



Increasing State Investments in Early Care and Education: Lessons Learned from Advocates and Best Practices



Prepared by Voices for America's Children for the Annie E. Casey Foundation
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FOREWORD

Voices for America's Children (Voices) is a national, nonpartisan, nonprofit child advocacy organization committed to speaking out for the well-being of children at the federal, state and local levels of government. With 60 members in nearly every state, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands, we advocate for effective public policies in order to improve the lives of children throughout the United States.

Voices believes that quality early care and education (ECE) initiatives are important public investments with the potential to greatly enhance the lives of America's children. In the context of this report, ECE refers to state efforts that support childcare subsidies, quality improvement initiatives, provider reimbursement rates, workforce development, increasing income eligibility, family friend and neighbor care (FFN), and reducing wait lists for services. These policy issues and their relationship to child well-being concern child advocates within the Voices network.

This report is based on interviews of 11 member organizations within the Voices network in ten states which have recently passed an early care and education legislative initiative (either a new policy or program or expanded funding). It is Voices' hope that this report will provide advocates with proven strategies for making progress in securing access to early learning opportunities for all children, and demonstrate the possibilities for children when advocacy strategies, political will and fiscal opportunities align. We believe that the lessons learned and the tactics used will both inform and impact federal, state and local policy decisions based on the experiences documented within this report.

As with all of our work, Voices welcomes comments on the report. In addition, to learn more about the Voices network or how to help America's children by supporting the mission of Voices, please go to www.voices.org.



William H. Bentley
President & CEO, Voices for America's Children

Spring, 2008



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EARLY INVESTMENT MATTERS

Young children have approximately 1,825 days between birth and the day they arrive at kindergarten. Thanks to significant scientific breakthroughs in the last two decades, we now understand that these precious days mark a period of explosive cognitive, social and emotional growth when over 90 percent of brain development occurs. Science confirms that this period is critical in forming the foundation of emotionally healthy, creative, resourceful, intellectually curious, socially connected, entrepreneurial members of society.

It is now clear that the effectiveness of many of our public investments is determined by how well our children are nurtured during this period. This is particularly relevant to the effectiveness of public education systems, which comprise the single largest investment in most state budgets. There is also significant evidence that many other expensive governmental outlays could be drastically reduced - including criminal justice, penal and health care costs - with better health and development investments in the early years.

A growing number of leaders – including economists, scientists, elected officials, business CEOs, educators and others – are recognizing the wisdom of early investment as a crucial strategy for creating the well-educated and creative people needed to maintain American prosperity and international leadership. Beyond the good intentions and sound bites, however, lies the daunting task of creating thoughtful, bipartisan, outcome-based policies that will achieve real results for young children.

Ten very different states have recently created significant new public investments in early care and education (ECE) programs. In every state, the political leadership, the resources and sophistication of advocates, connections and relationships with legislators and political influencers, political realities and public will came together in different ways. This paper outlines the lessons learned by advocates¹ and provides guidance to others seeking to increase investments for young children.

Voices Member Organizations Profiled

Alabama	VOICES for Alabama's Children
Colorado	Colorado Children's Campaign
Missouri	Citizens for Missouri's Children
New Mexico	New Mexico Voices for Children
Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children Public Citizens for Children and Youth
Rhode Island	Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
Virginia	Voices for Virginia's Children
Washington	The Children's Alliance
Wisconsin	Wisconsin Council on Children and Families
Wyoming	Wyoming Children's Action Alliance

SUMMARY OF STATE SUCCESSES

■ **WASHINGTON:** \$184.2 million to expand and improve childcare subsidies, pre-k and full-day kindergarten and family support and home visitation programs; pilot a quality rating and improvement system; and invest in a variety of infrastructure elements (child care resource and referral, career ladder, childcare consultation, apprenticeships, and redesigning the early learning benchmarks).

■ **WYOMING:** \$6 million to expand childcare subsidies (particularly for infants and toddlers), scholarships for ECE professionals to pursue degrees or Child Development Associate certification, technical assistance for directors on business planning and management, education for parents on the early years, quality improvement technical assistance and family strengthening programs.

■ **WISCONSIN:** Significant expansion of childcare subsidies and pre-k proposed (*budget not yet finalized*).

■ **RHODE ISLAND:** \$5 million public-private facilities fund (2002 and 2007).

■ **PENNSYLVANIA:** \$200 million to expand access to pre-k programs, Keystone Stars quality rating and improvement system, and expand access to childcare subsidies.

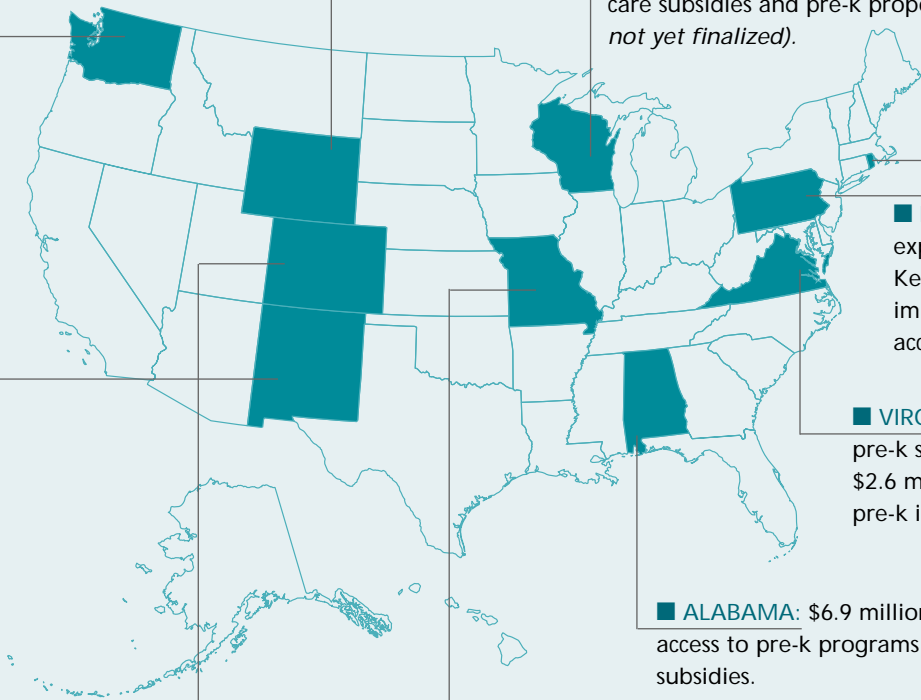
■ **VIRGINIA:** \$33.5 million increase in pre-k since 2002, with an additional \$2.6 million investment in 2007 to pilot pre-k in community-based programs.

■ **ALABAMA:** \$6.9 million to expand access to pre-k programs and child care subsidies.

■ **MISSOURI:** \$20 million to increase childcare subsidy eligibility.

■ **COLORADO:** Over \$27 million to expand pre-k and full-day kindergarten, quality rating and improvement system, and early childhood councils.

■ **NEW MEXICO:** \$12.7 million to expand access to subsidies, pre-k, TEACH, WAGE\$, training/technical assistance, and child development grant program.



PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS FOR ADVOCATES

Although the ten states profiled in this paper differ widely in size, political dynamics, budget resources and the number of children under the age of 5 they all increased public funding for ECE programs.² In some states smart advocacy trumped partisan political tensions, budget shortfalls or other dynamics that traditionally have meant that children lose in the political process. In other states the stars aligned and greatly aided the work of advocates. In one state a booming economy and lack of childcare caused employers and employees alike to demand better options and a friendly governor took the lead; in another, voter discontent with severe cuts to safety net programs generated new support from conservative leaders who viewed improving access to childcare subsidies as a way of helping vulnerable children and business simultaneously.

The ten states had ten very different experiences with how additional resources came to be invested for young children. Overall, it is clear that more and more people – elected officials and the voters – understand the importance of the early years. A number of governors have made early childhood investments a key priority. The echo chamber effect – or the impression that ‘everyone’ is talking about early childhood – has clearly bolstered state advocacy efforts. Organizations like the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Governors Association and others have brought this message to elected officials at national conferences and state-sponsored meetings. Scientists have announced new breakthroughs that have reinforced the impact of early experience and provided powerful new insights into which investments hold the greatest promise. Reports from business groups, economists, law enforcement and other unexpected messengers have all underscored the wisdom of early investment and encouraged leaders from other sectors to become involved in ECE advocacy.

What differed substantially among the states was the degree to which advocates capitalized upon these and other opportunities. The attitude and approach of advocates to elected officials, the degree to which advocates understood the political nuances well enough to successfully maneuver through the legislative process, and the depth of authentic partnerships with each other and others, particularly power brokers from other sectors, varied widely.

SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED

- Know Where You are Going. Create a Focused Policy Agenda.
- Create Accountable ECE Investments.
- Build and Sustain Broad-Based Coalitions.
- The Message Really Matters. Get it Right. Keep it Short. Repeat, Repeat, Repeat.
- The Messenger who Delivers the Message is Critical.
- Build Relationships with Elected Officials.
- Cultivate the Grassroots.
- Build Relationships with the Media.
- Do not Move too Fast for the Field.
- Change is Gradual. Small Steps Over Time Create Big Change.
- Start Early.
- Understand Politics and Play the Game as it Is – Not as You Wish it Would Be.
- Create Strategies for Long-term Success.

LESSONS LEARNED: GUIDANCE FOR ECE ADVOCACY

Know Where You Are Going. Create a Focused Policy Agenda.

Because young children and their families have so many needs, it is easy to create a laundry list of the many policies that need to be changed or programs that should be expanded. Advocates found this approach is rarely effective. It takes focused education and lobbying to get a few substantive bills through the process. Trying to get too many things done at once fragments the energy and the message and can confuse legislators. Narrow the needs down to a handful of policies and focus on them. Three to five priorities that everyone can remember is ideal.

Create a policy agenda that spans birth to age 5: Polling consistently shows stronger public support for investments for preschool-age children,³ yet the research is clear that the earliest years of birth to age 3 are the most vulnerable and critical for children's development. Enormous expansion has certainly happened in pre-k and this has become the proverbial "low-hanging ECE fruit" in many states. Advocates should also note that a number of states have created significant investments for infants and toddlers. In Washington, creating a carefully balanced policy agenda that addresses the needs of children birth to age 5 began to address the needs of the youngest children and also created a larger tent for many advocates to work together.

Policy goals should include increasing appropriations and building an infrastructure to make ECE work for the long term: Some policymakers want to focus only on increasing the number of slots. The best advocates are focused on accessibility, affordability, and quality. While many children are desperately in need of services, there are also significant infrastructure needs in the early childhood system to ensure that quality programs exist and can be expanded. Many states are wrestling with governance to align current investments and programs to best serve children, working on strategies to create a qualified ECE workforce, developing program standards and figuring out quality assurance (often through quality rating and improvement systems) as program funding increases are sought. In Wyoming, where unemployment is under 3 percent and the economy is booming, the lack of quality childcare in the state was affecting employers' ability to recruit and retain employees and employees' ability to remain employed. Advocates not only expanded access to childcare subsidies, but also secured funding for professional development scholarships, technical assistance, and other investments to improve the quality of the programs and build capacity for the long term.

The "correct" policy agenda will be different in each state based on political dynamics, opportunities, existing infrastructure and resources available: While the needs of children are constant across states, the opportunities to tackle specific issues vary widely. Create a policy agenda that is a careful balance of what children need, what the governor and/or legislature are willing to fund, what the public supports, and the priorities of advocacy groups. Do not be afraid to be bold in what you ask for but understand the realities of your state.

Vet the policy priorities and modify as needed to create broad ownership of the goals: The ideas of advocates must be subjected to the scrutiny of others, particularly those experienced in the political process. This does not mean that everyone gets to have their ideas formally reflected in the policy agenda and strategy. Be judicious and strategic by engaging appropriate people to increase ownership and improve ideas.

Create Accountable ECE Investments.

There is clearly increased interest in early childhood as evidenced by bipartisan leadership on the issue in a growing number of states. In order to increase the ECE momentum and ensure the goodwill does not run out, it is important for evaluation and outcomes measures to be built into ECE programs to show the impact of the investments. These do not need to be elaborate, expensive, longitudinal evaluation designs. A few powerful data points that show increased readiness for success in school or kindergarten teacher reports on an increase in children's readiness, for example, can make a huge difference. The states that proactively included accountability measures in their work found the results to be very powerful.

Welcome evaluation and outcomes: While some social service professionals shy away from accountability and spend untold energy outlining all of the intervening variables that could decrease the effectiveness of the program, embracing accountability is a refreshing approach that gets the attention of elected officials.

Design the accountability measures: Create the structures and the outcomes by which ECE investments should be measured up front. In the era of accountability, this both increases the credibility of the policies being promoted and prevents people who do not understand the field from creating inappropriate measurements for the ECE programs. "We cannot indefinitely come back for more investment without clear outcomes and documentation. And we want to create the benchmarks. Then we define the rules of the game and create benchmarks that will be good for children – and position this work for increased investment in the future," said one state leader.⁴

Build and Sustain Broad-Based Coalitions.

No matter the size of the state or the political dynamics, successful advocates always joined forces with others. The texture of the states was vastly different and therefore the partners who created the most powerful coalitions varied widely. In some states, the number of partners required to move an initiative forward were few and focused; in other states, the numbers were large and diverse. "We had to start from scratch after a coalition dissolved into infighting a few years ago," said one successful coalition leader. "We worked hard to keep it focused on the children who would benefit from our work. We knew from experience that if our work was focused on personalities or organizations trying to be in the limelight we would fall apart. We reminded each other every meeting that this was all about helping kids, not the adults."

In all states, the impact of a few key partners made a transformative difference in the effectiveness of their work. Sometimes this transformative leader was the child advocacy organization, sometimes it was a business entity or other partner.

Engage the right players: Nearly every successful coalition involved most of these partners:

- **Early childhood stakeholders:** such as state Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC) chapters, parent groups, family childcare organizations, resource and referral agencies, Head Start/Early Head Start, parent education coalitions and faith-based preschool associations.
- **Related partners:** such as K-12, unions, pediatricians, business (both individual companies and associations like Chambers of Commerce), law enforcement and faith-based groups.

In New Mexico, a faith-based group and pediatricians were instrumental to the success on ECE. In Washington and Missouri, a Chamber of Commerce from one of the large cities was very helpful.

Create safe environments where coalition partners can openly and honestly share their differences and come to consensus in private: Partners must commit to sharing their desires, bottom lines and non-negotiables - and be actively engaged as the inevitable differences come together and get ironed out.

Anything said “in the parking lot” should be said openly in coalition meetings in order for the group to function effectively and build a strong bond. Wisconsin and Colorado advocates learned that when partners feel that they can be honest and will be heard – even when they are not thrilled with the outcome – they keep coming back to the table.

Transparency and trust are a necessity. Communicate, communicate and communicate: Decisions are made quickly and things change rapidly in a legislative environment. Build trust and relationships so partners believe that you have their best interests at heart and are making decisions that have these interests in the forefront of your thinking. Help partners understand what is happening and why decisions are being made. Stay in close contact. Check in regularly.

Understand the organizational culture of your partners and create ways for everyone to meaningfully contribute: The processing and decision-making style of many nonprofits differs significantly from the processing and decision-making style of many businesses and private sector entities. Creating one single big table where everyone who cares about early childhood works together may result in alienating partners, particularly those who work with a different style. Be sensitive to this dynamic and create mechanisms for involving those who care about the issue in ways that will keep them engaged, such as a monthly 30-minute phone call to update each other on progress and develop strategy.

Even when there is tension behind the scenes, partners must have the discipline to act together and stick to the script in public: Unity among stakeholders is critical – and priceless. Partners must speak with a united, clear, consistent voice. Coalitions must commit to be like the Three Musketeers – “one for all and all for one.” If the coalition is not united it can give up its influence at the most critical moment in a debate.

Identify any dynamics that are making the coalition less effective and move quickly to change them: Coalition leadership – and the leaders of the organizations within the coalition – should regularly assess how the coalition is working and address any issues that are blunting the effectiveness of the work. Sometimes groups get into bad habits. Sometimes a powerful person might have suggested something that is now not working and coalition members are too polite (or scared) to say so. Sometimes coalition members are too busy with their full-time jobs to devote adequate time to the coalition. It is worth the time to take problems up. It will save everyone time and aggravation in the end and make coalition efforts more effective.

Recognize that being a part of a coalition is hard work: Individual organizations do not always get what they want and political compromise is rarely easy for the most passionate among us. There can be tension among the partners. There can be real and significant differences in policy approaches. Make sure there is a benefit to each of the members for being involved. In Wisconsin, leaders checked in with coalition members regularly to make sure the coalition process was working. They listened carefully to member feedback and made adjustments as needed.

Take the right role and understand that it may change: Sometimes your organization will lead, and sometimes it needs to follow. Take the lead when no one else can or wants to, but whenever it is clear that change is needed for children. There is no need to recreate something if someone else is doing it. In Colorado, advocates have built relationships and credibility by supporting others when they are already working on an issue.

The Message Really Matters. Get it Right. Keep it Short. Repeat, Repeat, Repeat.

The intricacies of early childhood investments are many. When child advocates talk in language of acronyms (CCDBG, FPL, QRIS, Title I, Title XX), programs (Head Start, Smart Start, Healthy Start, Early Start, Part C, Part B) or go into more detail and history than elected officials can attend to, children lose. “When we talk in alphabet soup, everyone’s eyes glaze over,” observed one advocate. Making the complex simple is a fine art. Through paying attention to the results of polls and focus groups, advocates can sharpen their message and make their communication efforts more effective.⁵

Determine what resonates with your elected officials and voters. Repeat, repeat, repeat: Using language and ideas that get advocates excited may or may not work with elected officials and voters. Do not waste precious time and energy speaking in a language others do not understand. Meet the public where they are so they will be engaged. Test the messages – formally through polling if the budget allows – and identify the top two or three messages that resonate with voters. Then repeat, repeat, repeat until everyone accepts your message as fact. Beyond the important work of helping to refine the message, polls can have other value. In Alabama, advocates commissioned a poll on ECE jointly designed by two pollsters that each had credibility with a different party. Each pollster presented the same message tailored to the party’s leadership, ultimately creating a competition between the parties for which would have the best policy proposal because each party saw the strategic appeal of ECE with the voters.

Make the argument in evidenced-based ways: New Mexico advocates learned that rather than using moral (“it’s the right thing to do”) or logical (“children need a place to go while their parents work”) arguments, it was most effective to make the case about how ECE investments pay off in dollars and cents. A similar lesson was learned in Washington. While most legislators were not familiar with the specifics on the policies that passed, they all knew that “\$1 invested now saved up to \$7 later.” The return on investment (ROI) message, particularly when used by business leaders, resonated across political ideology and provided a consistent way of speaking about the importance of early childhood investment.



In addition to this message, other states have also been successful pointing to the growing scientific evidence on early brain development and sharing in concrete terms how ECE investments have a proven impact on the effectiveness, efficiency and cost of other systems, such as K-12 education.

Make it personal to the listener: Policymakers want to know how an issue or policy affects the people they represent. Involve parents, kindergarten teachers, early childhood professionals, pediatricians and others who can speak to the importance of quality early childhood investments in very personal ways. In Wyoming, advocates made sure legislators in key districts heard about ECE and how it was affecting constituents’ families and businesses before the session started.

This helped make it a priority issue when the legislature convened. In Pennsylvania, over 700 visits, hundreds of phone calls and over 38,000 e-mail contacts were made from constituents to key legislators in one session, which helped legislators understand what a difference increased access to ECE programs would have in their communities, and they supported significant new investments as a result.

Make the complex simple: Provide short summaries to decision makers and other stakeholders. Most policymakers do not have time to read more than one-page briefs and likely will not read longer documents. Virginia advocates create one-page briefs that simplify each of the priority issues and outline what impact policy action might have.

Know your opposition and be prepared to counter their arguments quickly, but respectfully.

Never let an attack go unanswered: Respond to every attack, but not on their terms. “The other side may want to use their own statistics and data, but you should not feel compelled to try and rebut every point,” observed one advocate. Stick to your own message; do not be taken off message or let the opposition frame the debate. Wyoming advocates predicted the opposition’s message and proactively worked to blunt it before the opposition even spoke, making the opposition much less effective.

The Messenger is Critical.

While advocates have long talked about the importance of the early years, this message is heard differently when leaders with credibility on other issues talk about ECE.

Know who can sway decision makers and engage them to carry your water: Determine who has influence and build relationships. Deploy these leaders at high impact, strategic moments. In Washington, a Boeing vice president has been a highly committed, well-connected ally. In Alabama, the head of the statewide education lobby was instrumental to their cause.

In addition to powerful individuals, kindergarten teachers, law enforcement officials, business leaders, K-12 principals, unions and religious leaders aided advocacy efforts. The right mix of figures depended on the individual legislator, the makeup of the legislature and the politics in the state.

Build Relationships With Elected Officials.

Elected officials who are champions of your priorities are critical. Someone has to bird-dog the legislation through and out of committee, get it voted upon in each chamber, and make sure it makes it out of conference and into the budget and/or law. The challenge is that elected officials have many interests competing for their attention and everyone wants their issue to be the priority. “It is all about relationships, no matter how you slice it,” one advocate said. “People do things for people they like and trust. Elected officials are no different.”

Among the states profiled, legislative champions included governors and legislators in the house and senate. It makes a difference who your champion is – clearly, the chair of key committees can move something more quickly than a legislator who cares about the issue but is not on any of the committees that have jurisdiction over ECE investments. Elected officials with longevity and credibility, whether in the party in power or not traditionally associated with children’s advocacy, also helped states move the issues more quickly. In Missouri, bill sponsors who were considered more conservative and were not typically associated with children’s issues were key to the legislative success.

Help policymakers understand a path on which you can work together: Remember what policymakers want: a clear strategy to produce tangible benefits for their constituents. Advocates must develop trust with the policymakers that this is also the advocates’ goal, and convey that they are pragmatic enough to understand that policy development includes a series of compromises and negotiations. Working together through

these changes and investing the time and energy to develop relationships that will withstand the stressful legislative process is crucial. If possible, build these relationships before you ask for something.

Pennsylvania advocates are clear that building such relationships is critical to their success. They do not publish voting records, do not publicly criticize legislators for decisions made, and thank legislators at every opportunity for their leadership. In one instance a legislator in a leadership position voted against a key budget bill for a variety of nuanced reasons but publicly mentioned the importance of the ECE programs in that bill as something that needed to be seriously looked at by the legislature. Rather than criticizing him for his vote, advocates thanked him for his vocal leadership on the early childhood policies. This kept the relationship strong and set the stage for important work together that helped result in a massive new investment in ECE. On the other hand, advocates in two other states alienated legislative champions by publicly criticizing them for not fighting harder for an ECE bill. In hindsight, advocates realized that publicly criticizing the legislators when nothing more could be done damaged the relationships and could damage the ability to get things done next session.

This is not to suggest that advocates should not play hardball. It does mean that when advocates understand the intricacies of the legislative process and build relationships with elected officials they move beyond reactive criticism and create true partnerships with elected officials that can advance children's policy.

Not all elected officials are created equal: With well over 100 (and sometimes over 400) members in state legislatures, successful advocates focus on leadership, committee members and others in key positions. "We have to be clear on which legislators are friendly to our priorities, who will oppose them, and who is persuadable. We reinforce and check in with our supporters but we spend most of our time working on those legislators we can persuade," advised one advocate. Determine who these legislators listen to and enlist those individuals or groups to help reinforce your message. Do your homework and talk in terms each legislator will understand (e.g., if the legislator you are seeking to persuade is strong on economic development, talk ECE in those terms).

Cultivate the Grassroots.

Elected officials are keenly aware of what is important to their constituents and make decisions based on the needs and priorities of the people who elected them to office. The desires of competing interests will always exceed funding available. Elected officials will make hard choices based on what is of greatest interest to voters. Creating the dialogue between constituents and elected officials makes it clear that voters care about ECE and support increased investment in these programs.

Reach out to grassroots constituents regularly: Send regular e-mail alerts, mobilize constituents to call or write as needed, and regularly track the outcomes of the alerts. Use listservs, blogs and other alternative media if they are helpful. However, do not stop here. The states that built on this foundation and went beyond this standard grassroots outreach were the most successful. They trained advocates in key districts, worked with other advocacy groups to reach out to their lists, went into key districts off-session and engaged local grassroots advocates, helped constituents prepare for and accompanied them to meetings with legislators, and employed field organizers to do outreach.

Do not assume e-mail communication is enough: Many grassroots advocates, particularly those who work with young children, do not regularly access e-mail or the Internet. Engaging them in a more focused way is more expensive but the results can be invaluable. In Wisconsin, short-term contractors were engaged

to do outreach to parents and staff by going to early childhood programs. Members of a key committee received over 900 letters from these constituents and that committee recommended increasing funding for child care subsidies by \$70 million.

Grassroots forces can help or hurt you: Empower grassroots forces with the message and provide regular opportunities for them to use it to support the agenda. Advocates in Rhode Island have actively cultivated leaders of all types in their planning work, building relationships and networks that are extremely helpful during the legislative session.

Build Relationships With the Media.

There were varying levels of experience in successfully working with the media, yet all advocates agreed that earned media was invaluable to their efforts. Advocates who worked hard over a few years to educate the press and legislators on early childhood reported significant changes in knowledge and support of this topic. This was accomplished through strategically riding the coattails of national studies and reports, facilitating stories that provided a local perspective on a state or national trend, regularly visiting editorial boards around the state, conducting public talks with service and business clubs and following up with the press (invited by the advocacy group) afterward, issuing regular press releases, working with foundations to offer training on early childhood issues for reporters, and using targeted op-eds, editorials, statements of support, or similar strategies thoughtfully and often. Helping grassroots and grassroots activists write letters to the editor for media markets around the state also helped seed the issue in the media.

Build media networks: Build relationships with reporters and editorial boards. Be an impeccable source of information who is very responsive. Do not be afraid to be passionate, but do not ever lose the trust of the media by providing misleading or inaccurate information. Make sure every statement you make can be backed up.

Understand which media outlets impact opinion and work with them in strategic ways: Some states have one main media market and others have countless layers of media that reach very specific parts of the population. Understand which media markets influence your key constituents and cultivate regional and local partners to be the connection to the community. If possible, also work with media outlets that are favorites among persuadables or the opposition and have them convey your message.



Do Not Move Too Fast For the Early Childhood Field.

While there are individual exceptions, the early childhood field overall has been operating with so little funding for so long that change must happen incrementally or the field simply cannot absorb it. Many states reported that the turf battles were thicker on ECE than any issue they had ever engaged in. While all ECE leaders wanted significant improvements to ECE programs and increased funding, there was skepticism and lack of trust among some ECE leaders when new faces (business, unions, other advocates) came to the table. In some cases, the ECE leaders had a lack of experience with the legislative process, misunderstandings about how the process works or limited familiarity on how to influence legislative outcomes.

Do not underestimate how hard change is: Change cannot happen overnight. There are very practical challenges to building a sufficient supply of qualified teachers and having sufficient classroom space. Taking the programs to scale that research is very clear make a big difference is a challenge for any field. “There is also a big mindset shift for ECE advocates to go from trying to get people to pay attention to ECE to figuring out how to move fast enough to take best advantage of ECE momentum,” observed one advocate. “Knowing the right balance of how far to push how fast can come only from building coalitions and having good relationships with all stakeholders.” While there is wide agreement among advocates that broad ECE reforms and funding increases are needed, the capacity constraints of the ECE infrastructure in most states must also be considered.

Understand where the ECE leaders are: Engage ECE leaders and work together to hammer out policy proposals that address their dreams and concerns but that are also politically feasible. Capacity building, message and legislative training, and over-communication may be needed to build skills and reduce misunderstandings. “It simply takes time for any group of people to figure out how to work together. We had to create a structure and provide the time for this to happen. We moved slower than some of us wanted, but faster than others would have moved on their own. We all wanted good things for kids, but had really different ideas about how best to get there. We were ultimately successful because we found a balance that worked and developed trust to keep pushing each other,” reflected one advocate.



Change is Gradual. Small Steps Over Time Create Big Change.

Significant national child care legislation took over 30 years, and some states worked for five or more years in a focused way before any significant new resources were dedicated to early childhood. Chipping away incrementally can produce big gains for young children. As one advocate put it, “When big change is needed, this is not very satisfying. But when we look back over what we accomplished over five years when it did not feel like we were moving very fast, we really did a lot and children were better off as a result. This work also helped position us to take advantage of the big new opportunities that are before us now.”

You never know when the window of opportunity will open. Be ready: Have a good policy plan in place and cultivate a coalition that informs and supports this plan. Be strategic with communications and seed the environment for change. Keep working and be persistent. After term limits started and the state hit hard economic times, advocates went a number of years with few enhancements in Missouri. In 2007 the cumulative impact of their work and some fortunate political dynamics helped facilitate \$20 million in new

funding for child care subsidies. In Virginia, a new governor changed the climate overnight and advocates were prepared to capitalize on the opportunity, resulting in significant gains for young children.

Never underestimate the importance of administrative advocacy: Working from the inside, as well as the outside, is important. In Missouri and Pennsylvania, the gains made would not have happened without strong internal advocacy by department leadership. Internal advocacy is powerful even when it seems all is lost with the governor or legislature. As one advocate said, “There is a lot that can be done through administrative advocacy when times are lean, particularly in spending more effectively.”

Start Early.

Sometimes advocates start getting organized just before the legislative session. This is many months too late to impact the budgets proposed by the departments or the governor, which is the starting point for budget negotiations in the legislature. “Being involved in budget planning with the departments and the governor months before the session starts has been the single most important shift for us to become more effective advocates,” observed one state advocate.

Further, some perceptive advocates understand that nurturing elected officials while they are candidates is a smart path to success. By being involved in electoral politics with all candidates, trust and relationships were built that enabled the advocates to start working with the elected officials immediately upon election, rather than trying to start building the relationships during that busy time. As one advocate stated, “This way no matter who won the election, children were poised to be the big winners.”

Understand the budget and planning calendar and be involved early: The policy and appropriations process starts as departments and the governor plan their budgets, typically over the summer. Be involved and get your priorities reflected in as many places as you can. The more information you can provide the better: know what you want, how much it will cost, how many children it will serve, where the funding should come from, and the impact of the proposed investment. In Pennsylvania, securing investments for young children is seen as a year-round job.

Be involved in electoral politics (as the law allows): Build relationships with all candidates and their staff during the campaign. Become a trusted source for information, providing information quickly and volunteering solid policy recommendations equally to all candidates. Have political donors reinforce your message. Virginia and Pennsylvania advocates proactively provided information and resources equally to all candidates and encouraged conversations about ECE on the campaign trail, resulting in all candidates having strong early childhood proposals.

Understand Politics and Play the Game as it is — Not as You Wish it Would Be.

Politics is a complicated, tough process in which competing priorities fight for limited resources: Being morally right or having an ideologically pure policy plan is not enough. Many states found it helpful to engage a professional lobbyist who understands how the process works and can help create new dialogues and relationships on ECE issues.

Know what your non-negotiables are: Be clear internally how far an issue can be negotiated and when it is no longer good for children. Articulate this internally and externally and stick to your principles.

Create Strategies For Long-Term Success.

Commitment to ECE needs to be actively cultivated in local communities so that ECE investments are not considered just a fad or merely something that was a priority of the previous governor,

In order for success to happen long term, the commitment must be deeply felt at the community level: Various strategies have accomplished this – local children's services councils, grassroots networks actively cultivated in targeted districts of the state, planning teams who help inform the statewide policy and cultivate local support during the legislative session, grassroots involvement in elections – there is no single right way to get this done. The goal is to cultivate and regularly engage many voices to actively support investments in young children long after a specific leader departs.

Expand local success into statewide improvement: Take opportunities and figure out how to make local initiatives beneficial to the broadest number of children. In Colorado advocates have built on local successes to inform progress in other communities or statewide.

Conclusion.

While some of these lessons may appear to be contradictory, e.g., be prepared to move fast vs. understand that progress is slow, or use research vs. make it personal, in reality, successful advocates have learned that more often the ideas are complementary. A passionate, personal argument, supported by facts, for example, is more powerful than one that is only personal or only fact-based.

Many child advocates love the quote from Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of determined people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Yet many small, determined groups accomplish little without a clear strategy for success. The wisdom and guidance of the advocates who have been successful at increasing investments for early childhood shed much light on how to most effectively improve the lives of young children.

The 1,825 days are passing. Your work as advocates will influence how beneficial they are.

Endnotes

1. The lessons that are outlined in this report were learned across multiple, diverse states. However, the right mix of strategies deployed depended entirely upon the distinct situation in the state. While specific examples from states illustrate some of the lessons, the examples are meant to highlight the point, not to infer that the state mentioned was the only state deploying that strategy.

2. In order to be selected for this report, the states featured increased investments for young children through at least three of the following ways: created (or fostered) a political climate for change; contributed to building consensus among advocates and community leaders about the desired policy change(s) needed in early care and education; engaged the support of non-traditional organizational partners and community leaders; communicated messages that expressed the need for the desired policy changes and the need for action in early care and education to a broad audience; engaged policy-makers in a sustained campaign for change in early care and education; or had representation on the federal House or Senate Education and Labor committees.

3. <http://www.buildinitiative.org/communications.html>

4. No quotes in this paper are attributed to specific individuals out of respect to interviewees who requested their comments remain anonymous.

5. The BUILD Initiative has compiled a comprehensive list of polling and messages resources to inform messaging and communication efforts: <http://www.buildinitiative.org/communications.html>



ALABAMA

BACKGROUND

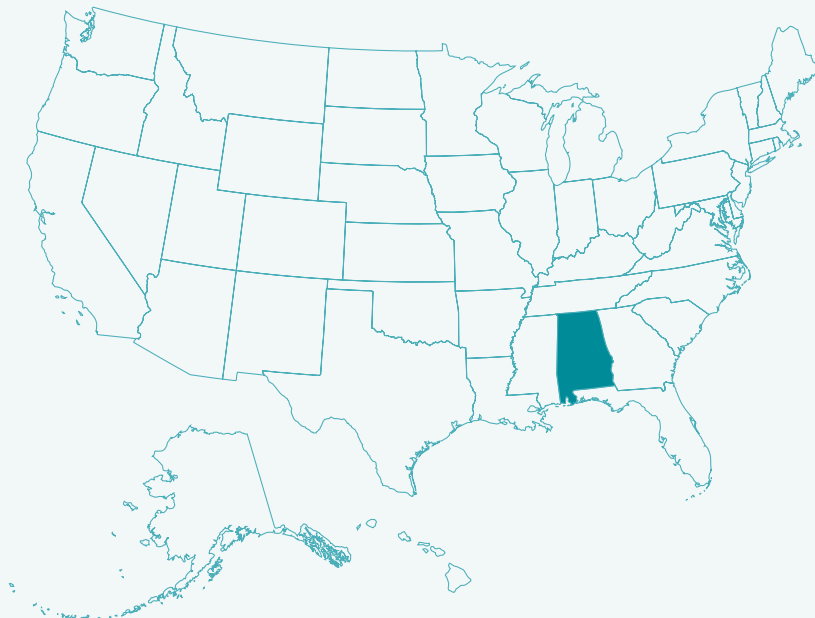
Alabama is the only state in the nation with two budgets: the Education Trust Fund, which funds K-12 and higher education, and a General Fund, which funds everything else (corrections, transportation, foster care, public health, child care, etc.). The Education Trust Fund is five times larger than the General Fund and all growth taxes (income, property, and sales taxes) go to that fund. Alabama also has the highest level of earmarking of funds of any state, with over 87 percent of funds in these budgets earmarked for specific purposes, which makes getting any funding increases through the legislature extremely difficult.

The Office of School Readiness (OSR) in the Department of Children's Affairs oversees the Alabama Pre-K Program, which was started in 2000 and receives funding from the Education Trust Fund. The Alabama Pre-K Program is operated by community-based programs (including private centers, Head Start programs, faith-based centers, universities and housing authorities) and public schools. The Pre-K program does not have eligibility criteria and invests an average of \$4,585 per child, but currently serves only 2 percent of eligible children. The Department of Human Resources oversees childcare subsidy and licensing. The state portion of the childcare budget comes from the General Fund. Because the General Fund is so limited, at times the state has not been able to put up enough state dollars to draw down its full federal match.

IMPROVEMENTS TO ECE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

■ **Alabama Pre-K Program:** Increased funding for Pre-K Program by \$5.7 million for a total of \$10 million. This program will serve 2,232 children statewide in the 2007-08 school year. The program also increased its standards and is now one of only two pre-k programs in the nation that meets all 10 of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) benchmarks.

■ **Childcare:** An additional \$1.27 million was earmarked for childcare to support the childcare subsidy program. There were available federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) dollars that Alabama could claim, but despite fervent effort neither the governor nor the commissioner would include the additional dollars in the budget for childcare subsidies. Advocates went to the chair of Government Finance and Appropriations in the House and asked him to add the funding. The request passed both chambers of the legislature with no challenges and resulted in subsidies for an additional 5,000 children.



STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

■ **Do not take no for an answer:** Advocates worked to have the governor and commissioner put the required funding in their budgets to pull down the maximum CCDBG allotment, but to no avail. When this did not work, existing relationships with the chair of Government Finance and Appropriations made it possible for an earmark for the required funding to be created and approved by the legislature, ensuring maximum funding in the state and creating the ability to serve more children.

■ **Know who controls the power in your state and quietly build your support:** The Alabama Education Association (AEA) is the single most powerful lobby in the state and their support for pre-k issues is critical to any expansion. Advocates carefully nurtured a relationship with the leadership of AEA, along with the traditional legislative and other state leaders. When the time was right, this support came together for expansion of early childhood investments, and it has gone relatively well because of quietly building the support needed early.

■ **Learn where the public is and use results strategically:** Peter D. Hart Associates and the Tarrance Group were commissioned to determine where public opinion was on early childhood. The results were better in Alabama than any other states polled and these results were used strategically to build momentum for the issue. Based on these findings, advocates switched tactics and moved from expending resources to build public awareness to making proclamations of the high level of public support that exists for ECE in the state. The next step for advocates was to begin crafting a viable policy package.

■ **Use early childhood as a competitive wedge between political parties:** The polling was presented to the leadership and political caucuses of each party by the pollster who would best resonate with each of them. (The Peter Hart pollster presented the results to Democrats and the Tarrance Group pollster presented the results to Republicans). From the numbers, both parties realized that early childhood, and pre-k in particular, could be a winning issue. Now some Republicans are coming up with big pre-k packages so that Democrats don't own the issue any more, and the Democrats are matching or exceeding those efforts. Additionally, with so many governors talking about pre-k, the Alabama governor may feel some peer pressure to address this issue. Collectively, this is creating real momentum.

■ **Create synergy between similar interests:** Alabama Giving, a consortium of foundations in the state, came together to invest in a single issue. Early childhood was selected from many options to be the focus of this investment. This commitment helped to get Pre-K Now involved, and created enough resources to fund a more focused partnership between advocates called the Alabama School Readiness Alliance. This support paid for staff, convening of meetings, public relations efforts and polling.

■ **Be restrained when the opposition speaks:** While it would have been easy to respond to every critical op-ed, a response would have given credibility to the opposition. By carefully and repeatedly using the same message, support for increasing ECE investments stayed strong among voters and legislators.

POINT OF REFERENCE

292,375 children under age 5 live in Alabama.

Governor: Republican
House: Democratic
Senate: Democratic

VOICES for
Alabama's Children
www.alavoices.org

COLORADO

BACKGROUND

Colorado has enjoyed significant success in expanding access to quality early childhood programs in a difficult environment. The state has strict TABOR-related (taxpayers' bill of rights amendment) financial expenditure requirements, and it is very difficult to get new revenue for any issue, particularly early childhood. Democrats currently control the executive and legislative branches, including a newly elected governor who has made early childhood a priority in many ways. (The previous governor was much more conservative and vetoed a number of key pieces of early childhood legislation.) The new lieutenant governor is the former president of the Colorado Children's Campaign and has a deep commitment to young children. The governor has delegated the development of an early childhood governance structure to the lieutenant governor's office. In addition, more and more legislators are recognizing the importance of early education to achieving other important education priorities --such as reducing the achievement gap and improving high school graduation rates -- which makes the landscape fertile for investments in pre-k and full-day kindergarten.

IMPROVEMENTS TO ECE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Four significant pieces of legislation have been passed in the last few years:

■ **Creation of the School Readiness Quality Improvement Program:** Originally passed in 2002, this bill provided funding to local early childhood councils in 17 pilot communities to provide quality rating assessments, quality improvement plans, and targeted quality improvement funding to centers and family childcare homes serving low-income children who will attend low-performing schools. Reauthorized in 2005, this bill was expanded statewide. \$2.2 million annually.

■ **Significant expansion of the Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program:** In the 2003-2004 school year, there were 9,050 slots available, of which 1,000 were allocated for full-day kindergarten; in the 2007-2008 school year, there are 16,360 slots, of which 2,454 are allocated for full-day kindergarten. Almost \$22 million in new general fund money has been infused into this program since 2003. This funding is embedded in the School Finance Act and expansion will continue in 2008.

■ **Creation and reauthorization of the Early Childhood and School Readiness Commission:** Made up of six legislators and 11 early childhood stakeholders, the Commission significantly increased the awareness that the early childhood system is not just ECE, but also includes health, mental health, and family support. The Office of the Lieutenant Governor has been charged with continuing this work and creating a governance structure for the early childhood system.

■ **Early Childhood Councils Act:** They received a total of \$3.7 million in existing money and redirection of some unexpended CCDBG funds to sustain and expand statewide the original 17 councils. Currently 31 councils cover the vast majority of the state and work to create a comprehensive early childhood system in their service delivery areas. Technical assistance and training are also provided to the councils to help with planning, systems development, increasing public awareness and partnership formation.

POINT OF REFERENCE

338,585 children under age 5 live in Colorado.

Governor: Democrat
House: Democratic
Senate: Democratic

Colorado Children's
Campaign
www.coloradokids.org

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

The Colorado Children's Campaign and its partners created and executed a sophisticated and thoughtful strategy for achieving their policy goals, including:

■ **Engage Stakeholders to Identify Priorities:** Through the Policy Matters project, a significant number of early childhood stakeholders from around the state participated in a comprehensive policy audit and landscape assessment and visioning process, creating a shared vision for the direction of early childhood in the state that fits the state political context. Additionally, the Children's Campaign's It's About Kids communities, which mobilize networks in 12 communities in 19 counties throughout the state, are brought together annually to help set the policy agenda; local needs and priorities contribute to this policy setting process.

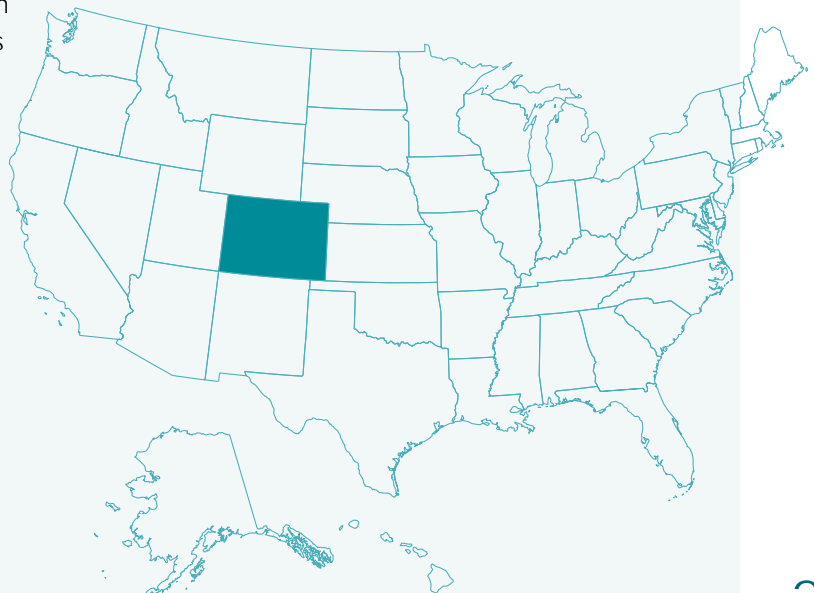
■ **Use Data and Information Early and Often:** In setting policy direction, developing briefs, interacting with elected officials, reaching out to potential grassroots or grassstops supporters and seeking to influence the legislature, data is relied on heavily to make a strong case for the work.

■ **Become a Trusted Resource:** By building bipartisan relationships with legislators, the media, stakeholders in the field who work in the state departments and other child advocacy organizations, the Campaign was viewed as a reputable resource that was very responsive and could help others understand the issues at hand in a way that was beneficial to young children.

■ **Implement a Sophisticated Communications Strategy:** Create relationships with reporters and editorial boards, respond to news about young children in a timely and professional manner, build on national stories with a local bent – whatever it takes to get and keep early childhood in the news in a positive way.

■ **Create a Fiscal Solution While Asking for Change:** Rather than merely coming up with a good policy idea, the Campaign and its partners also propose financing and funding mechanisms to fund its policy proposals.

■ **Build Relationships, Relationships, Relationships:** Engaging stakeholders, state departments, advocacy organizations and others to plan policy change and move forward policy goals has been critical. Having strong relationships and calling people back to the table – even when they vehemently disagree and the times are tough – has kept things moving forward and positive change happening for children.



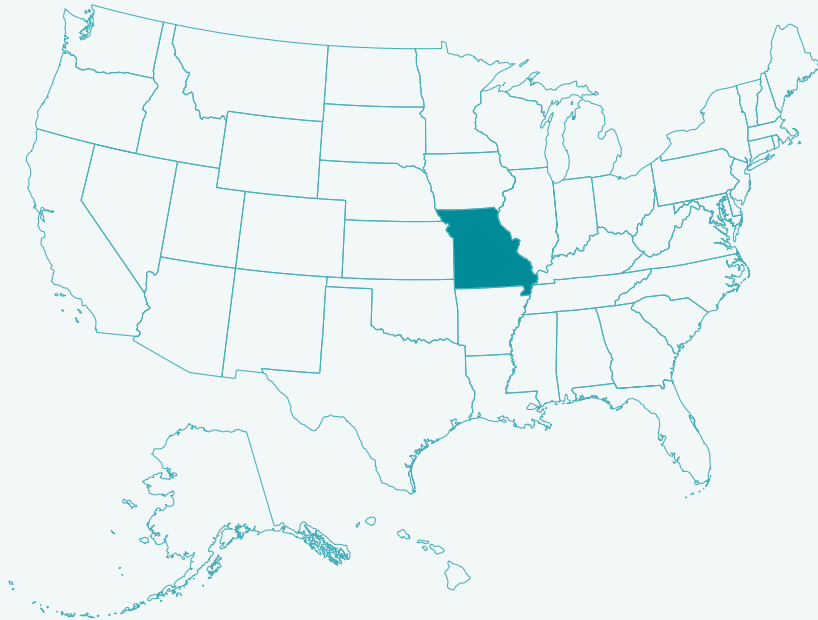
MISSOURI

BACKGROUND

Missouri has had budget deficits since 2002, the same year that the impact of term limits hit the legislature and significant institutional memory left with long-time legislative leadership. Advocacy for children has suffered during these difficult times but advocates' tenacity and hard work finally paid off in 2007 with bipartisan support for ECE.

IMPROVEMENTS TO ECE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- **Childcare subsidies:** \$20 million increase in subsidy program, taking eligibility from 108 percent to 127 percent of the federal poverty level.
- **Early Childhood Development and Education Care Fund maintained:** A proposal to reduce the \$28-30 million from the state gaming fund was effectively fought off. These resources fund Early Head Start, a stay-at-home parent program, and 207 Missouri Preschool Project programs, serving 4,972 children ages 3 and 4.
- **Early Childhood Coordinating Board appointed:** While legislation was passed in 2004 to create an early childhood coordinating board to improve the coordination of early childhood programs and services, the governor appointed the board at the end of 2006 and they are actively now working together.



STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- **Cultivate conservative champions:** Two of the three main sponsors of the bills in each chamber were considered either conservative or not traditionally associated with children's or social service issues. Their voices and ongoing leadership speaking out on the importance of childcare subsidies was crucial to the victory. These more conservative champions also found partners they did not typically find much agreement with; the issue was worked on in a truly bipartisan manner.
- **Reframe the issue to make sense to conservatives:** The economic and workforce development arguments worked extremely well with legislators who were more conservative. Because advocates used this terminology repeatedly, legislators also began to talk about the need to improve childcare subsidies in these terms.
- **Grassroots advocacy works:** Citizens for Missouri's Children (CMC) mobilized its grassroots base at various strategic times during the legislative session. A particularly challenging, deeply conservative member of the legislature voted for the subsidy increase after getting five contacts from constituents within her district.
- **Sometimes the opposition hangs itself when given enough rope:** The Early Childhood Development and Education Care Fund provides approximately \$28-30 million in funding to ECE programs from gaming proceeds. Each year veterans' groups, which already receive a large portion of the gaming proceeds, attempt to further increase their portion of the state's gaming proceeds. Clearly, a choice between veteran's needs and children's needs is a choice that no legislator wants to make.
- **Know your limits and when no means no:** Sometimes no really does mean no. There are also times when the direct assault strategy exhausts its usefulness and other strategies will be more helpful. Gauge the political situation in a way to know when to stop and when to use other ways to encourage the issue.
- **Public policy comes together when it comes together. Keep working:** Advocates learned that policy can come together very quickly, or progress can seem elusive for months or years as it appears nothing is moving. By keeping up the pressure, presenting a consistent case and nurturing new champions, advocates were able to secure a significant win this year after many challenging years with little success.
- **Secure leadership support:** Getting leadership to support your position is one of the most important priorities advocates should have. Without leadership support no progress was made for years. By securing leadership support, CMC and its partners were able to secure a large increase for the subsidy system.
- **Internal advocacy is invaluable:** The new director of the Department of Social Services is a long-time early childhood leader and knows the issues well. Her internal advocacy and leadership was a significant contributor to the success in Missouri this year.

POINT OF REFERENCE

378,746 children under age 5 live in Missouri.

Governor: Republican
House: Republican
Senate: Republican

Citizens for Missouri's
Children
www.mokids.org

NEW MEXICO

BACKGROUND

New Mexico has a popular Democratic governor, a legislature controlled by Democrats and significant budget surpluses. While a number of major achievements have occurred in the last few years, early childhood has struggled to compete with other gubernatorial and legislative priorities and has not enjoyed the benefits of the economic situation in the state to the degree advocates would have liked. Advocates were particularly frustrated that pre-election promises to make substantial investments in early childhood were not fulfilled.

IMPROVEMENTS TO ECE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

■ **Childcare Subsidies, TEACH and WAGES:** In 2007 the legislature increased funding for childcare subsidies and WAGES (staff bonuses based on education and longevity) by a total of \$5.5 million. Childcare eligibility was raised from 155 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to 165 percent FPL; the \$2.5 million allocated to subsidies will serve an additional 944 children. A total of \$2 million was allocated to increase childcare provider rates, partly because the minimum wage in New Mexico will increase to \$7.50 per hour over the next two years. Additionally, Training and Technical Assistance Programs were allocated \$352,000, TEACH received \$247,000 in new funding, and \$650,000 was allocated for child development grants.

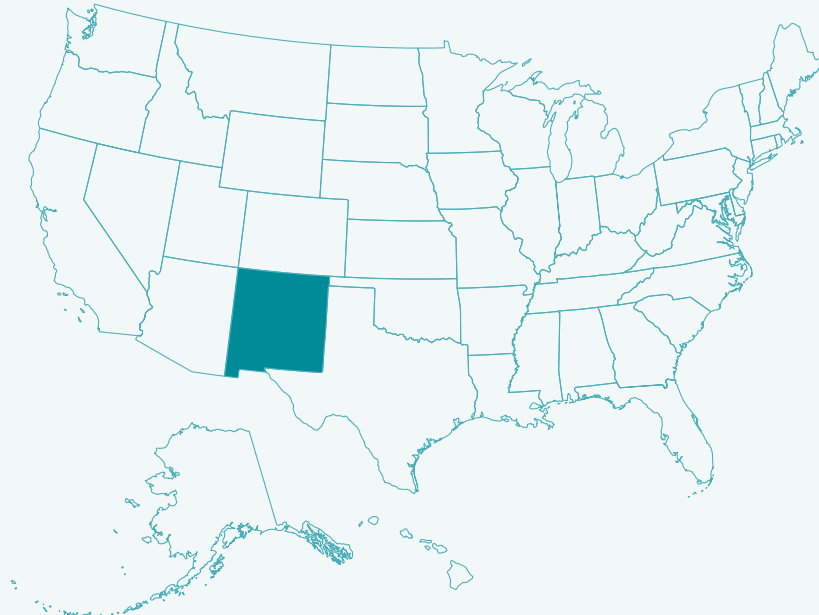
■ **New Mexico Pre-K Program:** In 2003, the New Mexico Pre-K Program was launched. Approximately 1,500 children are served at an annual cost of \$3.5 million. Approximately half of the spaces for the program are in community-based programs and half of the spaces are in schools. While there are no income eligibility requirements, two-thirds of children enrolled live within the boundaries of a Title I elementary school. Additionally, the state allocated \$1.5 million to enhance services in federal Head Start classrooms. In the 2007 session funding for the New Mexico Pre-K program was increased by an additional \$6 million to a total of \$14 million and is expected to serve a total of 3,568 four-year-olds.

POINT OF REFERENCE

131,551 children under age 5 live in New Mexico.

Governor: Democrat
House: Democratic
Senate: Democratic

New Mexico Voices
for Children
www.nmvoices.org



STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

■ **Find and nurture champions:** The lieutenant governor has been a tremendous champion for early childhood. She formed the Children's Cabinet, as well as an advisory group called the Early Childhood Advisory Network (ECAN), which is made up of 30-40 professionals from diverse perspectives (ECE, education, business, etc.). The Cabinet is focused on streamlining application processes and improving coordination of services between departments. The expansion of pre-k and childcare subsidy improvements have come from and been strongly supported by ECAN.

■ **Build a broad coalition:** Through ECAN and the Early Childhood Alliance, a partnership of a dozen organizations committed to young children, diverse partners from many perspectives have come together around a shared agenda for young children. In addition to the leaders who formally sit on ECAN or the Alliance, partners include childcare providers, teachers, pediatricians, the faith community, university faculty and others. The Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministries and the Child Care Association have been particularly helpful on legislative strategy, and the state AEYC chapter and the Child Care Association have been effective at coordinating grassroots legislative testimony. Business leaders have become increasingly aware of the importance of quality early childhood programs for young children and are engaged in a number of ways. While business leaders have been involved in ECAN and have been supportive of the lieutenant governor's agenda, they have not pushed as hard with the governor or invested as much political capital on behalf of early childhood as advocates would have liked.

■ **Use good data and research:** New Mexico Voices for Children presents information not only on the status of children, but also on the budget and tax situation and the implications of the state's financial status.

■ **Make argument in evidence-based ways:** Rather than using only moral ("it's the right thing to do") or logical ("children need a place to go while their parents work") arguments, it has been more successful to bring forth research and to make the case in ways that show in dollars and cents how ECE investments pay off.

■ **Advocate with legislative committees:** Voices and its partners have actively advocated before legislative committees and presented consistent information on the importance of early childhood investments.

■ **Get the advocates on the same page:** A few years ago there was a distracting clash between for-profit and nonprofit providers. Through facilitation, the groups realized they had more in common than they had differences, and are now working out their differences behind the scenes and presenting a united force in public.

■ **Engage credible messengers from outside the field:** One of the most powerful allies has been the New Mexico Pediatric Society. They are viewed as trustworthy and highly credible messengers and their support of ECE has carried additional weight with the legislature.

PENNSYLVANIA

BACKGROUND

Pennsylvania has increased investments for young children by over \$700 million over the last five years. In addition to year-round strategic advocacy, a campaign with 16 charter partners – Pre-K Today – sought to increase pre-k funding in 2007. The campaign was enacted in a year marked by prolonged and heated budget negotiations. The majority party of the Senate and minority party of the House were intent to enact a TABOR-like budget with a relatively small increase in spending. This was fueled by considerable turnover in the Pennsylvania General Assembly in the prior election cycle with many of the new members running on platforms calling for reduced spending. Additionally, a number of contentious budget and budget-related issues made negotiations among legislative leaders and the governor incredibly difficult. Advocates effectively made the case that investing in pre-k was both modest and wise, given the potential return on investments for students, schools, and the Commonwealth as a whole. The campaign resulted in 38,696 phone and e-mail contacts, over 700 face-to-face visits, 150 press hits, and endorsements from over 600 organizations and over 1,000 individuals. In a primarily rural, relatively conservative state with the largest population of elderly people in the nation, strategic advocacy, a broad vision for children ages 0 to 8, and a clear commitment to foundation principles has dramatically expanded ECE opportunities for young children.

IMPROVEMENTS TO ECE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- **Childcare subsidies:** \$96 million in increased funding to expand childcare subsidies and rates. The increase provides additional funding for Keystone STARS, Pennsylvania's quality rating and improvement system for ECE and school-age environments. This program began as a pilot five years ago and now includes 42 percent of the regulated providers, including nearly 61 percent of centers.
- **Pre-K:** \$75 million in new funding to create Pre-K Counts to provide pre-k opportunities to 3 and 4-year-olds, serving an additional 11,000 children. The program meets 9+ of the 10 NIEER standards and has a high reimbursement rate, approximately \$7,900 per child for a regular school day. The program is very inclusive and partnerships were incentivized, with community approaches that included schools, community-based childcare, private nursery schools, and others more heavily weighted in the competitive RFP process.
- **Full-Day K:** \$20 million in new funding to incentivize full-day kindergarten.
- **Home visitation:** \$4.8 million in increased and redirected funds to expand the Nurse-Family Partnership initiative; program now in 39 of 67 counties.
- **Early Intervention:** \$48.9 in increased funding for children ages birth to age 5.
- **Teacher certification:** Only those with early childhood certificates will be permitted to teach children in pre-K through fourth grade beginning in 2013, dramatically impacting the quality of teaching children will receive through third grade.

POINT OF REFERENCE

725,557 children under age 5 live in Pennsylvania.

Governor: Democrat
House: Democratic
Senate: Republican

Pennsylvania Partnerships
for Children
www.papartnerships.org

Public Citizens for
Children & Youth
www.pccy.org

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

■ **Increasing investments is a year-round job:** Understand how state government works and the budget cycles of the departments, the governor's office and the legislature. By working at all levels, advocates were able to get their priorities included in multiple places. Advocates set up the issues before they were formally announced with targeted media outreach and the strategic release of fact sheets and reports that reinforced the wisdom of these investments.

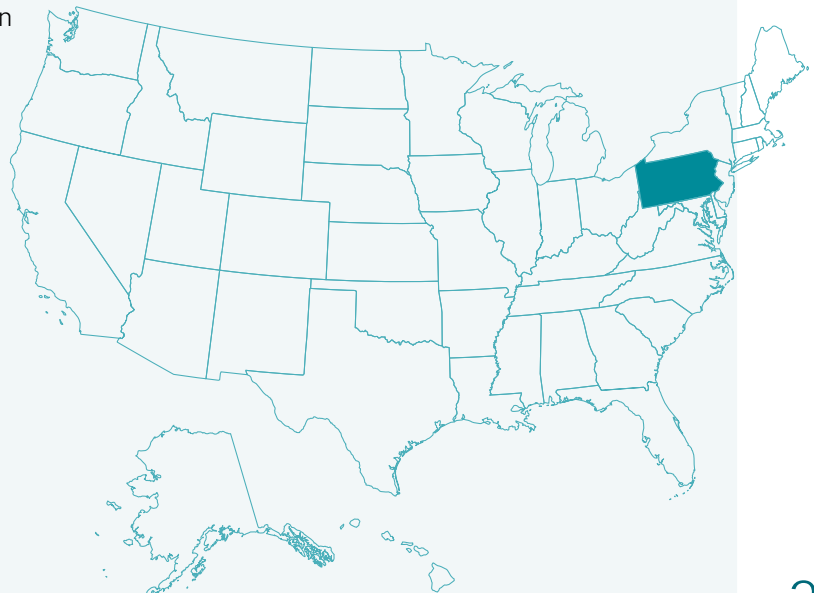
■ **Program quality improvement is difficult:** it requires supports to improve and increased per-child funding: Incentives and supports are needed to improve program quality, as is more per-child financing to fund the operations from one tier to the next. Combining pre-k with QRIS begins to tackle both issues.

■ **Relentless advocacy within state government makes all the difference:** Without the leadership of a strong administrator internally, the significant gains of the 2007 session would not have been possible.

■ **Launch a successful campaign:** Advocates built relationships with leaders in different media markets. A team of credible local leaders, such as a school board member, a business leader, a child care provider and a parent, visited editorial boards throughout the state. Communication took place non-stop, with legislators getting informative weekly e-mails, many of which included video clips of prominent leaders and political elites reinforcing the message, to increase knowledge of the impact of pre-k. The campaign spent its money wisely on high impact activities, particularly great staff.

■ **Remember your manners:** Advocates worked hard to never burn bridges, as they knew that the person who voted against their issue today might be their most important ally tomorrow. They never criticized people in public, vilified legislators for a decision or published voting report cards. Advocates painstakingly and intentionally built and maintained bipartisan relationships.

■ **Empower the grassroots advocates:** Many grassroots advocates were intimidated by the process of making calls, doing face-to-face visits, or hosting legislators in their programs. Advocacy leaders provided the grassroots advocates with fact sheets, talking points, PowerPoint presentations or other appropriate tools and often accompanied them on their first or second visit. When grassroots advocates were successful, they realized how easy the process is and are now eager to do more. Having seen this in action, advocacy leaders feel this empowerment of the grassroots will be invaluable for years to come.



RHODE ISLAND

BACKGROUND

During the past decade, Rhode Island policymakers, including Republican governors and a majority Democratic legislature have made investments in childcare and health care a top priority. The Starting Right law, passed in 1998, was a comprehensive early childhood law that increased childcare eligibility, created a Head Start-like program, and increased the rate of reimbursement tied to a market rate survey. A unique implementation strategy resulted in the creation of an advisory committee of state government staff and leaders from the advocacy and childcare communities to guide the implementation of the Starting Right law. The DHS Child Care and Development Advisory Committee continues to meet on a monthly basis to provide guidance on all aspects of the state's childcare program. Over the years, state funding for childcare grew while federal funds remained flat, making the childcare program vulnerable to cuts when the state faced a significant budget deficit last year. After a major advocacy campaign, the legislature restored a portion of the proposed cuts at the end of the last session. The next session is also projected to have a large deficit. Advocates will urge restoration of the cuts, making the case that the decrease in state spending for cash assistance has depended upon access to childcare and restoring the cuts will also promote school readiness.

IMPROVEMENTS TO ECE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

■ Established an entitlement to childcare through the state's welfare reform law:

Policymakers recognized that successful transitions from welfare to work depend on access to childcare and included a provision in the welfare reform law that appropriate childcare must be available for parents transitioning to work. Starting Right, a comprehensive ECE law passed in 1998 significantly increased state funding for childcare, resulting in a doubling of the numbers of children served by the childcare subsidy program.

■ **Creation of a facilities fund:** With Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC), Rhode Island Kids Count and its funding partners created a grant and loan fund for childcare facilities renovation and construction. This \$5 million public-private partnership has resulted in significant improvements to centers and homes. The fund was launched in 2002 and funded for its second five-year phase in 2007.

■ Creation of Quality Rating System

(QRS): Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, with support from the United Way of Rhode Island, convened a diverse steering committee that designed a research-based QRS called Bright Stars. It will be piloted in the fall of 2007 in centers, family childcare homes and school-age programs. The public-private partnership will go statewide in 2008.



STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- **Use your unique role to move systems forward:** Rhode Island KIDS COUNT has a unique and critical role in systems development work. As a neutral table and with a strong reputation for using research to inform decisions, the organization is uniquely positioned to convene diverse partners, engage philanthropy and state government and facilitate the creation of early childhood systems such as the facilities fund and the Quality Rating System that are based on best practices.
- **Systems reform requires rigorous community-based planning and effective implementation to make the vision a reality:** The work of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and its partners to design new ECE systems that reflect best practices depends on the identification of strong implementation agencies to make the vision a reality. The facilities fund has been masterfully implemented by LISC and the QRS plan is being implemented in the pilot phase by the state AEYC.
- **Focus on creating infrastructure elements that will improve the quality of early care and education programs:** Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and its partners have focused considerable energy to make the system more effective through the development of new ECE systems such as the facilities fund and the quality rating system. The QRS will both assist programs with identifying where they need to improve quality, as well as help to enhance the state's professional development, quality and other investments.
- **Create close relationships with state departments:** Improving early childhood systems or creating new ones depends on the ability to cultivate positive relationships with state department staff who oversee the pieces of the system.
- **Benchmarking regularly tells you whether or not you're on target:** The annual Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook is released and presented to over 600 policymakers and community leaders at a policy breakfast. This event shines a spotlight on the issues on which progress is being made, as well as those issues that are stagnant or moving backward. This data informs direction, strategy and communications.
- **Talk about income supports for families as a complete picture:** Rather than segmenting parents and children by program (e.g., food stamps, health care, childcare assistance, etc.), advocates from over 100 organizations formed a coalition called One Rhode Island and started collectively talking about the interrelationship of the programs and income supports families need to be successful. Each year the One Rhode Island Platform highlights the most important new policies for policymakers to consider.
- **ECE progress depends upon a sophisticated communications strategy:** A media and communications strategy that continuously stresses the importance of ECE investments is critical.

POINT OF REFERENCE

64,050 children under age 5 live in Rhode Island.

Governor: Republican

House: Democratic

Senate: Democratic

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
www.rikidscount.org

VIRGINIA

BACKGROUND

Virginia has made significant progress in creating an early care and education system and increasing public and private investments for children 0-5, particularly since the system had been largely dismantled and severely underfunded only six years ago. After many years of executive and legislative leadership that viewed services for children 0-5 primarily through the lens of helping people on welfare get to work, there was little investment, little infrastructure, and the word "quality" was a red flag. In addition to a traditionally conservative legislature, Virginia is the only state where a governor cannot serve consecutive terms, thus making it difficult to sustain progress

IMPROVEMENTS TO ECE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

■ **Increased access to pre-k:** The Virginia Preschool Initiative, which has had an increase in investment from \$16 million in 2002 to \$49.5 million in 2007. This program now serves 13,000 children annually with funding based on \$5,700 per child. Localities receive a varied percentage of that from the state based on the school funding formula. An additional \$2.6 million was invested last session for up to 12 districts to expand partnerships with community-based programs and create lessons learned for expansion of this public-private partnership model in the future.

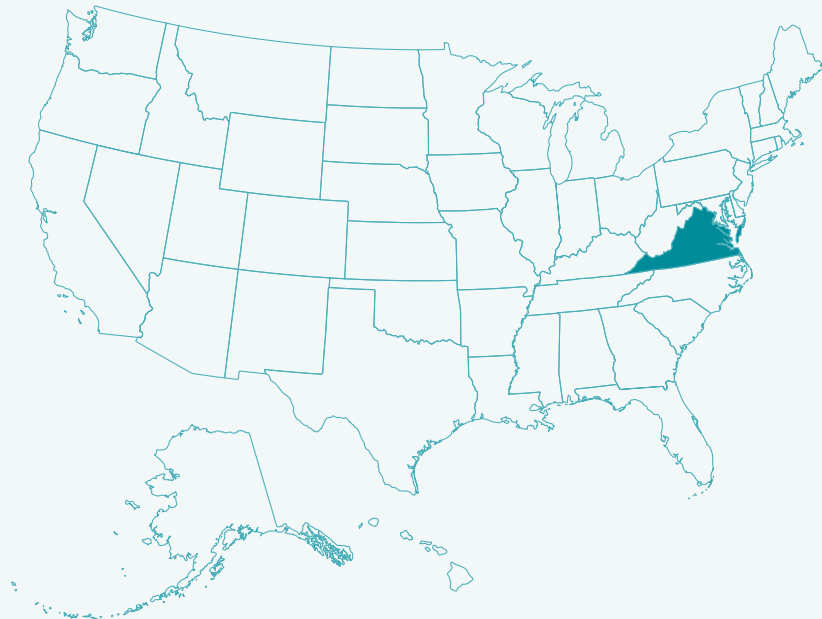
■ **Increased quality of 0-5 programs through incentives of a Quality Rating and Improvement System:** A model has been created from the North Carolina QRIS and is currently being piloted with private funding in a number of communities in the state.

POINT OF REFERENCE

506,004 children under age 5 live in Virginia.

Governor: Democrat
House: Republican
Senate: Republican

Voices for Virginia's Children
www.vakids.org



STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- **A strong governor can change the entire landscape immediately.** Cultivate these champions early and ensure your organization is a reliable, accurate, responsive partner to them as they seek office and develop policy.
- **Therefore, electoral advocacy strategy is critical:** A few months prior to the election, Voices and Every Child Matters jointly commissioned a poll that showed, among other things, that voters considered candidate stances on children's issues important. Following the election Voices heard from the campaign staff that the results of this poll helped to propel ECE to a more central focus of the campaign. Voices and its partners reached out to all candidates and offered information, data and other support. Building a relationship with candidates during the campaign, not after they assume office, has been successful.
- **Frame the debate and press around issues you care about:** Originally as part of its electoral advocacy strategy, Voices created the First Things First campaign; with diverse partners Voices identified 10 key questions affecting children birth to age five. Over the five months leading up to the election, the campaign focused each two week period on one question, encouraging partners across the state to place op-eds, columns, letters to the editor, and whenever possible, had people ask questions of candidates on the topic of focus in person or by calling or e-mail the candidates' headquarters. This helped to raise children's issues and created consistent messages around the state on each topic. The campaign was so effective that it is still used as the electronic communications tool for Voices, generating thousands of connections with legislators and administration leaders.
- **Engage up and coming political figures (and their families) in advocacy work:** A number of leaders in Virginia have had prior associations with Voices. These relationships established credibility and trust and the governor's agenda for early childhood mirrors that of Voices.
- **Forums where school districts stated need for ECE had a tremendous impact:** When Governor Kaine was the lieutenant governor he visited almost every school district in the state. School district leaders – from teachers to superintendents - consistently told him that the single biggest challenge they faced was children arriving at school unprepared.
- **In a state with one-term governors, private sector champions are critical for consistency:** Business and philanthropic champions have strongly supported ECE and helped raise the profile of the issue. These champions have been cultivated one on one and through luncheons with powerful speakers from the private sector on the importance of high quality ECE initiatives.
- **Duplication can be a good thing:** Having leaders, particularly from the private sector, serve on multiple boards has helped to increase consistency and decrease confusion and competition between ECE initiatives.
- **Develop and use messages that work in your context and change with the times:** Virginia is increasingly recognized as a prosperous, successful state and an under-funded early childhood system is inconsistent with that image. This inconsistency has become increasingly important as the brain development research is better understood and has served to motivate politicians, business people and others to be engaged. Additionally, information on the ratio of state funding spent on prisons compared to early childhood (37 to 1, compared to the national average of 9 to 1) captured many people's attention.

WASHINGTON

BACKGROUND

The early childhood landscape in Washington has become much more exciting and dynamic with significant new public and private investment. Advocates are working on a broad early childhood agenda that seeks to serve families and children by improving access to high quality settings wherever young children spend their time.

Washington's budget situation is always unpredictable due to the lack of consistent revenues. The state has a regressive tax system that does not rely on a state income tax. Given that, the last few sessions have been rather stable from a budget perspective and the state has enjoyed landmark revenues. The governor and the legislature have been good partners when it comes to ECE policy. One of the governor's first initiatives was to create a new Department of Early Learning. The legislature has followed her enthusiasm and there is good bipartisan cooperation on ECE.

IMPROVEMENTS TO ECE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

■ **Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS):** \$5 million to pilot QRIS in at least four communities. Funding will pay for administration, professional development and training for providers, mentoring and technical assistance, facilities improvement, and external assessment.

■ **Working Connections Child Care Subsidy:** \$85.8 million for subsidy rate increases, tiered reimbursement, health care benefits, 15 percent infant differential, and a non-standard hours bonus for family childcare providers and centers.

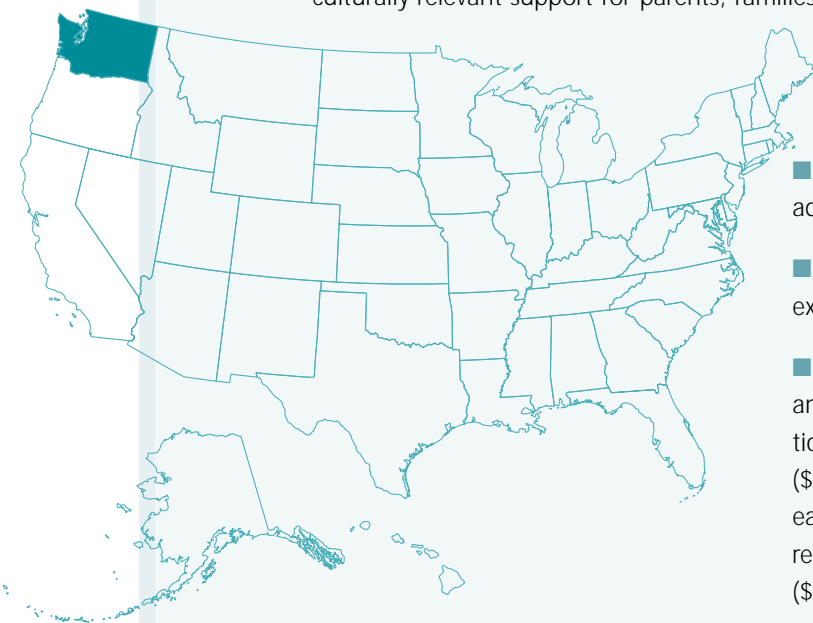
■ **Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program:** \$34.1 million to create 2,250 new slots for the community-based, family-focused, comprehensive, pre-kindergarten program designed to help children and their families who are in poverty. The program focuses on helping 3-5 year-olds prepare for and succeed in school while helping their parents progress toward self-sufficiency.

■ **Support for parents, families and other caregivers:** \$2 million to develop and provide culturally relevant support for parents, families and other caregivers. Supports may include play and learn groups, workshops, telephone hotline enhancement, brochures and a public awareness campaign.

■ **Home visitation:** \$2 million to serve an additional 929 families.

■ **Full day kindergarten:** \$51.2 million expansion of full day kindergarten

■ **Other new investments:** Child Care Resource and Referral (\$1.7 million); early learning information system (\$172,000); career and wage ladder (\$1 million); childcare consultation (\$500,000); early childhood apprenticeships (\$200,000); redesign of early childhood benchmarks (\$200,000); early learning partnerships (\$172,000).



STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

■ **When more care about ECE than ever, opportunities as well as challenges arise:** A significant number of new stakeholders, new resources and new funding have opened many doors and created incredible opportunities to engage new funding, leadership and expertise. However, this massive influx of new leaders and money has also created challenges. With different decision making cultures, thoughts on the desired pace of change, experience with raising and managing large sums of public or private funding, and widely varying understanding of the field and the industry – all of which have collided as major amounts of public and private funding have been infused into a system starved for years - there have been challenges to trust, unity, and understanding. Communicating among partners and managing the change process carefully is critical.

■ **The best agenda is for children birth to age 5:** By focusing on the needs of children birth to age 5 and their families through a variety of investments, the broad and diverse needs of children can be better met and a stronger and more diverse coalition of partners can be built. This more comprehensive agenda also positions the broader needs of children birth to age 5 for future investment.

■ **Attending to underfunded infrastructure first is critical:** After years of small investments or cuts to the early childhood system, there was serious deferred maintenance that needed attention. By focusing first on subsidy rates, tiered reimbursement, QRIS infrastructure, and other investments, the credibility of the policy leaders was built and the immediate and most pressing needs of providers were addressed. With this foundation, advocates in the state are better positioned to build upon this foundation and create new investments for young children.

■ **When legislators hear different messages or hear a laundry list of priorities, they do not feel any pressure to do anything:** The greater consensus among advocates on policy priorities, the more legislators feel pressure to act.

■ **New partners can bring significant influence and access:** SEIU, the Service Employees International Union, masterfully negotiated the significant increase – over \$80 million - in child-care subsidy funding before the session even started.

■ **Have ECE included as a central part of the agenda of other powerful organizations:** The fact that early childhood was included as a central piece of the blueprint created by Washington Learns and was broadly supported by K-12, for example, was a significant boost to the early childhood advocacy efforts.

■ **Put governance first:** When ECE investments are consolidated under one roof there is a better shot at significant new resources. A new Department of Early Learning was created by statute in 2006.

■ **Working the kinks out on a small scale through pilot projects provides a tested model for the state to take to scale:** Through investments in two pilot communities, significant resources are being invested to show the impact of targeted ECE investment; the goal is for these pilots to provide models of strategies that can be taken to scale around the state.

POINT OF REFERENCE

395,158 children under age 5 live in Washington.

Governor: Democrat

House: Democratic

Senate: Democratic

Children's Alliance
www.childrensalliance.org

WISCONSIN

BACKGROUND

Wisconsin is facing a structural deficit for the fourth year in a row and there is a strong anti-tax sentiment in the state. The Democratic governor is a fiscal conservative. The legislature is split with the Republicans controlling the House and Democrats controlling the Senate. Collectively, this makes any increases for any issue difficult to secure. The Early Learning Coalition, made up of 12 statewide organizations, has led the ECE improvement efforts. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees has recently started to organize providers in the state and, while they have not been members of the Early Learning Coalition, they have supported the Coalition's efforts and worked, in particular, to support the funding increase for the childcare tuition assistance program.

IMPROVEMENTS TO ECE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- **Childcare subsidies:** \$70.2 million increase currently proposed (final budget numbers still being determined).
- **Expansion of pre-k (4K):** In 2004 only 20-22 percent of 4 year olds were in pre-k and 50 percent of districts had programs. Now over 2/3 of districts have programs and 35 percent of 4 year-olds participate (total program funding: \$95.6 million). The pre-k program (4K) in Wisconsin is automatically universal; if a district offers 4K they are entitled to state aid but they must provide it to all children that want to attend. State funding for 4K is part of the school aids formula and the local school districts also use property tax dollars to fund approximately 1/3 of local school costs.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- **Identify your foundation principles and invites others with similar perspectives to join your work:** The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) spent time internally getting clear on their values and priorities. Through this they determined that one of their key goals was to make sure that no matter what door a child walked through that they would be in a high quality program. From this commitment, the organization was able to strategically reach out to organizations that focused on the multiple places where children are (e.g., centers, family childcare homes, schools, with their parents) and create a coalition.
- **Creating a coalition was critical:** After some challenges with a previous attempt at having a coalition led by another organization, WCCF had to work doubly hard to be open, honest, and engaging of all partners to make the coalition work. After interviewing stakeholders to see if they would participate in a coalition and determining that WCCF was the most appropriate lead organization, the coalition spent the summer defining its mission, goals and policy agenda. The coalition included a mix of content experts and people with significant policy experience. Collectively this coalition could reach over 50,000 members through e-mail.
- **Build relationships with policymakers:** WCCF and its partners certainly went to policymakers to make their case, but they also further cultivated these relationships to make it more likely that legislators would call them when there was a problem that needed to be solved. It was critical to make regular visits, do the homework to make sure all information was impeccably correct, and to localize the issue as much as possible. Thanking legislators who were helpful and publicly recognizing leadership also reinforced these relationships.

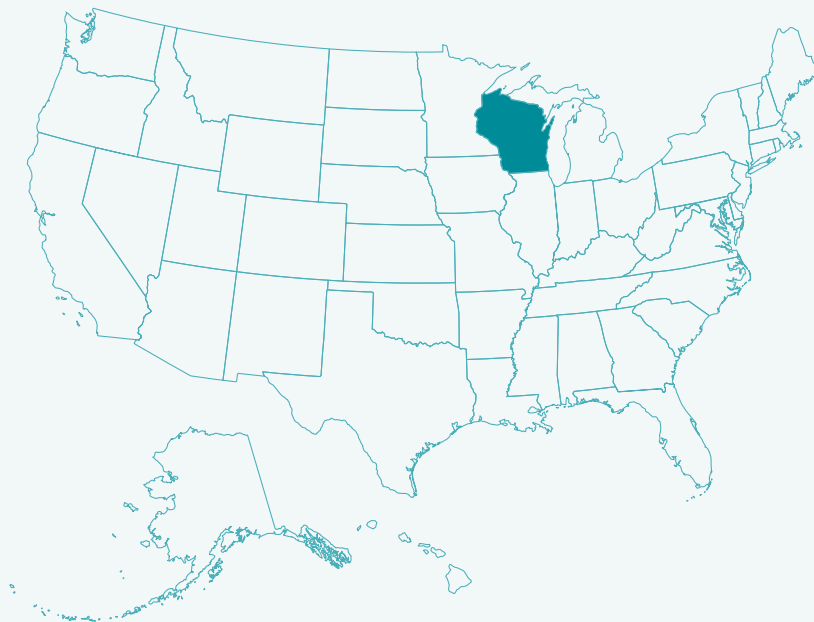
■ **Reach out and engage the grassroots:** WCCF reached out to providers, parents and others affected by subsidies. WCCF and its partners hosted policy forums, appeared at conferences and co-hosted conference plenary sessions.

■ **Mobilize the grassroots effectively:** Because many early childhood providers do not regularly use e-mail and outreach to parents was essential, two regional contractors were hired to reach out to early childhood programs. Through attending meetings of parents and staff and working with program leadership, a grassroots movement was mounted to encourage an increase in funding for childcare subsidies. Over 900 postcards were sent from parents and providers to the joint finance committee and an additional 900+ postcards were sent to other members of the legislature. The committee recommended an increase of \$70 million in childcare subsidies on a completely bipartisan vote.

■ **Have resources that are flexible and can be deployed in strategic ways:** Having resources that could be deployed in a nimble and reactive way made WCCF's advocacy much more effective. Without the funding from the Buffett Foundation that paid for the regional outreach contractors, the mobilization of the grassroots would have been much less effective.

■ **Incentivize and facilitate the implementation outcome you want:** WCCF worked hard to promote a mixed delivery system for the pre-k program, providing \$10,000 grants from the Joyce Foundation to districts to facilitate collaborative programming that capitalized on schools as well as community based child care. As a result of the planning grants and the associated technical assistance, sharing of information and publications, a majority of districts are now implementing collaborative programming.

■ **Connect ECE to other areas of work:** A campaign to end poverty in the state has only four priorities, one of which is to increase access to quality ECE programs to break the cycle of poverty over the long term. Advocates have been strategic about getting ECE on the agenda of many different organizations so it is talked about and advocated for from many different perspectives.



POINT OF REFERENCE

339,983 children under age 5 live in Wisconsin.

Governor: Democrat

House: Republican

Senate: Democratic

Wisconsin Council on
Children & Families
www.wccf.org

WYOMING

BACKGROUND

The last two years have been exciting in Wyoming. In his first term, Governor Dave Freudenthal announced the Children and Families Initiative, which engaged a broad cross-section of Wyoming leaders and citizens, and a committee of four legislators, six judicial branch representatives, and 25 others representing the state departments, higher education, local government, and members at large from throughout the state. The committee sought input through a broad-based survey and meetings in each of the state's 23 counties. From this work that engaged thousands of citizens, five priorities were identified, including *Children Born Healthy and Achieving Their Highest Potential During their Early Development Years*.

The economy of Wyoming is booming and unemployment is under 3 percent, largely because of the extraction and gas/oil industries. New residents are having a hard time finding housing and care for their children, and long time residents see the limited supports squeezed by demands from new residents. There is tremendous pressure from businesses and other employers for qualified personnel, but recruiters have a hard time getting people to move to the state because the basic infrastructure that supports families and children is lacking, particularly when it comes to early care and education for children 0-5. These realities were very clear in the citizen feedback received by the committee overseeing the Children and Families Initiative.

IMPROVEMENTS TO ECE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The first early childhood bill was crafted by the Joint Health and Social Services Committee in late 2005. In a 2006 short session that addresses almost exclusively budget issues, a bill appropriating \$1.5 million was passed to gather information about the current capacity and quality of the childcare system. Assessment Profiles were completed on early childhood centers and family childcare homes around the state to gain a better picture of the quality. A separate evaluation was completed to determine the capacity of the industry. A subsequent bill was created by the committee that, when passed in 2007, resulted in new investments of \$6 million in state general revenue in early care and education programs, including:

- Childcare subsidies to increase the capacity of childcare available to children from low-income families, particularly for infants and toddlers (\$4.5 million);
- Educational grants for early childhood professionals to pursue continuing education, CDA certificates, or degrees (\$600,000);
- Technical assistance to early childhood program directors on business plans and business management (\$100,000);
- Education to help parents understand importance of early years (\$500,000);
- Technical assistance contracted through the state Childcare Resource and Referral program and another nutrition program for early childhood programs to address issues cited in their Assessment Profiles (\$100,000);
- Family strengthening programs (\$100,000).

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

■ **Be opportunistic:** The work of the Children and Families Initiative, *From the Heart Together We Thrive*, was published in November 2005 from surveys, interviews, and focus groups with citizens in each of the 23 counties in the state. This provided stories, data, and quotes from citizens on the challenges they were having finding high quality childcare and the impact this was having on parents' ability to be in the workforce and employers' ability to hire good people. The report was widely distributed in legislative districts around the state. Personal contacts from parents to share their stories were particularly powerful.

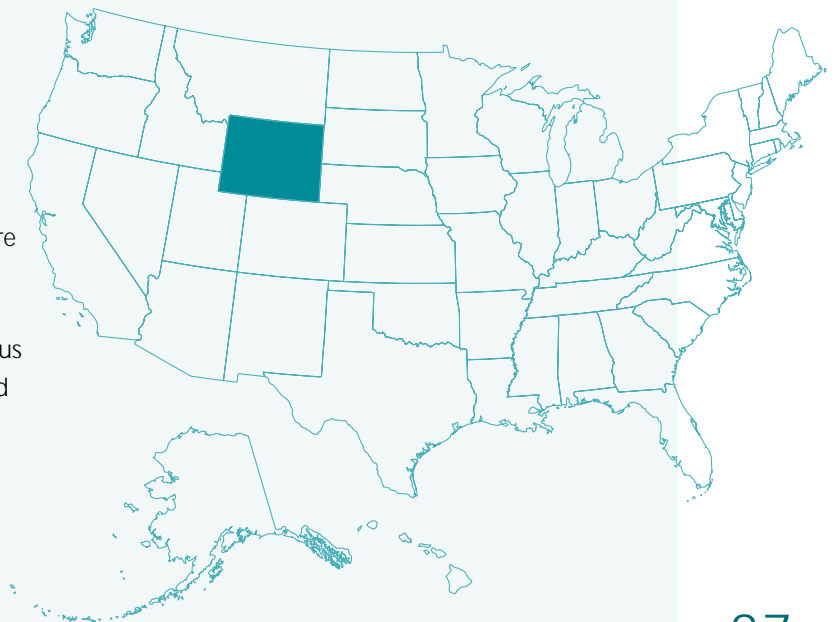
■ **Create a picture of the problem and make it personal to legislators:** A Better Baby Campaign grant from Zero to Three enabled Wyoming Children's Action Alliance to take more of a leadership role than would have otherwise been possible. The Alliance organized statewide meetings in every county in the state and these community meetings got people around the state engaged in a grassroots movement. Formation of a Coalition for Wyoming Children in the fall of 2006 ensured that legislators started the 2007 session having heard about ECE and with a clear understanding that this issue was affecting people in every district.

■ **Create synergy between initiatives committed to similar goals:** Collaboration between the members of the Children and Families Initiative and the committee that worked on the ECE systems grant engaged the diverse leaders from many sectors in the same conversation, creating new synergy and partnerships.

■ **Hire the right lobbyist:** The Coalition obtained funds to hire a lobbyist, and it was critical that it was the right person. The lobbyist hired was a well-known Republican who was a former legislator. Her relationships and understanding of how to get things done in the capital were critical to the success of this work.

■ **Create effective partnerships:** Working with the well-established Equality State Policy Center was particularly effective. Outreach to associations and other organizations, such as the state AEYC chapter and Child Development Services of Wyoming, brought additional players to the table and enabled more grassroots engagement to occur.

■ **Engage new partners:** The County Commissioners Association, the Council of Churches, the Outdoor Council, the Association of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, Chambers of Commerce, the head of the Department of Corrections for the state, YMCAs and others all reinforced the importance of quality early care and education programs for the short and long term economic development of Wyoming. The Wyoming Children's Alliance worked with these partners in various ways, holding joint press conferences, sharing data and working with their lobbyists.



POINT OF REFERENCE

31,029 children under age 5 live in Wyoming.

Governor: Democrat
House: Republican
Senate: Republican

Wyoming Children's
Action Alliance
www.wykids.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Alabama	VOICES for Alabama's Children
Colorado	Colorado Children's Campaign
Missouri	Citizens for Missouri's Children
New Mexico	New Mexico Voices for Children
Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children Public Citizens for Children and Youth
Rhode Island	Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
Virginia	Voices for Virginia's Children
Washington	The Children's Alliance
Wisconsin	Wisconsin Council on Children and Families
Wyoming	Wyoming Children's Action Alliance

We believe their experience and insight will provide others with the practical tools and resources to secure investments in early education programs for children across the country. This project was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Without its generous support, this project would not have been possible. The findings in this report are those of Voices for America's Children alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Annie E. Casey Foundation

Voices for America's Children is a national, nonpartisan, nonprofit child advocacy organization committed to speaking out for the well-being of children at the local, state and federal levels of government. With 60 members in nearly every state, as well as the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands, Voices advocates for effective public policies to improve the lives of all children throughout the United States.

For more information about Voices, visit our website at www.voices.org.

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MEMBERSHIP LIST

With 60 members in nearly every state, as well as the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands, Voices for America's Children (Voices) is the only nationwide network of state and local child advocacy organizations. Members of Voices are independent, nonprofit, multi-issue organizations dedicated to the well-being of children in their locations. By gathering data and conducting research, educating the public and the media, working with elected officials, monitoring government programs, and offering creative solutions, Voices' members advocate for children across the country.

Alabama

VOICES for Alabama's Children
www.alavoices.org

Arizona

Children's Action Alliance
www.azchildren.org

Arkansas

Arkansas Advocates for
Children & Families
www.aradvocates.org

California

Children Now
www.childrennow.org

California

Children's Advocacy Institute
www.caichildlaw.org

California

Coleman Advocates for
Children & Youth
www.colemanadvocates.org

California

Kids in Common
www.kidsincommon.org

Colorado

Colorado Children's Campaign
www.coloradokids.org

Connecticut

Connecticut Voices for Children
www.ctkidslink.org

Delaware

KIDS COUNT in Delaware*
www.dekidscount.org

District of Columbia

DC Action for Children
www.dckids.org

Florida

Children's Campaign, Inc.
www.iamforkids.org

Georgia

Voices for Georgia's Children
www.georgiavoices.org

Hawaii

Good Beginnings Alliance
www.goodbeginnings.org

Idaho

Idaho Voices for Children Foundation,
Inc.
www.idahovoices.org

Illinois

Voices for Illinois Children
www.voices4kids.org

Iowa

Child & Family Policy Center
www.cfpciowa.org

Kansas

Kansas Action for Children
www.kac.org

Kentucky

Kentucky Youth Advocates
www.kyouth.org

Louisiana

Agenda for Children
www.agendaforchildren.org

Maine

Maine Children's Alliance
www.mekids.org

Maryland

Advocates for Children & Youth
www.acy.org

Massachusetts

Massachusetts Citizens for Children
www.masskids.org

Michigan

Michigan's Children
www.michiganschildren.org

Michigan

Priority Children
www.prioritychildren.org

Mississippi

Mississippi Forum on
Children & Families
www.mfcf.org

Missouri

Citizens for Missouri's Children
www.mokids.org

Missouri

Partnership for Children
www.pfc.org

Nebraska

Voices for Children in Nebraska
www.voicesforchildren.com

Nevada

Children's Advocacy Alliance*
www.childrensadvocacyalliance.com

New Hampshire

Children's Alliance of
New Hampshire
www.childrennh.org

New Jersey

Association for Children
of New Jersey
www.acnj.org

New Mexico

New Mexico Voices for Children
www.nmvoices.org

New York

Citizens' Committee for
Children of New York
www.cccnewyork.org

New York

Schuyler Center for
Analysis & Advocacy
www.scaany.org

New York

Westchester Children's Association
www.wca4kids.org

North Carolina

Action for Children North Carolina
www.ncchild.org

North Dakota

North Dakota KIDS COUNT! *
www.ndkidscount.org

Ohio

Voices for Ohio's Children
www.vfc-oh.org

Oklahoma

Oklahoma Institute for
Child Advocacy
www.oica.org

Oregon

Children First for Oregon
www.cffo.org

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Partnerships
for Children
www.papartnerships.org

Public Citizens for
Children & Youth
www.pccy.org

Rhode Island

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
www.rikidscount.org

South Carolina

Voices for South Carolina's Children
www.scchildren.org

South Dakota

South Dakota KIDS COUNT*
www.sdkidscount.org

South Dakota

South Dakota Voices for Children
www.sdvoicesforchildren.org

Tennessee

Black Children's Institute
of Tennessee
www.bcitn.org

Tennessee Commission
on Children & Youth*

www.tennessee.gov/tccy/kc.html

Texas

CHILDREN AT RISK
www.childrenatrisk.org

Texas

Texans Care for Children
www.texanscareforchildren.org

Texas

Voices for Children of San Antonio
www.voicesforchildrensa.org

U.S. Virgin Islands

Community Foundation
of the Virgin Islands*
www.cfvi.net

Utah

Voices for Utah Children
www.utahchildren.org

Vermont

Voices for Vermont's Children
www.vermontvoices.org

Virginia

Voices for Virginia's Children
www.vakids.org

Washington

Children's Alliance
www.childrensalliance.org

West Virginia

West Virginia KIDS COUNT Fund
www.wvkidscountfund.org

Wisconsin

Wisconsin Council on
Children & Families
www.wccf.org

Wyoming

Wyoming Children's Action Alliance
www.wykids.com

*Associate members (state- and
local-level children's entities related
to advocacy without meeting Full
membership criteria)

As of 01/01/08



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