

PLAYBOOK

FOR

MICHIGAN'S CHILDREN

2019-2020 Legislative Priorities

**STRONG
FAMILIES**



**THRIVING
STUDENTS**



**READY
LEARNERS**



**SUCCESSFUL
TRANSITIONS**



Michigan's
Children

michiganschildren.org

OUR CORE POLICY PRINCIPLES

“Will this change the odds for children, youth, and families in Michigan?”

It's the most important question we ask ourselves when we begin our work, and it's how we decide what work to pursue with each new legislature and administration. To know whether our policy priorities are meeting our mission, we evaluate whether or not they will:



Close the Gaps

Discouraging and unacceptable gaps in a wide variety of life outcomes for children, youth and families begin early and persist over a lifetime, with race, ethnicity, geography and family economics continuing to predict success. The most effective public policies and investments not only improve overall well-being, but also close gaps in access to resources and opportunities.

Grow Healthy Minds

Raising Michigan's children isn't rocket science—it's brain science. Healthy development and good mental health are critical for the growth and well-being of children and youth and for the stability of families. Public policy and investment must promote access to concrete supports and services. This is critical to prevent harmful experiences that alter brain development in ways that make it difficult to participate and excel, and to better align services to changing brain architecture of children, youth, and those who care for them.

Listen to Youth and Families

To pursue the most effective solutions for children, youth, and families in Michigan, decision-makers need accurate information about what works and what doesn't. This means that our legislature and administration must ground their work in data and research and create space for the voices of youth and parents to impact policy conversations. Children, youth and families experience the outcomes of lawmaker decisions every day. Their voices are not always included in decision-making and yet their perspective on whether programs are accessible and effective and for whom is crucial information for design and investment.

Make Government Work

Michigan's many state and local agencies administer scores of effective programs and collect millions of points of data, but existing resources and administrative staffing are often insufficient for making information and services work together to improve the lives of citizens. The needs of families don't neatly fit into individual programs or departments, requiring structures that enable cross-agency information sharing, research, constituent voice and program planning and investment.

Support Professionals

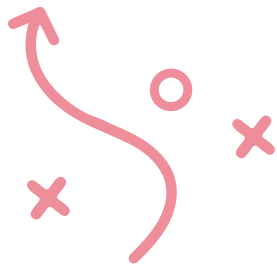
The individuals providing services to children and families across the state are helping grow Michigan's economy by strengthening our talent pipeline. Many professionals who serve children and families, however, do not currently earn wages that reflect their contributions to our state's economic growth and development. For example, in 2016, child care workers and mental health direct care professionals made under \$10.00/hour on average. Still others are overburdened with high caseloads, limited professional support, or populations with many needs and few available services. Public policy and investment decisions must also fortify those who serve kids and families on the front lines.

Build on Progress

Many programs have become less accessible to Michigan citizens over recent decades and child and family outcomes remain far below acceptable levels. However, Michigan has moved the ball forward on a number of initiatives in recent years, and we must recognize and build upon that progress. (See page 12 for examples.)



PROVEN PLAYS FOR READY LEARNERS



51%

of families who are eligible for state child care assistance don't receive it.

Source: datacenter.kidscount.org
(Children Ages 0-12 Eligible for and Receiving Subsidized Care)

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. Under-served 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, compromising families ability to succeed.

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.**

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 access to support for parents and other caregivers to ensure opportunities to build early skills needed to thrive.

- ✗ **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 delay, equipping families in their homes with skills to help their children, often preventing the need for future costly K-12 special education services.
- ✗ **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.
- ✗ **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 and the needs of their families.

- ✗ **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.
- ✗ **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.
- ✗ **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, which help prevent instability.

Family instability at an early age leads to decreased reading test scores.

65%

reading proficiency of 3rd graders whose families **were not** investigated for abuse or neglect.

57%

reading proficiency of 3rd graders whose families **were** investigated for abuse or neglect.

Source: www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/jacobs-and-ryan-report.pdf

