

Budget Advocacy: Two FY 2017 Proposals that Deserve Your Support

April 19, 2016 - Two positive developments for Michigan children and families are included in proposals for the FY2017 state budget. Both represent increased commitment in areas that have seen inadequate investment for many years. In each case, the plans would provide more support needed to ensure that children whose families are facing significant challenges grow up healthy and thrive.

One would require the Departments of Health and Human Services and Education to identify how Michigan can maximize federal Medicaid funds to support *Early On*. *Early On*, a program that helps families with infants and toddlers birth to age three who have a developmental delay or disability, has traditionally received no state funding leaving many eligible families under-served. The other provision would provide up to \$2.4 million over three years to expand “Parents as Partners,” a peer-based mentoring program, and another \$7.2 million for the Family Reunification Program – both serving parents whose children have been placed in the foster care system. Here is a summary:

Early On: Unlike other states, Michigan doesn’t have a statewide appropriation for *Early On* services, though the recent state appropriation to help Flint children impacted by the lead-in-water crisis this year is a welcomed change. Now the budget plan put forth by the House includes an important study to identify how Medicaid funds can be used to improve *Early On* services to eligible Michigan families. Medicaid is the second largest source of revenue nationally for IDEA Part C – known as *Early On* in our state – but Michigan has not put the pieces in place to take full advantage of this funding source. The House targets \$50,000 for the study, which includes general fund dollars matched by federal Medicaid funds, while the Senate plan does not include this provision at all. Should it be approved, the study will be a good first step to understand how Michigan can increase funding for *Early On* services and is a hopeful development as we continue our fight for a significant state investment for *Early On*. Join us and [ask your senator](#) to support the *Early On* Medicaid study.

Family Reunification and Parent Partners: More than half of the number of children who are removed from their homes for substantiated abuse and neglect return home to their birth parents. To improve the chances for reunification, and improve the lives of children and their parents who are reunified, Michigan has operated the Parent Partners pilot program in Wayne County, and other Family Reunification Programs in select communities. Now, budget plans presented by the Governor, House and Senate would expand the Parent Partners pilot to Genesee and Macomb Counties, and the Family Reunification Program to additional counties as well. The two legislative plans make provisions for just one year, while the Governor’s plan recommends consistent funding for three years. The Parent Partners program pairs parents whose children are in out-of-home care with mentors who successfully reunited with their children for intensive one-on-one assistance.

Read more: [Better Financing Early On Michigan Early Intervention](#)

Read: [Spotlight on Parent Partners](#)