

for Michigan's Children

April 11, 2011

Great Start Collaboratives in Michigan

In 2003, the Great Start initiative was launched with the mission of ensuring that all Michigan families have the resources and supports they need to provide a great start for their children from birth to age five. In 2005, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) was created as a public/private initiative to take the lead in developing Michigan's comprehensive early childhood system. At the core of this system are the local Great Start Collaboratives (GSCs), created through the state's Intermediate School Districts.

Today, Michigan has 54 GSCs that serve all counties in the state, and bring together parent leaders and community decision-makers from diverse sectors, including education, business, clergy, law enforcement, service providers and parents; to create and implement school readiness plans. Each GSC partners with a local Great Start Parent Coalition (GSPC), comprised of parents of children under the age of 12, who provide a parent voice as they educate community and state leaders about the importance of investing in young children. Over 12,000 parents statewide are involved in GSCs and GSPCs.

Building a more efficient and accessible system in communities

Currently early childhood programs in Michigan are funded by different sources at varying levels of investments, each with different regulations and eligibility requirements. This fragmented system makes it very difficult for parents of young children to access needed services. The purpose of the GSCs and GSPCs is to work at the local level to coordinate and integrate early childhood programs to better serve young children and their families. Through local coordination and improved efficiencies, young children and their families have better access to the physical and social emotional health, child care and early learning, parenting leadership, and family support services they need to ultimately succeed in school.

GSC efforts across the state have leveraged over \$10 million in investments from local businesses and foundations for local early childhood programs and services.

Through their efforts, GSCs and GSPCs are creating an accountable, data-driven, locally-focused early childhood system in Michigan that links parents and children to services and those services to each other, thereby increasing efficiency and ultimately the number of children ready to succeed in school. For example, in Midland County, the local GSC initiated a partnership between Head Start and the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) – Michigan's preschool program for at-

risk four-year-olds. Together, they created a single intake form and database. The county-wide database keeps track of which programs are filling up and allows for shared marketing, while the single intake form allows parents to rank their top choices of early education programs for their children. Once completed by parents, the forms are submitted to the Great Start Regional Child Care Resource Center satellite office in Midland County where a county-wide database and wait list are maintained. Parents who request the GSRP program but are eligible for Head Start receive a phone call explaining the benefits of Head Start so that parents can make informed decisions, and vice versa. This provides a "one-stop-shop" model for parents who are looking for an early education program for their children

while allowing the programs to maximize and streamline enrollment through coordination and collaboration.

In addition, GSC efforts across the state have leveraged over \$10 million in investments from local businesses and foundations for local early childhood programs and services. For example, when Shiawassee County GSC was launched, a financial assessment was conducted to identify monies coming into the county from various sources. This assessment brought agencies and hospitals together to discuss options for leveraging additional dollars as well as to collaborate efficiently to maximize the impact of their funding. Through their efforts, the Shiawassee GSC has used creative financing to braid, blend and leverage more than \$1 million to support local early childhood initiatives. The blended funding has allowed agencies to fund and share positions, eliminate or minimize duplication of services and expand the value of each important funding dollar. In partnership with the Shiawassee GSC and Shiawassee County Community Mental Health (CMH), funds were maximized to increase the number of developmental delay screenings provided to young children. Since Shiawassee CMH can draw down federal dollars for their services, by providing 15 percent of Shiawassee's GSC money to CMH, CMH was able to draw down 85 percent matching federal money to expand mental health services for young children.

[Visit the ECIC website](#) for more examples of the great work of local GSCs.

State-level coordination: the role of the Early Childhood Investment Corporation

At the state level, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) supports local efforts by providing oversight and guidance to GSCs as they develop their strategic plans, as well as ongoing technical assistance, support and monitoring of GSC collaborative efforts, including the work of GSPCs. ECIC also organizes and sponsors regional and statewide technical assistance meetings and conferences that provide important opportunities for GSC and GSPC directors and other community leaders to share strategies and lessons learned.

Funding

In fiscal year (FY) 2007, \$1 million in new funding was approved through the K-12 School Aid budget for the creation and support of local GSCs and GSPCs, with funds going directly to Intermediate School Districts as the fiscal agents for the Collaboratives. Funding for these local entities was increased to \$1.75 million in FY 2008 and to \$6.75 million in FY 2009. In FY 2010, funding was cut to \$6 million, where it remains in the current fiscal year.

Fiscal year 2012 budget recommendations:

In his budget plan for FY 2012, Governor Snyder has recommended that funding for the local GSCs and the GSPCs be continued at the current level of \$6 million. As the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for K-12 School Aid began its budget deliberations last month, Senator Howard Walker (R-Traverse City), Chair of the Subcommittee, proposed a budget plan that included eliminated the \$6 million in funding for GSCs. His proposal has yet to be voted on by the Subcommittee.

Read [Michigan's Children's Action Alert](#) on steps you can take to help preserve funding for Great Start Collaboratives.