscal Year 2016, ECI supported 9,915 families through family support programs. Of those families served, 61% are at 100% or below of FPL. 90% of families participating in Home Visitation improved or maintained Healthy Functioning, Problem Solving and Communication.



Successful Collaboration in Health

In the spring of 2016, the Governor's office submitted a joint application by the Early Childhood Iowa Office and the Departments of Education, Human Services and Public Health to the National Governor's Association for technical assistance. It was selected with a focus on strengthening Child Care Nurse Consultant (CCNC) Services in Iowa. The work has included developing contract template language to ensure the fidelity of the program, mapping where services are accessible and a review of alternative funding strategies. Recommendations will be delivered in 2017.

The Child Care Nurse Consultant Program supports child care providers in meeting the health and safety needs of children in their care by providing outreach, on-site assessment, education, training and referral. CCNC's assist child care providers in Iowa's Quality Rating System by providing on-site health and safety assessment, follow-up and training. CCNC's also assist child care providers with care planning, education, and coordination for inclusive care for children with special health needs. The CCNC is a resource for parents of children with special health needs by working with the child's health care provider developing special needs action plans and medication management. The Child Care Nurse Consultant is a vital resource for child care providers at the local level.

Evidence suggests that frequent visits by a trained health consultant improves health policies, health and safety practices, and improves children's immunization status, access to a medical home, enrollment in health insurance, timely screenings, and potentially reduces the prevalence of obesity with a targeted intervention.

Funded primarily by ECI Area Boards, the CCNC program was made available in 76 counties. In FY 2016:

- Of the 1,411 programs with a CCNC visit, 98% completed an initial health and safety assessment;
- Of the 1,394 programs using the CCNC assessment and improvement process, 89% showed improvement in health and safety in the program and;
- 701 children in the participating programs were identified with special health needs. Of those children, 586 or 84% of those children had a special needs health care plan in place to increase the likelihood of continuing of care in the same program;
- CCNC's provided over 150 local trainings with 2370 providers trained statewide with DHS approved health and safety courses.

Child Care Nurse Consultation does make a difference:

Wee Wildcat Daycare Center utilizes the services of local CCNC Deb Gimer, RN. The CCNC provides consultation to the center on a multitude of health and safety topics including following "best practice" child health guidelines by establishing practices and policies for offering annual screenings for children in development, hearing, dental and vision. Partnering with the local Lion's Club to offer vision screenings, 18 month old Lylah's vision impairment was identified and appropriately addressed. "Mom" Angie stated "I'm so thankful that Lylah comes here (to Wee Wildcat Daycare) for child care. I don't think her vision problem would have been identified if the center didn't provide vision screenings"

Additional Information

The following documents can be found at http://earlychildhoodiowa.org/EC_resources/annual_reports/2016_annual_reports.html

ECI Statewide Indicators and Performance Measures

State and Community Demographic and Indicator Profiles

ECI Areas and Boards Overview

ECI Timeline through 2016

ECI History of the Early Childhood Fund (by ECI Area)

ECI History of the School Ready Fund (by ECI Area)

ECI Funding Summary (state-level allocations)

ECI PBIS Annual Report 2016

FY 2016 Family Support Annual Report Data

State Child Care Advisory Committee Report 2016