

**SUCCESSFUL
START**

RHODE ISLAND'S
EARLY CHILDHOOD
SYSTEMS PLAN

**ALL CHILDREN HEALTHY AND
READY TO LEARN**

NOVEMBER 2005

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This report was prepared by the Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health and Rhode Island Kids Count based on input from more than 200 early childhood leaders across the state during a two-year strategic planning process. Rhode Island Kids Count provided expertise and technical assistance throughout the strategic planning phase of the initiative.

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RHODE ISLAND'S YOUNGEST CHILDREN

Strong families and healthy communities provide the foundation for children's healthy development. Community-based early childhood services are part of the critical network of supports for families. An effective early childhood system addresses the needs of all children, while providing more intensive services for infants and children most at risk.

FAMILY INCOME

Children in poor families generally score lower on standardized tests of verbal ability and cognitive skills than children in higher-income families. Research indicates that when family income improves so does elementary school performance. Strategies that support high-quality early learning opportunities for children most at risk are also effective in closing the achievement gap that exists at kindergarten entry. One in five Rhode Island

children under age 6 lives in a family with income below the federal poverty threshold of \$15,219 for a family of four with two children. Two-thirds of all poor children in Rhode Island live in the six core cities. The core cities are those communities in which 15% or more of the children live in families with income below the federal poverty threshold: Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Significant disparities in child outcomes continue to exist in Rhode Island. Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American children are three times more likely than White, non-Hispanic children to be poor and more likely to live in Rhode Island's poorest urban neighborhoods. Children most at risk of not

achieving their full potential are children in poverty. Of the 77,648 Rhode Island children under age five, 70% are white, non-Hispanic, 16% are Hispanic, 5% are Black, 3% are Asian and Pacific Islander, 4% are two or more races and 1% are some other race.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Children with special needs are those who have a chronic disease or disability that requires educational services, health care and/or related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally. Without

appropriate supports in the early years, children with special needs are less likely to be ready for school and are at higher risk for poor educational outcomes.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Rhode Island's children are diverse in race, ethnic background, language, and country of origin as well as how long they and their families have been in the United States. Children who speak a language other than

English at home and have difficulty speaking English are more likely to have barriers to academic success. They are more likely to start school with reading and math skills that lag behind their peers.

SUCCESSFUL START VISION

To create a comprehensive and coordinated early childhood system that supports families and communities in promoting positive early childhood development so that **all children enter school healthy and ready to learn.**

SUCCESSFUL START MISSION

Successful Start partners will use Rhode Island's Early Childhood Systems Plan to ensure that all young children reach their full potential through a system of services that promotes healthy **social-emotional development**, quality **early care and education**, coordinated **medical homes**, and effective **parent education and family support** services.

THE SUCCESSFUL START PARTNERSHIP

The Successful Start Partnership is comprised of over 200 early childhood leaders, including all of the state departments that administer programs for young children, community-based agencies, child care providers, health care and mental health professionals, child advocates, and parents. The project is administered by the Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health. Rhode Island Kids Count provided expertise and technical assistance throughout the strategic planning phase. The Successful Start Steering Committee provides guidance and oversight for the initiative and addresses challenges in systems building. The Early Childhood Council, a blue-ribbon panel of state agency directors, legislators, and community leaders convened by Rhode Island Kids Count, provided input into the strategic plan and will continue to work to ensure that public and private partners implement effective policies to coordinate and improve the early childhood system.

SYSTEM BUILDING

- ◆ Fill gaps in services.
- ◆ Coordinate programs.
- ◆ Develop effective policies.
- ◆ Maximize resources.
- ◆ Reduce inefficiencies.
- ◆ Build capacity for quality.

BEST PRACTICES

Evidence-based systems of service delivery and model programs are included in Rhode Island's Early Childhood Systems Plan.

STRATEGIC PLANNING RESULTS IN A STATEWIDE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS PLAN

Successful Start is a five year systems building initiative. The first two years of the initiative (September 2003 through September 2005) focused on the development of a statewide Early Childhood Systems Plan. The next three years (October 2005–September 2008) focus on implementation. The plan presented in this document describes goals, objectives and implementation strategies that will improve and coordinate services, resulting in improved child and family outcomes.

As part of strategic planning, Successful Start conducted a needs assessment to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities in the existing early childhood system and to assess child and family needs. Special attention was

paid to needs and gaps in the areas of *capacity, access, coordination, quality, and financing*. Components of the environmental scan included:

- ◆ Survey of early childhood and family service programs.
- ◆ Analysis of data and indicators.
- ◆ Workgroup discussions.
- ◆ Key informant interviews.
- ◆ Parent focus groups conducted in multiple languages.

Successful Start partners used this information to address areas most in need of improvement.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR RHODE ISLAND'S EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

A core set of guiding principles provides the foundation for Rhode Island's Early Childhood Systems Plan.

Rhode Island's early childhood system:

- ◆ Recognizes parents and families as a child's first teacher and most important support system.
- ◆ Supports all families, while still addressing the needs of children and families at high risk.
- ◆ Provides services that are individualized to meet child and family needs and build on family strengths.
- ◆ Ensures access through multiple points of entry.
- ◆ Integrates prevention, early intervention and early and complete response.
- ◆ Invests in high-quality, evidence-based practice and programs.
- ◆ Promotes cultural and linguistic competence.
- ◆ Involves parents in the design, delivery and evaluation of services.
- ◆ Maximizes resources and reduces inefficiencies.
- ◆ Includes target outcomes for children, families and systems and tracks progress over time.

THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF SUCCESSFUL START ARE:

- ▶ **PARENT EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT**
- ▶ **EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION**
- ▶ **MEDICAL HOMES**
- ▶ **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

These are critical components of a **comprehensive and coordinated early childhood system** that promotes the healthy development of infants, toddlers and young children. An effective early childhood system ensures that children are in safe and nurturing environments, supports the healthy development of all children and addresses the needs of families and young children at high risk for poor outcomes.

In the earliest stages of Successful Start planning several key themes emerged: 1) prevention is critical; 2) services and systems cannot operate categorically but must address the needs of the whole child and family; and, 3) strategies to specifically promote social-emotional development should be woven into the delivery of all services that touch children and families. Successful Start partners have focused on creating systems improvement where it will have the greatest positive impact on children and families.

DOMAINS OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Experiences during the first five years set the stage for a child's entire life, including success in school and productivity as an adult. Recent research demonstrates that brain development during a child's first five years is a complex interaction between physiology and environmental experiences. During early childhood the foundations for later

development are established, creating a strong or weak framework within which language, cognition, and social and emotional skills develop.

Early childhood development has significant implications for children's readiness for school. The Early Childhood Systems Plan that is presented here is designed to improve child

development in all five domains critical to school readiness:

- ▶ **Physical well-being and motor development.**
- ▶ **Social and emotional development.**
- ▶ **Approaches to learning.**
- ▶ **Language development.**
- ▶ **Cognition and general knowledge.**

This report outlines the comprehensive, statewide Early Childhood Systems Plan developed to create a better system of services for young children and families in our state.

SUCCESSFUL START: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS PLAN

OPPORTUNITIES

Successful Start coincides with a renewed focus on preventing negative outcomes for children and families. There is widespread consensus that fragmented systems have resulted in too many children and families falling through the cracks. Strong momentum exists to shift resources to systems and programs that focus on primary prevention so that families are assisted in overcoming challenges and in supporting their children's optimal development. Other opportunities include interdepartmental

cooperation among state agencies that administer health and social service programs, facilitated by the newly formed Office of Health & Human Services. Successful Start is also partnering with the United Way of Rhode Island's Solutions for Children, Youth and Families Impact Group in its efforts to promote quality services and systems in the fields of Early Care and Education and Parenting and Family Support.

CHALLENGES

Financing the development of a comprehensive early childhood system remains a significant challenge. Successful Start will work to ensure that the impact of existing funding is maximized through creative strategies of blending and coordinating funding, integrating services and resources, reducing administrative inefficiencies and duplication of services and supporting evidence-based models of service delivery. Successful Start recognizes several health system needs that are beyond the scope of the project, but critical to its success. The Social-Emotional Development component

of the plan assumes that Rhode Island must increase the supply and capacity of behavioral health professionals and the Medical Homes component assumes that Rhode Island will assure that children have access to medical specialty providers and oral health providers. These needs are being addressed through a number of existing efforts including the Governor's Balanced Health Care Initiative, the Office of Health and Human Services implementation team on mental health, RIte Care and the Oral Health Access Project. Successful Start will contribute to these ongoing discussions.

EVALUATION

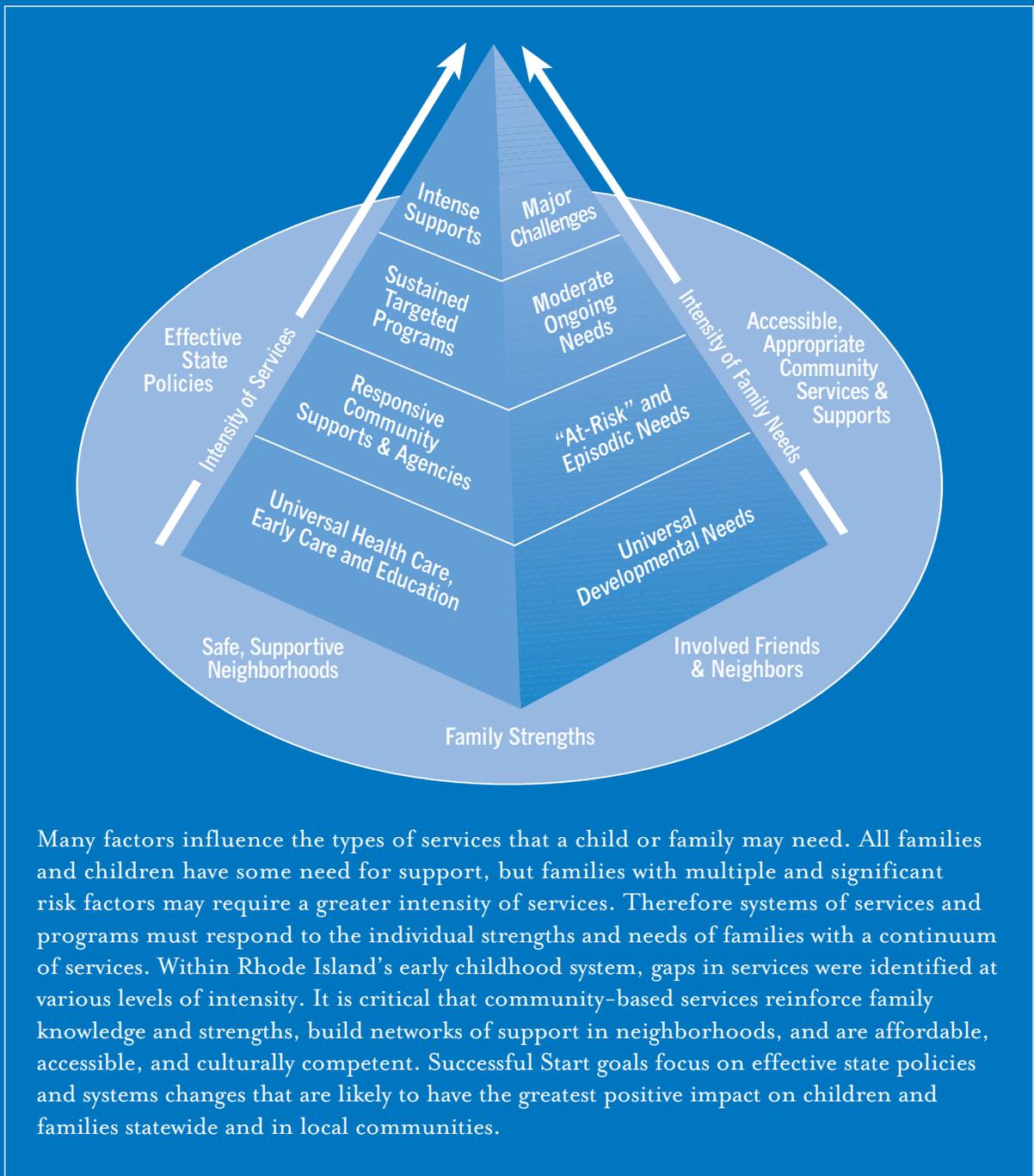
Evaluation of the implementation phase of Successful Start will include assessing the extent to which goals and objectives are achieved, and whether changes made to the early childhood system have a positive impact on the health and well being of young children and families. Performance measures have been developed to track progress toward

achievement of specific Early Childhood Systems Plan objectives. In addition, Successful Start will build on the work of the Rhode Island School Readiness Indicators initiative to assess service system capacity and access, monitor outcomes for children and families, and track progress in meeting goals and improving the early childhood system.

NEXT STEPS & IMPLEMENTATION

Successful Start is now ready to begin full-scale implementation of the Early Childhood Systems Plan. The Successful Start initiative continues to build support among key constituents, including policymakers, legislators, state and community-based agencies and consumers. Successful Start

partners are committed to the vision and mission of the initiative and have dedicated their time and resources to move the plan forward. Our work to build a better early childhood system will be directed at realizing our vision that all children enter school healthy and ready to learn.



Many factors influence the types of services that a child or family may need. All families and children have some need for support, but families with multiple and significant risk factors may require a greater intensity of services. Therefore systems of services and programs must respond to the individual strengths and needs of families with a continuum of services. Within Rhode Island’s early childhood system, gaps in services were identified at various levels of intensity. It is critical that community-based services reinforce family knowledge and strengths, build networks of support in neighborhoods, and are affordable, accessible, and culturally competent. Successful Start goals focus on effective state policies and systems changes that are likely to have the greatest positive impact on children and families statewide and in local communities.

SUCCESSFUL START: SNAPSHOT OF GOALS AND OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

CROSS-SECTOR

- ▶ **GOAL #1** Families, communities, and policymakers understand the importance of the early childhood years and there is **public and political will for accessible and effective early childhood services**.
- ▶ Families in Rhode Island are supported in their roles as caregivers and teachers through effective policies and services.
-
- ▶ **GOAL #2** Early childhood and family services are part of a **streamlined and coordinated early childhood system** that allows parents and families to access a range of services through multiple points of entry.
- ▶ Families can easily access services in their neighborhoods when they need them.
-
- ▶ **GOAL #3** High-quality parenting and early childhood information, services, and supports are **universally available to all families** to support and promote young children's healthy development.
- ▶ Families are offered information about activities they can do with their children that promote positive development.
- ▶ Information and services are available to families where they spend time.
-
- ▶ **GOAL #4** All young children have access to quality **developmental screening** and are connected to appropriate **and effective intervention** services.
- ▶ Children are screened early and periodically for developmental risks.
- ▶ Children get necessary intervention services at the earliest points possible.
-
- ▶ **GOAL #5** Effective **intensive and comprehensive services** are available to all children and families with significant risk factors for poor developmental outcomes.
- ▶ Families who need intensive home visiting services receive them.
- ▶ Children at risk for poor outcomes receive appropriate, comprehensive and timely services.
-
- ▶ **GOAL #6** Consensus exists about what constitutes **quality services** for early care and education, medical homes, parent education and family support, and early childhood behavioral health. **Quality standards and performance measures** are in place and used for licensure, regulation, and recognition purposes.
- ▶ Families can compare the quality of services on a standardized scale and make informed choices.
- ▶ The overall quality of early childhood services improves and more high-quality programs are available to families.

PARENT EDUCATION & FAMILY SUPPORT

- ▶ **GOAL #7** All families with young children have access to **community-based parenting and family support programs** that provide direct services to families and link them to other resources including health and behavioral health care, child care, food and nutrition services, housing assistance, income supports and work readiness programs.
- ▶ Families receive the same level of high-quality, culturally competent support from all service providers.
- ▶ Parents are educated and supported in raising their children and are able to access support services in their community.

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

- ▶ **GOAL #8** All child care providers have access to **training and higher education on key early childhood issues** including children's behavioral health, infant-toddler care, inclusion of children with special health care needs, and service coordination.
- ▶ Children with special health care needs are able to spend time in natural environments with their typically developing peers.
- ▶ All children in early care and education programs are cared for in a way that supports their development and learning.
- ▶ Children with challenging behaviors are not excluded from child care. They receive inclusive, stable, nurturing care that supports their development, intervenes appropriately, and prepares them for school.
- ▶ **GOAL #9** All children with **challenging behaviors and special needs** have access to quality early care and education.

MEDICAL HOMES

- ▶ **GOAL #10** All pediatric primary care practices incorporate the seven **medical home core components** – care that is accessible, family-centered, continuous, comprehensive, coordinated, compassionate, and culturally effective.
- ▶ Children and families receive culturally appropriate anticipatory guidance at well-child visits.
- ▶ Children have access to oral health care and to behavioral health and medical specialty providers as needed.
- ▶ Families are partners in their children's health care.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ **GOAL #11** All early childhood service providers have the capacity and ability to **support the healthy social-emotional development of young children** and families.
- ▶ Caregivers interact with children in ways that promote positive development and healthy relationships. They educate and assist families in understanding and promoting their children's social-emotional health.



TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM CROSS-SECTOR GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The development of the Successful Start plan has been an evolving process. Four workgroups specific to each of the critical components – Early Care & Education, Medical Homes, Parent Education & Family Support, and Social-Emotional Development – were convened during the first phase of the two-year strategic planning process. Work groups identified strengths, needs, and opportunities within each sector and began formulating goals and objectives.

As individual workgroup priorities developed, the groups merged into one Successful Start Partnership to ensure that the work would be systemic and comprehensive. A child's development cannot be divided into single domains of behavior, health, or learning. Therefore, the Successful Start Early Childhood Systems

Plan proposes an integrated approach across the critical components. The full partnership continues to focus on building a better early childhood system across all sectors.

To address goals for the Early Childhood System as a comprehensive, coordinated set of services for young children and families, Successful Start developed Cross-Sector Goals and Strategies. The Cross-Sector Goals are systemic in nature and policy-oriented. These goals will change the way the early childhood system is structured and the way services are delivered. They will facilitate collaboration between service providers in different sectors, resulting in a system that is efficient, effective, comprehensive and family-centered.

GOAL #1

Families, communities, and policymakers understand the importance of the early childhood years and there is public and political will for accessible and effective early childhood services.

FIRST STEPS FOR ACTION**PRIORITY STRATEGIES**

- ◆ Communicate Successful Start vision and mission through a public engagement campaign that targets consumers, policymakers, program planners, local community leaders, and the private sector.
 - ◇ Develop materials to inform and educate parents about the physical, cognitive, and social-emotional needs of young children.
 - ◇ Convene small group meetings with legislators to discuss the issues affecting families with young children.
 - ◇ Outreach to and engage the Rhode Island business community as advocates for working families.
 - ◇ Develop materials and fact sheets to help consumers to advocate for effective early childhood policies and services.

GOAL #2

Early childhood and family services are part of a streamlined and coordinated early childhood system that allows parents and families to access a range of services through multiple points of entry.

FIRST STEPS FOR ACTION**PRIORITY STRATEGIES**

- ◆ Promote service delivery models that build interagency partnerships and co-location of services.
 - ◇ Communicate best practice models of integrated services. Examples of effective models include family resource centers and co-location of behavioral health and primary care.
 - ◇ Develop statewide policies that support integrated services. Partner with the Rhode Island Office of Health and Human Services in this work.
- ◆ Improve collaboration between child care providers, school districts, Early Intervention providers, and health care providers.
 - ◇ Develop transition plans between child care providers and Kindergarten programs.

SUBSEQUENT STEPS

- ◆ Align eligibility criteria for state programs.
- ◆ Align funding streams to agencies to create more flexible funding.

GOAL #3

High-quality parenting and early childhood information, services, and supports are universally available to all families to support and promote young children's healthy development.

FIRST STEPS FOR ACTION**PRIORITY STRATEGIES**

- ◆ Support child care providers as a primary access point for providing information and access to parenting education and family support services.
 - ◇ Create a public-private leadership team that includes child welfare, family support and early care and education providers to implement *Strengthening Families through Early Care & Education* models and approaches. Integrate the Strengthening Families approach into existing child care training and professional development efforts statewide and in local communities.
 - ◇ Engage child care providers in promoting use of the *Early Learning Standards* family materials and activities.
- ◆ Provide child development information to parents during pregnancy and immediately post-partum. Ensure parents of newborns are linked to and can access appropriate services.
- ◆ Expand the Family Outreach Program's capacity to outreach and provide services to pregnant women.

SUBSEQUENT STEPS

- ◆ Develop parenting workshops and offer them in settings easily accessible to families.
- ◆ Develop a web site for parents so that information about early childhood services is accessible and easily understood.
- ◆ Expand the capacity of evidence-based parent education programs, e.g. Parents as Teachers, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters and the Incredible Years.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES THROUGH EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Strengthening Families is a research-based, cost-effective strategy to prevent child abuse and neglect. The strategy involves child care centers in supporting families and building protective factors in the lives of children. Strengthening Families initiatives are now being implemented in seven states, including Rhode Island.

The goals of the initiative are:

- ◆ To increase awareness that strengthening families is central to quality child care.
- ◆ To increase the number of early childhood programs that are working to prevent child abuse and neglect by building protective factors in the lives of children and families.
- ◆ To build effective relationships among early childhood systems, child welfare systems, and child abuse prevention programs and initiatives.

Strengthening Families Rhode Island is managed by Prevent Child Abuse Rhode Island in collaboration with a community leadership team and is supported by a grant from the United Way of Rhode Island. Technical assistance is provided by the Center for the Study of Social Policy. Additional information on *Strengthening Families* is available at www.cssp.org/doris_duke/index.html

GOAL #4

All young children have access to quality developmental screening and are connected to appropriate and effective intervention services.

FIRST STEPS FOR ACTION**PRIORITY STRATEGIES**

- ◆ Expand developmental screening of young children in natural settings. Create mechanisms to refer children with positive screening results for assessment, treatment, and other needed intervention services.
 - ◇ Work with the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities to identify best practice models of developmental services.
 - ◇ Convene a workgroup to identify appropriate screening tool(s), settings in which children will be screened, and effective referral mechanisms.
 - ◇ Address issues relating to the capacity of intervention services.
 - ◇ Address reimbursement policies for developmental screening in the medical home.
- ◆ Increase the number of three and four year-olds receiving comprehensive screening through the Child Outreach program.
 - ◇ Support existing efforts at the Rhode Island Department of Education to increase the number of children screened.
 - ◇ Promote the use of reliable and validated screening tool(s) by all school districts.

SUCCESSFUL START DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING & SERVICES

Successful Start is working to increase the number of young children receiving quality, comprehensive, developmental screening and appropriate assessment and treatment services. Research shows that standardized developmental screening identifies physical, cognitive, and emotional health issues that may go undetected by health care providers, parents, and other caregivers, providing the opportunity to intervene to correct problems at the earliest points possible.

In partnership with the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Successful Start has convened a work group to develop a plan to integrate developmental screening into medical homes and community settings, design effective referral pathways, and build relationships and partnerships among families, health care providers, child care providers, mental health, and family support services. In 2006, the model of developmental screening and services will be piloted in selected communities.

This work is supported in part by a grant award from the Vermont Child Health Improvement Project (VCHIP), the Commonwealth Fund, and the National Initiative for Children's Healthcare Quality (NICHQ). Technical assistance and expertise are provided by Dr. Neal Halfon from the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities.

GOAL #5

Effective intensive, comprehensive services are available to all children and families with significant risk factors for poor developmental outcomes.

FIRST STEPS FOR ACTION**PRIORITY STRATEGIES**

- ◆ Develop protocols to refer all infants and young children birth to age three who have had an indicated case of child abuse and/or neglect for an assessment to determine eligibility for Early Intervention or other early childhood development services.
 - ◇ Work with the Early Intervention Interagency Coordinating Council to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of referral procedures and protocols.
- ◆ Expand comprehensive, intensive, evidence-based programs for families with young children at high risk. Programs that have been shown to produce positive child outcomes include Early Head Start and the Nurse Family Partnership.
 - ◇ Develop a sustainable public-private funding stream. Work with state agencies, local funders, and community partners to develop financing strategies using a combination of existing resources, new resources and public-private partnerships.
 - ◇ Examine successful intensive, comprehensive service delivery models in other states and communities.

SUBSEQUENT STEPS

- ◆ Provide comprehensive, intensive services for all teen parents to promote healthy child development and decrease repeat births to teens.
- ◆ Develop data sources and other mechanisms to identify the universe of high-risk pregnant women, children and families.

GOAL #6

Consensus exists about what constitutes quality services for early care and education, medical homes, parent education and family support, and early childhood behavioral health. Quality standards and performance measures are in place and used for licensure, regulation, and recognition purposes.

FIRST STEPS FOR ACTION**PRIORITY STRATEGIES**

- ◆ Develop and implement a statewide child care Quality Rating System (QRS) that includes center-based child care programs and family child care homes.
 - ◇ Convene a task force/steering committee to design the system.
 - ◇ Evaluate current quality of child care and set benchmarks for improvement.
 - ◇ Pilot QRS in selected sites, followed by statewide implementation.

SUBSEQUENT STEPS

- ◆ Develop and implement quality standards and performance measures for medical homes, parenting education, family support, and early childhood behavioral health services.
- ◆ Develop mechanisms to obtain consistent outcome data from programs serving young children. Use this data to set benchmarks and track progress over time.

RHODE ISLAND QUALITY RATING SYSTEM PARTNERSHIP

Experience in other states shows that designing and implementing a Quality Rating System is a proven strategy to systemically improve the quality of child care children experience. A Quality Rating System measures the quality of a program against a common set of community-developed research-based standards, offers supports to help programs meet these standards and promotes the quality of programs to parents and other consumers through easily recognized symbols, usually stars. Based on the success of similar projects in 10 other states, Rhode Island has established a 30-member steering committee to design a reliable system to assess the quality of early care and education and after school programs. Quality rating information will help parents select a program for their child and will help the state focus resources to improve the quality of care and education available. The steering committee aims to pilot an initial Quality Rating System beginning in Fall 2007.

Rhode Island Kids Count coordinates the Quality Rating System Partnership that is leading the 24-month research and development phase of the Quality Rating System. The Partnership is funded by the United Way of Rhode Island and is supported by an expert consultant team, including Anne Mitchell from the National Child Care Information Center.



PARENT EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Parents and families are a child's first and most important caregivers and teachers. All families face challenges and needs as they raise their children. Parenting and family support programs that enhance parents' skills, provide child development services, create social networks, and build community linkages are critical resources for all parents and families. Families at high risk may need specialized supports and services that address a range of social, economic and emotional needs and build on their strengths. Research shows that intensive, high quality family support services can improve children's health, development, behavior and educational outcomes. Currently, there is limited infrastructure to support

the delivery of parent education and family support services and coordinate and integrate these services into existing systems. Rhode Island, like many other states, also has an insufficient supply of comprehensive, intensive services for families at risk. Although Rhode Island faces significant challenges, there are foundations on which to build. Rhode Island is fortunate to have a number of state and community programs that offer a range of parent education and family support services and programs. Examples of these include Early Head Start and Parents as Teachers programs that operate in various communities in the state, providing home visiting and other critical supports to children and families at risk.

GOAL #7

All families with young children have access to community-based parenting and family support programs that provide direct services to families and link them to other resources including health and behavioral health care, child care, food and nutrition services, housing assistance, income supports and work readiness programs.

FIRST STEPS FOR ACTION**PRIORITY STRATEGIES**

- ◆ Develop a statewide parent education and family support infrastructure. Develop a shared mission and vision for parent education and family support.
 - ◇ Use Rhode Island KIDS COUNT's definitions of family support across various levels of intensity to assess current system capacity.
 - ◇ Develop and convene a statewide Parent Education & Family Support Alliance to work on issues of capacity, quality, and coordination.
- ◆ Develop activities and programming that build on family strengths, use peer-to-peer-models, and increase families' capacity to self-advocate.
 - ◇ Expand the Pediatric Practice Enhancement Project peer-to-peer model to additional medical and non-medical settings.
 - ◇ Research and disseminate information on best practice outreach, engagement, and family support models.

RHODE ISLAND'S PARENTING AND FAMILY SUPPORT CONTINUUM

The Rhode Island KIDS COUNT July 2005 Issue Brief on Parenting and Family Support offers a continuum for classifying and defining parenting and family support services. Services and programs generally fall into five categories, based on the intensity of the services:

- ◆ Basic Information and Support.
- ◆ Screenings, Assessments, and Referrals.
- ◆ Parent Education and Peer Support.
- ◆ Intensive, Individualized Family Support.
- ◆ Family Preservation.

Families vary in the type and intensity of services they find helpful at any particular point in time. Communities that have a diversity of services and offer a variety of programs along a continuum are most able to address the broadest range of family and community needs over time. While family support programs vary in program setting, size, delivery method, and intensity of services, all work to build on family strengths while addressing family needs.



EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Early care and education plays an important role in the social, emotional and cognitive development of infants and young children. Children who receive high quality care score higher on tests of cognitive and social skills, do better in school, are less likely to repeat a grade, and are better at problem-solving and working with others. Quality early care and education can further enhance child development by connecting parents to supports and services and by providing opportunities to enhance parenting skills and knowledge of child development. High quality early child care and education programs can also offer an entry point into family support and health care through early identification and referral of children with health

conditions, developmental disabilities or other risk factors.

Rhode Island is nationally recognized for its investments in an accessible, affordable, high-quality child care system. Rhode Island is the only state with a legal entitlement to child care subsidies for working families earning up to 225% of the federal poverty threshold. Reimbursement for child care providers who accept subsidies are set at the 75th percentile of the market rate, ensuring the low-income families have a choice in their children's child care. Building on these accomplishments, Successful Start is working to further enhance the quality and accessibility of early care and education for all families.

GOAL #8

All child care providers have access to training and higher education on key early childhood issues including children's behavioral health, infant-toddler care, inclusion of children with special health care needs, and service coordination.

FIRST STEPS FOR ACTION**PRIORITY STRATEGIES**

- ◆ Develop a higher education scholarship program for early care and education providers.
 - ◇ Work with the Department of Human Services, United Way of Rhode Island, and community partners to implement the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program.
- ◆ Ensure that training and coursework incorporate evidence-based practices, target specific topics, and meet the education needs of early care and education providers.
 - ◇ Review and revise higher education curricula with a workgroup of child care directors, teachers, education coordinators, and higher education.
 - ◇ Develop mechanisms to give college credit for experience and other completed training.

RHODE ISLAND EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS

Rhode Island has established a set of early learning standards to provide guidance to families, teachers and administrators on what children should know and be able to do as they enter kindergarten. The *Rhode Island Early Learning Standards* are organized into eight domains with defined learning goals and expectations. The eight domains are: approaches to learning, social and emotional development, language development and communication, literacy, mathematics, science, creativity, and physical health and development. Professional development – often with college credit – is available to early childhood programs to help teachers recognize four-year-old behavior that meets expectations and to implement curricula and activities that build competence in relation to each learning goal. Family materials are also available for parents so that they can support their child's learning at home and in their early education setting.

The Rhode Island Early Learning Standards project is a partnership of the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Rhode Island Department of Human Services.

GOAL #9

All children with challenging behaviors and special needs have access to quality early care and education.

FIRST STEPS FOR ACTION

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- ▶ Develop and implement a consultation model for child care providers that includes health, behavioral health, parent education and family support.
 - ◊ Build the capacity of the Child Care Support Network and Healthy Child Care Rhode Island to provide various levels of services including on-site consultation and referrals.
 - ◊ Link consultation services to the Strengthening Families initiative.
 - ◊ Evaluate the effectiveness of current child care health consultant licensing requirements and research other state licensing models.
- ▶ Expand the capacity of KIDS CONNECT to provide on-site therapeutic services to children with special health care needs and behavioral challenges in child care settings.
- ▶ Educate and inform child care providers about state and local resources for health, behavioral health, and family support.

THERAPEUTIC CHILD CARE AND YOUTH CARE

KIDS CONNECT supports the participation of children with special health care needs in typical child care settings. Medicaid-eligible children with physical, developmental, emotional, or behavioral special needs are eligible for the program. Inclusion in child care settings offers opportunities for socialization, communication, and overall skill development. Children with special health care needs often have limited access or no access to opportunities to interact with their peers in natural settings.

Child care and after-school care settings that are certified KIDS CONNECT providers hire and support additional staff who are specially trained to help children with special health care needs participate in group child care settings with their typically developing peers. An individualized therapeutic integration plan is developed for each child by a licensed clinician. Medicaid reimburses child care providers for staff time, development of a plan and nursing care when needed. Two child care providers in Rhode Island currently offer KIDS CONNECT services, and many more are being recruited.

KIDS CONNECT (previously named Therapeutic Child & Youth Care) is managed by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services and is supported through state and federal Medicaid funding.

**HIGH QUALITY EARLY CARE AND
EDUCATION, PARENTING AND FAMILY
SUPPORT, AND MEDICAL HOMES
CONTRIBUTE TO HEALTHY SOCIAL
AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN
EARLY CHILDHOOD.**



MEDICAL HOMES GOALS AND STRATEGIES

All children benefit from a **medical home**, that is, a regular source of health care from a primary care provider (pediatrician, family physician, nurse practitioner, etc.) that is familiar with the child's family and medical history and developmental progress. Pediatric providers that have a regular, ongoing relationship with a family have a greater likelihood of understanding the family and community context in which the child is developing. They are more likely to partner with parents and other providers to identify and access all the medical and non-medical services needed to help children reach their full potential. Medical homes provide essential acute care, chronic care and developmental services and are culturally and linguistically competent.

Rhode Island leads the country in ensuring children's access to health and medical care. Rhode Island's strong commitment to RItE Care has resulted in one of the lowest rates of uninsured children in the country. Some children with special health care needs are supported through specialized programs and services such as Early Intervention and CEDARR Family Centers. The foundation for Rhode Island's child health system is a strong and active provider community, with leadership by the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, community health centers and family practice physicians.

GOAL #10

All pediatric primary care practices incorporate the seven medical home core components – care that is accessible, family-centered, continuous, comprehensive, coordinated, compassionate, and culturally-effective.

FIRST STEPS FOR ACTION**PRIORITY STRATEGIES**

- ◆ Promote the use of parent consultants in primary care offices to assist families in accessing and navigating medical and non-medical services and supports. Build on the work of the Pediatric Practice Enhancement Project.
 - ◇ Secure stable funding to support current programming and expand capacity.
- ◆ Provide training to primary care providers on strategies to incorporate child development and anticipatory guidance into primary care.
 - ◇ Promote the use of Bright Futures and other recognized tools and guidelines for developmental surveillance and anticipatory guidance.
 - ◇ Offer provider training at hospital grand rounds.
 - ◇ Offer training and support to providers related to maximizing reimbursement for medical home-type services, including developmental screening and care coordination.

PEDIATRIC PRACTICE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

The Pediatric Practice Enhancement Project (PPEP) supports pediatric practices in providing comprehensive and coordinated care to children and their families within a Medical Home. The project places trained parent consultants into pediatric primary care practices. The primary role of the parent consultant is to create linkages between the family, pediatric practice, and the community as a whole. All parent consultant activities are driven by the needs identified by individual families.

Currently, nine pediatric offices, each serving large numbers of children with special health care needs, participate in the project. Practices cover a large geographic area and represent several different practice types including private practices, community health centers, academic clinics, and a multi-specialty group practice.

The project is managed by the Rhode Island Parent Information Network and receives support from the Rhode Island Department of Human Services and Rhode Island Department of Health.



SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Healthy social and emotional development in early childhood provides the foundation for healthy behavior, cognitive development and school achievement. Social development refers to children's ability to interact with their peers and with adults. Emotional development includes such factors as children's perceptions of themselves and their abilities to both understand the feelings of other people and to interpret and express their own feelings. Throughout the Early Childhood Systems Plan there is the recognition that children build their social and emotional skills and capacities primarily through everyday social interactions with the adults at home, in child care, and in other settings. Components of this plan that address high quality early care and education and parenting and family support are

also strategies to ensure healthy social and emotional development in early childhood. Strategies within the medical home component of the plan are also critical to ensure that pediatric providers give anticipatory guidance to families, screen for behavioral problems and risks, and provide appropriate treatment and referral.

Rhode Island has struggled to provide appropriate services to children and families with significant behavioral health needs. Currently, there is widespread recognition that a system to address problems early and appropriately is needed, and that resources should be shifted from crisis intervention to primary prevention services. Many of the Successful Start goals incorporate the promotion of healthy social-emotional development through prevention, early identification, and early and complete response.

GOAL #11

All early childhood service providers have the capacity and ability to support the healthy social-emotional development of young children and families.

POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION AND SUPPORTS

The Positive Educational Partnerships initiative will bring together the state's community-based behavioral health and education investments in both elementary and pre-school settings to prevent the development of serious behavioral disorders in children and to offer assistance to children who have serious emotional disturbances in the least restrictive and most natural settings. The project will develop training and evidence-based interventions to build positive environments that best support children's learning and development. Within the school setting, educators will implement Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS), which is a shift from a reactive approach to managing problem behavior to one that is preventive and positive. This approach involves a partnership between health, behavioral health, child welfare and social service supports in the community. The Positive Educational Partnerships initiative is managed by the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, & Families and is supported by a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

FIRST STEPS FOR ACTION**PRIORITY STRATEGIES**

- ◆ Support ways for behavioral health specialists to provide consultation and direct services in natural settings, including primary care, child care, and parenting and family support programs.
 - ◇ Address barriers to providing services in natural settings.
 - ◇ Educate the provider community on successful local and national models.
 - ◇ Develop an effective financing strategy.
 - ◇ Build on the work of the Foundations for Learning grants in Rhode Island.
- ◆ Expand and support the use of evidence-based tools and models in child care to build social-emotional protective factors in children.
 - ◇ Train and support child care providers in the use of the Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment tools and activities.
 - ◇ Implement Strengthening Families and Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) in early care and education settings.
- ◆ Develop and offer multi-disciplinary professional development opportunities focused on early childhood social-emotional development, including workshops, in-service training, online classes, and conferences.
 - ◇ Identify and recruit persons qualified to conduct training, including professionals working in the field and higher education.
 - ◇ Conduct training in collaboration with professional organizations and other groups that provide training to service providers.

SUBSEQUENT STEPS

- ◆ Increase the capacity of early childhood service providers to address parent and family behavioral health problems, through on-site treatment or referral to services.
- ◆ Incorporate social-emotional development into higher education curriculum for child care providers, pediatricians, and other service providers.

GLOSSARY

BRIGHT FUTURES

Bright Futures is a vision, philosophy, set of expert guidelines, and a practical developmental approach to providing health supervision for children and adolescents from birth through age 21. Bright Futures publishes tools and materials and provides technical assistance and training to health professionals, families, and communities to promote children's health and development.

CEDARR FAMILY CENTERS

CEDARR (Comprehensive, Evaluation, Diagnosis, Assessment, Referral and Re-evaluation) Centers serve as a one-stop source of information for Rhode Island families with children with special health care needs. CEDARR Centers provide information, professional assessment, specialty clinical evaluation, care planning, coordination of services, and ongoing referral assistance and support.

CHILD CARE SUPPORT NETWORK

The Child Care Support Network is a comprehensive support system for both center-based and family child care providers in Rhode Island offering on-site technical assistance, training workshops, and access to resources.

CHILD OUTREACH

Child Outreach screening is sponsored by the Rhode Island Department of Education and is offered through the local school districts. It is a screening process to evaluate the developmental, speech, vision and hearing needs for children ages three through five.

DEVEREAUX EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSESSMENT (DECA)

The DECA Program is a strength-based assessment and planning system for children ages two through five. Based on resilience theory, DECA is a five-step system designed to support early childhood teachers, mental health professionals, and parents in their goal of helping children develop healthy social/emotional skills and reduce challenging behaviors.

EARLY HEAD START/HEAD START

Head Start and Early Head Start are comprehensive child development programs that serve children from birth to age 5, pregnant women, and their families. They are child-focused programs and have the overall goal of increasing the school readiness of young children in low-income families.

EARLY INTERVENTION

Early Intervention serves families with children birth to three years old with a medical condition that may affect their growth and development, a known developmental delay, or a risk of delayed growth or development. Early Intervention provides complete developmental testing for children, services to meet the child's and family's special needs, and links to resources in the community.

FAMILY OUTREACH PROGRAM

The Family Outreach Program is a statewide home-visiting program for families with young children. Families of newborns are referred to the program if they screen positive for specific risk factors at birth. Family Outreach Program nurses, social workers, and trained paraprofessionals provide home and developmental assessments, referrals to community services, and parent education.

FOUNDATIONS FOR LEARNING

Through the Foundations for Learning grant program, the U.S. Department of Education provides funding to community organizations to deliver services to children and their families with significant risk factors for poor outcomes. Grantees develop services and programs that foster children's emotional, behavioral, and social development, coordinate and facilitate access to community resources, and develop early childhood community partnerships and build toward a community system of care. In Rhode Island, the Providence Center and Children's Friend and Service have been recipients of Foundations for Learning grants.

HEALTHY CHILD CARE RHODE ISLAND

Healthy Child Care Rhode Island promotes the healthy development of children in all child care settings through quality assurance, health consultation, and a medical home for all children.

HOME INSTRUCTION FOR PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL YOUNGSTERS (HIPPIY)

HIPPIY is a parent involvement and school readiness program that offers home based early childhood education for three, four and five year-old children working with their parent(s) as their first teacher. Parents are provided with a set of carefully developed materials, curriculum and books designed to strengthen children's cognitive skills, early literacy skills, social/emotional and physical development.

NURSE FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

The Nurse Family Partnership program is an evidence-based program of home visiting by registered nurses. Nurse-Family Partnership clients are low-income, first-time mothers, and client participation is voluntary. Highly educated nurse home visitors begin making visits during pregnancy and continue through the first two years of the child's life. The program has been proven to improve pregnancy outcomes, children's health and development, and family economic self-sufficiency.

OFFICE OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

In March 2004, Governor Donald L. Carcieri created the Office of Health and Human Services to facilitate cooperation among the five state agencies that administer Rhode Island's critical health care and social service programs. The Office was created to eliminate redundancies, maximize purchasing power, and to magnify the departments' joint ability to meet client needs. State Departments included in the Office are: Elderly Affairs, Health, Human Services, Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals, and Children, Youth and Families.

PARENTS AS TEACHERS

Parents as Teachers is an international early childhood parent education and family support program serving families throughout pregnancy until their child enters kindergarten. The program is designed to enhance child development and school achievement through parent education accessible to all families.

SCHOOL READINESS INDICATORS INITIATIVE

Rhode Island is one of 17 states that participated in the national School Readiness Indicators Initiative. Through this work, Rhode Island state agencies and policymakers identified a set of indicators to track progress in meeting the goal that all children enter school healthy and ready to learn. These 12 key indicators emphasize the importance of physical health, economic well-being and attention to child development. The set of school readiness indicators can be used as a starting point in developing indicators to track progress in meeting the goals of Successful Start. Rhode Island's School Readiness Indicators report, *Benchmarks for Progress: Preparing Rhode Island's Children to Succeed in School* is available at www.GettingReady.org or www.rikidscount.org.

T.E.A.C.H.

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project gives scholarships to child care workers to complete course work in early childhood education and to increase their compensation. All T.E.A.C.H. scholarships link continuing education with increased compensation and require that recipients and their sponsoring child care programs share in the cost. The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project is an umbrella for a variety of different scholarship programs for teachers, directors and family child care providers working in regulated child care programs.

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David R. Gifford, Director



Rhode Island Department of Children,
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Patricia Martinez, Director



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and
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Peter McWalters, Commissioner



Rhode Island Department of Human Services
Ron Lebel, Acting Director



Rhode Island Office of Health and
Human Services
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