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A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHILD ADVOCATES

**For Immediate Release
February 16, 2005**

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As Wisconsin Grapples with How to Prepare Children to Succeed in School, a New Report Shows How the State Can Use Indicators to Help Track Progress

(Madison)—Research shows that too many young children in Wisconsin enter kindergarten with physical, social, emotional and cognitive deficits that could have been minimized or eliminated through early intervention. A new national report entitled “Getting Ready: Findings from the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative,” shows how identifying indicators of school readiness in Wisconsin and tracking progress on those measures can lead to more effective policies and investments in early childhood in our state. Wisconsin was one of the 17 states that helped design the indicators noted in the national report.

The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative is a multi-state initiative that developed sets of indicators at the state level to track results for children from birth through age eight. The goal was for states to use the school readiness indicators to inform public policy decisions and track progress in meeting key goals for young children.

“This is an ambitious project with goals to improve the lives of our children significantly. Our state’s commitment to these indicators will shape our future economy and society, and we are hopeful we can succeed,” said Wisconsin Council on Children and Families Executive Director Charity Eleson.

In order to get the information to key policy-makers, the initiative partnered with five national organizations: the National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislators, the Council of State School Officers, the Education Commission of the States and the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

“DWD is pleased to support this study which clearly outlines what school readiness means for children, families, communities and schools. This report comes at an exciting time as we work to advance Governor Jim Doyle’s KidsFirst Agenda, particularly, the first chapter, ‘Ready for Success,’” said Department of Workforce Development Secretary Roberta Gassman.

“The National School Readiness project will help us advance Governor Doyle’s KidsFirst agenda. Working together for our children is a top priority for Wisconsin, so all our children can grow up safe and healthy, nurtured and ready for school,” said Department of Health and Family Services Secretary Helene Nelson.

“We must do everything we can to ensure that students are ready for school,” said State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster. “Four-year-old kindergarten, along with small class sizes through SAGE and a top-notch teacher in every classroom, will help to close the achievement gap and lift the level of achievement for every Wisconsin student.”

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Wisconsin formed a team made up of representatives from the governor's office, the state departments of Public Instruction, Health and Family Services, and Workforce Development as well as, child advocates, early childhood educators, head start, researchers, and business leaders. The state team developed indicators that fit Wisconsin's political, social and economic situation. A report on those Wisconsin specific indicators, *Ready, Kids, Ready Schools, Ready Communities* can be accessed at www.wccf.org. In addition, a core set of indicators common across the various states can be used to measure progress towards school readiness and early school success. The Initiative's Web site (www.GettingReady.org) lists work already done in Wisconsin and the 16 other states toward adopting the proposed indicators.

The core set of indicators that cover all the areas necessary for success include:

Ready Children

Physical Well-Being and Motor Development

% of children with age-appropriate fine motor skills

Social and Emotional Development

% of children who often or very often exhibit positive social behaviors when interacting with their peers

Approaches to Learning

% of children almost always showing curiosity and interest at kindergarten entry

Language Development

% of children almost always recognizing the relationship between letters and sounds at kindergarten level

Cognition and General Knowledge

% of children recognizing basic shapes at kindergarten entry

Ready Families

Mother's Education Level

% of births to mothers with less than a 12th grade education

Births to Teens

of births to teens ages 15-17 per 1,000 girls

Child Abuse and Neglect

Rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect among children birth to age 6

Children in Foster Care

% of children birth to age six in out-of-home placement (foster care) who have no more than two placements in a 24-month period

Ready Communities

Young Children in Poverty

% of children under age six living in families with income below the federal poverty threshold

Supports for Families with Infants and Toddlers

% of infants and toddlers in poverty who are enrolled in Early Head Start

Lead Poisoning

% of children under age 6 with blood lead levels at or above 10 micrograms per deciliter

Ready Services – Health

Health Insurance

% of children under age six without health insurance

Low Birthweight Infants

% of infants born weighing under 2,500 grams (5.5 pounds)

Access to Prenatal Care

% of births to women who receive late or no prenatal care

Immunizations

*% of children ages 19-35 months who have been fully immunized
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Ready Services – Early Care and Education

Children Enrolled in an Early Education Program

% of three and four year-olds enrolled in a center-based early childhood care and education program (including child care centers, nursery schools, preschool programs, Head Start programs, and pre-kindergarten programs)

Early Education Teacher Credentials

% of early childhood teachers with a bachelor's degree and specialized training in early childhood

Accredited Child Care Centers

% of child care centers accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Accredited Family Child Care Homes

% of family child care homes accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)

Access to Child Care Subsidies

% of eligible children under age six receiving child care subsidies

Ready Schools

Class Size

% of K-Third grade classes with 25 or fewer children

Fourth Grade Reading Scores

% of children with reading proficiency in fourth grade as measured by the state's proficiency tests

“The regular tracking of school readiness indicators enables policy-makers and community leaders to identify areas most in need of intervention, track the results of investments, and monitor trends over time,” said Elson. “The goal of the School Readiness Indicators Initiative was to develop indicators not just for data’s sake, but to inform and influence policy decisions to improve school readiness.”

The data can also be obtained on the Web site at www.GettingReady.org and www.wccf.org .

The Wisconsin School Readiness Indicator Initiative is a part of a seventeen state National School Readiness Indicators Initiative. Made possible by a grant to the Department of Workforce Development supported by the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

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