



Early Care and Education Fact Sheets

State Early Learning Initiatives:

A Snapshot of Several States' Efforts to Improve Early Care and Education

MAJOR PRE-KINDERGARTEN INITIATIVES

Illinois' Preschool for All ¹

In 2006 Illinois was the first state to pass a bill to make preschool available to all 3- and 4-year-olds through its program, Preschool for All. The program, which provides universally available, high quality preschool, is being phased in over several years through the Early Childhood Block Grant. Current funding: \$348 m.

- The program is funded via competitive process, and is delivered through schools, child care centers, Head Start, and other community agencies.

Massachusetts Early Education for All ²

The House and Senate unanimously passed an act establishing the Massachusetts Universal Pre-Kindergarten program as of July 2008.

- The bill calls for phasing in high-quality universal early care and education over 10 years, with a diverse delivery system including public and private preschools, child care centers, and family child care.

Wisconsin 4-K

Wisconsin has increased 4-year-old kindergarten (4-K) services so that 68 percent of school districts offer 4-K and 39 percent of all 4-year-olds are served.

QUALITY RATING SYSTEMS ³

Fourteen states are now reported as having statewide quality rating systems: Colorado, District of Columbia, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Vermont. Indiana and Illinois are in the process of establishing new systems.

A quality rating system (QRS) is a systemic approach to assess and improve the level of quality in early care and education programs. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, QRS award quality ratings to early care and education programs that meet a set of defined program standards. These systems are usually strengthened when accompanied by training, technical assistance and financial assistance to help programs improve.

Wisconsin has not yet implemented a quality rating system.

INITIATIVES TARGETED TO CHILDREN AT RISK

Arkansas's ABC Program ⁴

Arkansas has emerged as a state to watch due to its efforts to expand quality early care and education.

- Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) program, which has grown since its inception in 1991, is targeted to educationally deprived children.
- The program funds high quality preschool for 3- and 4-year-old children, with about half the programs in child care settings and half in public schools.
- In addition, ABC funds home visiting for families with children from the prenatal period to age five.

Kansas: Early Head Start Expansion Initiative 5

In 1998 Kansas was the first state to use TANF funds transferred to CCDF for a state-administered Early Head Start (EHS) initiative.

- The expansion of Early Head Start serves pregnant women and children up to age 4 in families with incomes at or below the federal poverty level.
- Services may include weekly home visits, health, nutrition, mental health, early childhood education, social services, parent involvement and child care.

Wisconsin Efforts

Wisconsin provides state funds to supplement Head Start, has provided strong support for Wisconsin Shares and funds home visiting programs for children at risk.

PUBLIC/PRIVATE INITIATIVES 6

Nebraska's Early Childhood Endowment Fund

Nebraska passed 2006 legislation establishing an Early Childhood Endowment Fund to fund services to at-risk children ages birth to age 3.

- The legislation establishes a public-private partnership to fund the endowment, with \$40 million in public funds, matched by \$20 million from private philanthropic sources.
- Earnings from the endowment are allocated to home visiting programs or to groups of children in center-based and/or family childcare homes.

Michigan's Early Childhood Investment Corporation 7

Michigan's Early Childhood Investment Corporation was established in 2005 to leverage and invest both public and private dollars to improve school readiness.

- Local Great Start collaboratives, which operate through school districts, are funded to develop a local comprehensive early childhood system.

Wisconsin Initiatives

Wisconsin does not have an extensive state-level public/private initiative in early care and education.

COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMS 8

North Carolina Smart Start

Smart Start, initiated in 1993, is North Carolina's nationally recognized and award-winning early childhood initiative, with state funding over \$200 million annually.

- The Smart Start program is considered by many national experts to be the most comprehensive state early care and education system in the country, operated through local public/private partnerships.
- Smart Start efforts include a quality rating system built into the state's licensing system, major efforts to improve child care teacher education and benefits, and expansion of 4-year-old kindergarten.

Pennsylvania's Comprehensive System 9

Pennsylvania is getting attention nationwide for its coherent system to improve the quality of child care and early education across the state.

- The Keystone STARS program, implemented statewide in 2003, is the largest, most comprehensive voluntary quality rating program for child care in the nation. Six regional centers help implement the program, providing and coordinating training and technical assistance, and fiscal incentives to help programs improve their ratings.

Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners (WECCP)

WECCP has been operating as a collaboration of state and local agencies and individuals since 1993, fostering early childhood systems coordination, but the work has not yet resulted in a comprehensive system.

Sources

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4 Website: <http://www.arkansas.gov/childcare/abc/index.html>

5 Website: http://www.srskansas.org/ISD/ees/head_start.htm

6 Website: <http://www.earlychildhoodendowment.org/>

7 Website: http://www.branchisd.org/education/components/scrapbook/default.php?sectiondetailid=1308&sc_id=1214923323

8 Website: <http://www.ncsmartstart.org/index.htm>

9 Website: <http://www.pakeys.org/message.aspx>