

Proven Plays for Early Childhood

Michigan's economy is surging – unemployment is 4% for the first time since 2000. However, labor force participation remains low, especially for young adults, Black and Hispanic parents, and parents in rural and high-poverty areas, with business leaders and workers alike citing the cost and availability of child care as a major barrier. Underserved parents and their children are both at risk of falling behind Michigan's economic boom. Without access to high-quality child care, parents aren't getting to work and their families are falling behind.

Beyond child care, other early childhood programs work with families to develop skills and access services to promote their young children's healthy growth. Without them, kids enter kindergarten behind their peers, and stay behind. Third grade reading test scores in Michigan remain troubling, but a looming third grade retention crisis offers an opportunity to rethink how we support the factors that are proven to drive a child's early growth: their parents, their health, and their social and cognitive development.

Quality Care for Children

Access to high quality child care has been proven to close gaps in early learning by helping young children develop the social and cognitive skills they need to interact with others along with basic literacy and numeracy. High quality child care is also essential for parents to engage in work, job training, or education to support themselves and their children, but many families in need cannot access state support.



Invest federal and state funds into child care family support eligibility and provider payments, which will ensure young children are closing the early learning gap, protecting against poverty-related risk factors, and enabling their parents to access a job or job preparation.



Create an enhanced child care support system for families in the foster care system who struggle to find child care even though they automatically qualify for support.

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A Healthy Start

Ensuring children are born healthy and are developmentally on track results in a healthy start for young children. This includes access to developmental screenings and services for every family whose infant or toddler has or is at risk of delay and support for parents and other caregivers to ensure opportunities to build early skills needed to thrive.

- X Preserve and expand recent state investment in *Early On Michigan*** to provide recognized levels of service to all eligible infants and toddlers. *Early On* provides screening and services to families with infants and toddlers with and at risk of acquiring a developmental delays, equipping families in their homes with skills to help their children, often preventing the need for future costly K-12 special education services.
- X Create a single unified system** that serves infants and toddlers eligible for both *Early On* early intervention services and Michigan Mandatory Special Education. The current “two-tiered” system results in uneven services, creating equity gaps.
- X Increase state support for mental health consultants** to provide supports and services to providers and families in child care settings across the state in both formal and in-home settings.

Supporting Parents

Supporting parents to be their children’s first and best teachers results in safe, stable, and nurturing home environments that promote children’s early learning and development. Also critical is to enable communities to drive resource investments based on their own needs.

- X Increase state support to provide statewide access to voluntary evidence-based home visiting programs based on local needs assessments.** These quality programs work with families exhibiting some risk to promote early learning and healthy child development and improve birth and early learning outcomes.
- X Increase state support for local abuse and neglect prevention councils** which coordinate community support, assess needs, and build partnerships to provide needed services for families who without concrete support might experience trauma.
- X Increase state support for child abuse and neglect prevention direct services statewide.** Community-identified needs lead to evidenced practices like home visiting, parenting classes, counseling, child care, referrals, transportation and prenatal care for families preventing instability.