Building
Ready
States

A GOVERNOR'S GUIDE TO

Supporting a Comprehensive,
High-Quality Early Childhood
State System

Building Ready States

A GOVERNOR'S GUIDE TO

Supporting a Comprehensive, High-Quality Early Childhood State System

Rachel Demma
NGA Center for Best Practices
Education Division

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Contents

Executive Summary

With more than 60 percent of all children from birth to age 5 spending time in the care of someone other than their parents,[1] publicly supported early childhood programs must provide safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate experiences that foster healthy growth and learning. Yet the current configuration of early childhood care and education programs and services is failing to provide too many young children with the positive early experiences needed to prepare them for success in school and life. Moreover, the children who would benefit the most from high-quality programs are the least likely to be enrolled in them.

Child development research, neuroscience, and program evaluation demonstrate that the experiences a child has between birth and age 5 shape the developing brain's architecture and directly influence later life outcomes, including economic stability, work productivity, and mental health. Positive early childhood experiences also improve developmental and school readiness outcomes, increase K–12 achievement, and contribute to higher rates of high school graduation.[2] Public investments in high-quality early childhood programs generate cost savings of between seven percent and 10 percent in other public programs such as economic support and incarceration programs.[3] In addition, early childhood programs targeted specifically to the most vulnerable children and their families produce even greater social and economic returns than programs focused generally on children and their families.[4]

A comprehensive, high-quality early childhood system prepares children from birth to age 5 for success in school and life by providing access to high-quality programs and supporting the training and development of a highly qualified professional workforce. However, across all types of state early childhood programs, including subsidized child care, Head Start and Early Head Start, and prekindergarten programs, disparities in access and the quality of early experiences are contributing to an ever-widening national K–12 achievement gap. Long-standing and persistent challenges have prevented the development of effective early childhood systems to date. State leaders continue to struggle to coordinate siloed federal and state programs, and categorical funding streams.

Developing an effective and efficient early childhood state system will involve efforts to support program quality and a highly qualified professional workforce based on clearly articulated standards for child development and school readiness. This kind of system improvement will rely on collaborative governance, integrated data to drive and measure improvement, and sustained resources.

Governors are uniquely positioned to communicate their vision for an effective system and prioritize this work over time. To ensure they are leading "ready states" where young children are supported by a comprehensive, high-quality early childhood system, state leaders can take six actions.

➤ **Coordinate early childhood governance through a state early childhood advisory council (ECAC)** that is designated by the governor, represents the full range of early childhood programs, and implements a strategic plan for comprehensive services statewide. The 2007 reauthorization of Head Start required states to establish an ECAC to increase collaboration among state and federal early childhood programs and services. The 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided grants of at least $500,000 to every state to support ECAC development and implementation. In most states, governors have designated a state early childhood advisory council.

➤ **Build an integrated professional development system** that reflects aligned and research-based professional development standards, supports recruitment and retention through career pathways, and uses a professional development registry. The knowledge, skills, and practices of early childhood care providers and teachers are critical factors in their delivery of high-quality developmental and educational experiences to young children. A professional development registry helps states track the effectiveness of policies to recruit, retain, and develop a highly qualified early childhood professional workforce. In **Arkansas,** for example, an online registry guides professionals to development and training opportunities, and collects information on qualifications.

➤ **Implement a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS)** that measures different aspects of program quality, applies a common metric to all early care and education programs, and promotes program improvement. In **Kentucky,** both incentives and supports are given to early care and education programs that participate in the voluntary STARS for KIDS NOW QRIS. Participation in **New Mexico**'s QRIS is mandated for all licensed child care programs.

➤ **Develop a longitudinal and coordinated early childhood data system** that protects child and family privacy, maintains accountability, and drives continued improvement by continually collecting, analyzing, and reporting information. For example, the **Pennsylvania** Office of Child Development and Early Learning's information management system integrates data from the state's prekindergarten, child care, and early intervention programs. It also links to the statewide QRIS and professional development system.

➤ **Align comprehensive early learning guidelines and standards for children from birth to age 8 with K–3 content standards** to bridge early childhood experiences with the early elementary grades. Despite widespread budget shortfalls, states have targeted funds to support school readiness initiatives that align early childhood experiences with entry into kindergarten. In 2010, **Washington** allocated funds to its department of early learning to partner with the office of the superintendent of public instruction to develop and pilot a voluntary kindergarten readiness assessment tool that is based on expectations for skills and abilities identified in the state's early learning standards.
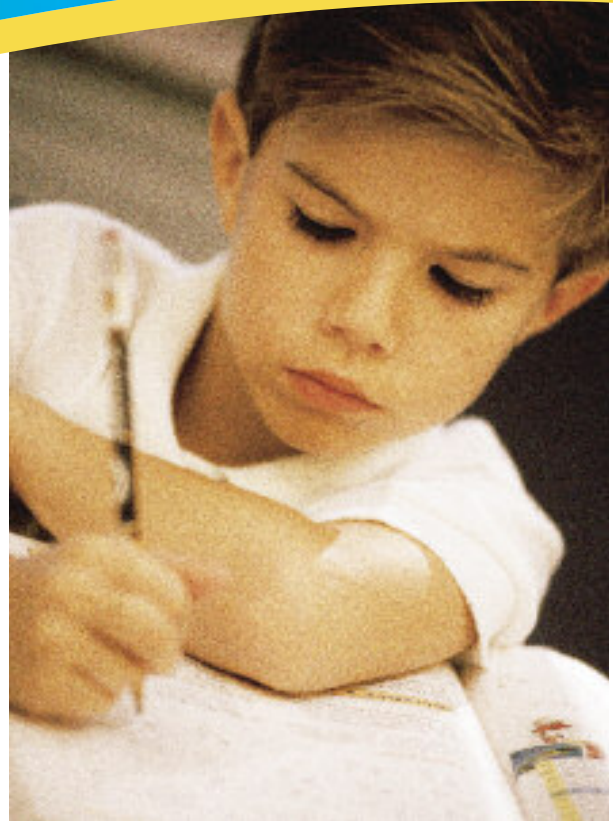
➤ **Integrate federal, state, and private funding sources** to support and sustain the core components of a comprehensive, high-quality early childhood system. Federal funding is flowing to states to support the development of coordinated early childhood governance bodies, early childhood professional development systems, quality rating and improvement systems for early childhood, and longitudinal data systems that link early childhood and K–12 data. ARRA has infused federal early childhood funding streams with one-time funding increases. Despite tough budget times, several states have increased their investments in early childhood systems with the help of this federal support. In fiscal year 2010, **Minnesota** allocated $1.5 million for the School Readiness Connections pilot program that will spend approximately $3,000 more per child for subsidized child care, enabling each to receive high-quality, ull-day, and year-round child care.

Governors who adopt these strategies will take significant steps towards improving school readiness, closing the achievement gap, and reducing high school dropout rates. Particularly in this fiscal climate, the investment of public dollars in building a comprehensive early childhood system can bring about strong returns. Ultimately, this commitment will position states to nurture the next wave of learners, workers, and parents who will shape future generations.

I. The Promise of a Comprehensive, High-Quality Early Childhood System

The current configuration of early childhood programs and services is failing to provide too many young children with the positive early experiences needed to prepare them for success in school and life. With more than 60 percent of all children from birth to age 5 spending time in the care of someone other than their parents, publicly supported early childhood programs must provide safe, nurturing, developmentally appropriate experiences that foster healthy growth and learning.[5]

Child development research, neuroscience, and program evaluation demonstrate that the experiences a child has from birth to age 5 shape the developing brain's architecture and directly influence later life outcomes, including economic stability, work productivity, and physical and mental mental health. Early childhood is a time of unequaled growth and development, but it is also a time of heightened vulnerability. In the first year of life, the brain's neural circuits (i.e., connections among brain cells) become "wired" at an unprecedented rate to enable children to develop senses such as vision and hearing, language skills, and cognitive functioning *(see Figure 1)*.[6]

The environments where children grow and learn—beginning with the family and extending to their communities and early childhood care and education settings—help determine the pace and success of this early phase of development. The science of early childhood development demonstrates that adverse experiences early in life, such as poverty, abuse or neglect, and exposure to violence, have profound effects on child development and can lead to lifelong problems in learning, behavior, and physical and mental health.[7] Nationally, 44 percent of children from birth to age 5 are deemed at risk for the negative life outcomes that can result from exposure to poverty.[8] The more risk factors children experience, the more likely disruptions in their neural pathways will impair their later learning and health *(see Figure 2)*.[9]

Nationwide, the children who will benefit the most from high-quality programs are the least likely to be enrolled in them because of gaps in access and quality. Only 47 percent of low-income kindergartners are likely to have attended a center-based program (including Head Start) prior to kindergarten entry, compared with 66 percent of higher-income children. Low-income families are less likely to find high-quality center-based or family child care options they can afford. Infants and toddlers also are less likely to have access to high-quality child care environments.[10] Without coordinated policies that bridge programs and

Figure 1. Neural Connections for Different Brain Functions Develop Sequentially
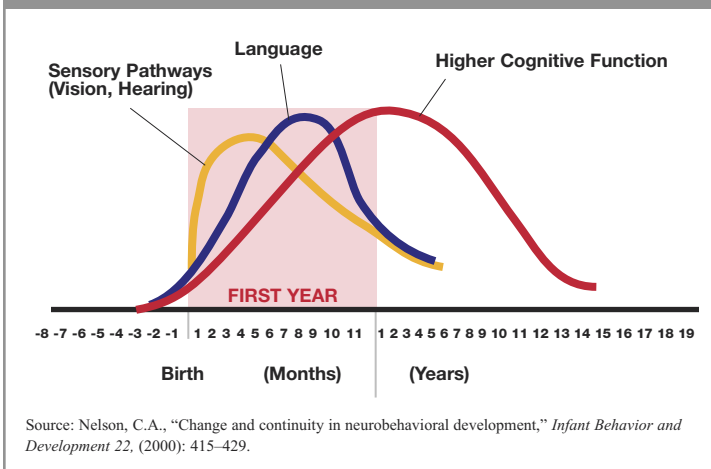
Source: Nelson, C.A., "Change and continuity in neurobehavioral development," *Infant Behavior and Development 22,* (2000): 415–429.

Figure 2. Significant Adversity Impairs Development in the First Three Years
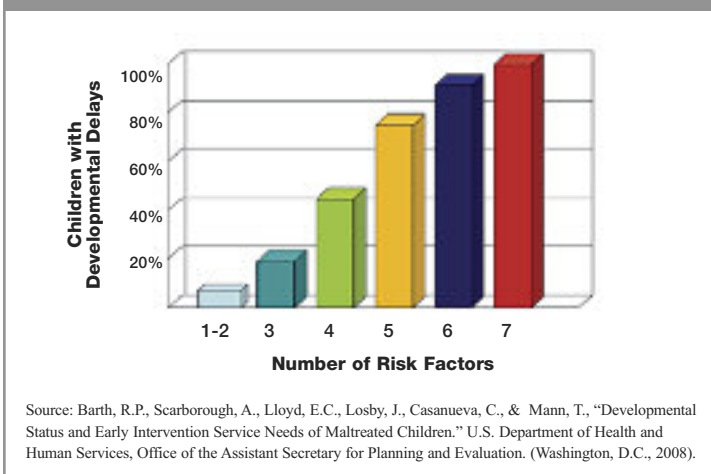
Source: Barth, R.P., Scarborough, A., Lloyd, E.C., Losby, J., Casanueva, C., & Mann, T., "Developmental Status and Early Intervention Service Needs of Maltreated Children." U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. (Washington, D.C., 2008).

promote quality improvements, these gaps in access and quality will persist.

A comprehensive, high-quality early childhood system provides critical supports to young children to prevent and mitigate their exposure to negative early experiences that can greatly influence their lifelong well-being and economic productivity. To ensure children are healthy and ready to learn, states may coordinate programs and services that provide high-quality early care and education experiences. Such experiences are particularly important for children deemed at risk. A comprehensive system of high-quality early childhood care and education programs can:

- Improve school readiness;
- Close the achievement gap;
- Increase high school graduation rates; and
- Prepare the next generation of workers and parents.

Improve School Readiness

Improved school readiness and early academic success are among the benefits children receive from high-quality early care and education programs. Being "ready" to excel in school, particularly through the acquisition of early literacy, math, and social-emotional skills, is critical to setting low-income children on a path to academic success. Before entering kindergarten, the average academic ability scores of children in the highest socioeconomic group are already 60 percent above the average academic ability scores of children in the lowest socioeconomic group *(see Figure 3)*.[11]

➤ The Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study tracked more than 800 3- to 5-year-olds from high-quality child care settings through second grade. Children who attended higher-quality child care centers scored higher on measures of cognitive and social skills while in care and through their transition to elementary school. Children who were at greater risk for poor academic achievement demonstrated even stronger cognitive benefits from high-quality care than their less at-risk study peers and sustained these benefits through the second grade.[12] The study also shows that children benefit in the early school years from interactions over time with highly qualified care providers and teachers while in child care.

➤ Other studies of child care and prekindergarten programs also show that higher-quality instruction and closer teacher-child relationships result in positive early

Figure 3. Family Income Affects School Readiness

Source: Lisa Klein and Jane Knitzer, *Promoting Effective Early Learning: What Every Policymaker and Educator Should Know* (New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, 2007), http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_695.pdf
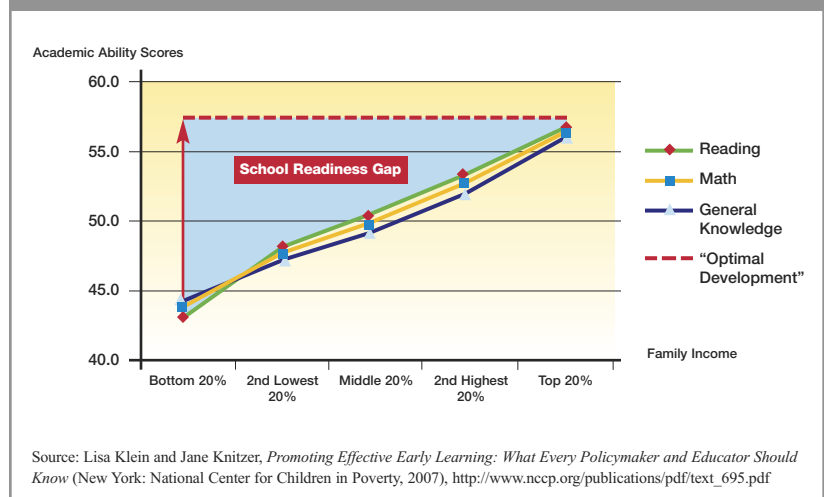
outcomes for children, including higher rates of early academic success,[13] fewer behavior problems in kindergarten, and increased language and literacy skills.[14]

Close the Achievement Gap

The national achievement gap has been the target of large-scale education reform initiatives since *A Nation At Risk* was published in 1983. Since then, an impressive body of early childhood research underscores the potential of high-quality early childhood programs to narrow this gap.

➤ Low-income children between the ages of 3 and 9 who participated in two to six years of Chicago Parent-Child Center programs fared significantly better than their peers who did not participate in these programs. The study cohort scored significantly higher on math and reading assessments through age 15, experienced a one-third lower rate of grade retention, and were less likely to be placed in special education by age 15.[15]

➤ The HighScope Perry Preschool Study, which used random selection to assign 3- and 4-year-olds to a high-quality preschool program and tracked them over four decades, demonstrated that children who participated in the program scored higher on school achievement tests between the ages of 9 and 14.[16]

➤ The Abecedarian project tracked, up to age 21, low-income children who received a high-quality, full-day educational intervention in a child care setting from infancy through age 5. Children who participated in the program intervention had higher academic achievement in both reading and math from the primary grades through young adulthood.[17]

The achievement gap begins early and widens over time. By the time children arrive at their kindergarten classroom door, the academic achievement trajectory is often already set. According to a National Center for Education Statistics study, children who enter kindergarten with lower mean achievement scores in reading and math are even further behind their higher-income peers by the end of third grade.[18]

Increase High School Graduation Rates

Several prominent early childhood studies have linked participation in high-quality early childhood programs with reducing the likelihood that a young person will drop out of high school. Currently, at least one student in five drops out of high school.[19]

➤ Low-income children who participated in two to six years of Chicago Parent-Child Center programs had a 26 percent higher high school graduation rate than their nonstudy cohort peers.[20]

➤ Children who participated in the Abecedarian intervention completed more years of K–12 education and were more likely to attend a four-year college.[21]

➤ The HighScope Perry Preschool study found that 65 percent of the group who participated in the study's high-quality early education experience graduated from high school, compared with 45 percent of the nonstudy group.[22]

In addition, the National Dropout Prevention Center has shown that programs promoting early literacy development and school readiness competencies are part of an effective state dropout prevention strategy.[23]

Prepare the Next Generation of Workers and Parents

Investment in high-quality early childhood programs has payoffs in human capital and economic competitiveness. Nobel Laureate James Heckman's analysis of early care and education programs serving children from birth to age 5 reveals that investing in early childhood development for disadvantaged children provides a high return on investment to society through increased personal achievement and social productivity.[24] Public investments in high-quality early childhood programs generate cost savings of between 7 percent and 10 percent in other public programs such as economic support and incarceration programs.[25] The HighScope Perry Preschool study has documented a return on investment of more than $16 for every tax dollar invested in the early care and education program.[26] A recently conducted cost-benefit analysis of the Abecedarian project reports a four-to-one return on tax dollars and significantly higher lifetime earnings for the children who participated in the project and their mothers.[27]

II. Features of a Comprehensive, High-Quality Early Childhood System

In 2005, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices released *Building the Foundation for Bright Futures,* the final report of the National Governors Association Task Force on School Readiness. This gubernatorial advisory group made policy recommendations to build ready states, schools, communities, families, and children. The opening paragraph of the report reads, "For most states, the key challenge is to bring together all the disparate pieces of the "nonsystem" into a coordinated infrastructure of services, programs, and decision-making." In the five years since the publication of this report, governor-led initiatives in several states have improved the coordination, access, and quality of early childhood programs. Yet the work of building comprehensive early childhood systems in states is far from complete.

The policy map for early childhood care and education is considerably different from that of other public systems. Unlike the structured and contained K–12 system, early childhood care and education programs and services encompass diverse program types, service environments, professional staff, and care providers. State early childhood programs and services serving children from birth to age 5 involve multiple agencies and several federal and state funding streams. Young children participate in various care and education programs and settings, including subsidized and licensed center-based and home-based child care; family, friend, and neighbor child care; Head Start and Early Head Start programs; state prekindergarten programs; and additional unlicensed and private settings. Home visiting programs can also support children and their families from the prenatal period until school entry (see What Are the Most Common Early Childhood Care and Education Programs in States? on page 9). Vulnerable children, in particular, tend to shift among these programs and settings within a single day or over time.

Young children and their families also rely on supports that can intersect with early childhood care and education but exist as distinct programs and services. These include a broad and largely disconnected network of supports related to physical and mental health, family income, healthy nutrition, and child welfare. Young children with disabilities and special needs often are served by programs housed in state departments of education and health and human services.

Separate federal and state funding streams and agency oversight complicate the landscape still further. Within a single state, as many as 30 federal funding streams may support programs that touch the lives of young children and their families. Each program has its own data collection protocols and reporting requirements. Difficulties abound in finding consistent accountability metrics across early childhood programs, shared definitions of data elements, or cross-agency procedures for maintaining data reliability and validity.

Given this complex configuration of programs, services, and funding streams, recognizing the features of a comprehensive, high-quality early childhood care and education system is important to states engaged in or planning system building. Research and promising practices lay a foundation for understanding these key features. A comprehensive, high-quality early childhood system incorporates:

- A multidimensional approach to improving child outcomes;
- A coordinated strategy to close gaps in access and quality;
- A focus on infants and toddlers;
- Targeted resources to serve high-need and special populations;
- Data-driven policymaking; and
- Strong linkages between parents, communities, and schools.

Figure 4. A Comprehensive Early Childhood System Framework

Early Care and Education

Health, Mental Health, and Nutrition

Family Support

Special Needs/Early Intervention

EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS WORKING GROUP

Source: J. Coffman, M.S. Wright, and C. Bruner. "Beyond Parallel Play: Emerging State and Community Planning Roles in Building Early Learning Systems." (Washington, D.C: State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network and The Build Initiative, 2006).
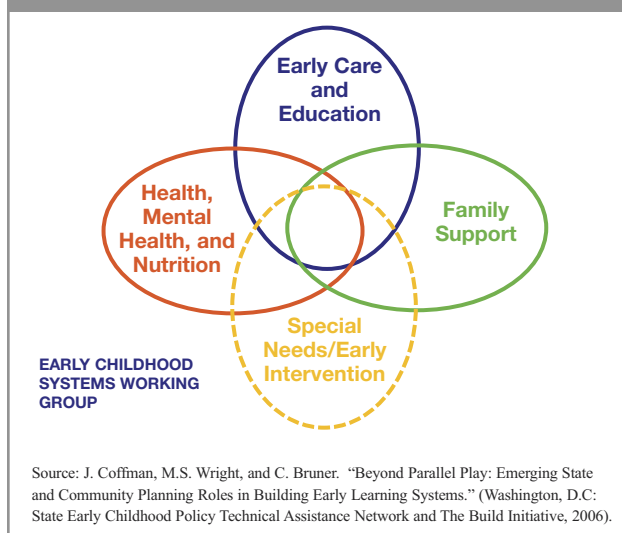
A Multidimensional Approach to Improving Child Outcomes

Ensuring young children are prepared for success in school and life involves addressing multiple domains of growth and development, and affording access to high-quality care and education experiences. Yet early childhood state systems continue to struggle to implement a comprehensive approach to improving child outcomes. Children need nurturing families within safe and supportive communities. A readiness to prevent and address physical and mental health issues also is crucial. In addition, resources to maintain healthy nutrition are important. Finally, children who have special health or developmental needs require early diagnosis and intervention.

The Early Childhood Systems Working Group, a consortium of national policy organizations, has provided states and governors with a framework for a comprehensive early childhood system that supports all children, particularly those who are most at risk, in these ways *(see Figure 4)*. The framework depicts the four key parts of an early childhood system (represented by the four overlapping ovals): Early Care and Education; Family Support; Health, Mental Health, and Nutrition; and Special Needs/Early Intervention.

Many states are taking steps to implement an integrated approach to meet the needs of young children and their families. For example, nine states are partnering with the Strengthening Families National Network to develop cross-system strategies to foster the development of five protective factors that contribute to the prevention of abuse and neglect: parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and children's social and emotional development.[30]

A Coordinated Strategy to Close Gaps in Quality and Access

Gap analyses, needs assessments, and quality improvement data are fundamental tools to determine where and why gaps in quality and access are occurring. In Illinois, the Early Childhood Asset Map offers policymakers a visual representation of the capacity, availability, and accessibility of the state's prekindergarten program and provides additional context through data on family income and poverty, and language(s) spoken at home.[31]

A Focus on Infants and Toddlers

In the past 30 years, the percentage of mothers with children below age 3 who are employed has almost doubled.[32] However, the availability and quality of center-based child

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN STATES?

- **Child Care and Development Fund/Child Care and Development Block Grant:** The Child Care and Development Fund supports state child care subsidy programs under the rules of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act, which serves children up to age 13 living in families with incomes below 85 percent of the state median income. Child care subsidy programs include center-based, family or home-based, and school-based licensed child care settings.

- **Head Start:** Head Start is a federally funded school readiness program that serves 3- and 4-year-olds in families with income at 200 percent of the federal poverty level. The program seeks to enhance children's social and cognitive development by providing education, health, nutrition, social, and other services.

- **Early Head Start:** Early Head Start is a federally funded community-based program for low-income families with infants, toddlers, and pregnant women. Its mission is to promote healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women, enhance the development of very young children, and promote healthy family functioning.

- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C:** This federal program serves children with disabilities or developmental delays through age 2 and their families by providing early intervention services.

- **Early Childhood Special Education Part B:** This federal program provides education and related services for children ages 3 to 5 who are experiencing developmental delays. Eligibility is determined by criteria established by federal and state regulations.

- **State-Funded Prekindergarten Programs:** Thirty-eight states support prekindergarten programs that serve 3- and 4-year-olds. Nationally, about 70 percent of children in state-funded prekindergarten programs are served in a school setting.[a]

- **Title I:** Local education agencies and schools with high numbers or high percentages of poor children can use Title I funds to support state prekindergarten programs. Currently, only about 2 percent of Title I funds are spent on these programs.[b]

- **Home Visiting:** Currently, 40 states use state funds to support 69 different home visiting models that typically serve children and their families in a home setting from the prenatal period to school entry. Common models include Parents as Teachers and the Nurse Family Partnership.[c] Federal funding authorized through the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 will significantly expand the resources that states can dedicate to home visiting programs over the next five years.

NOTES:
a. http://www.preknow.org/policy/factsheets/snapshot.cfm
b. http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/ wwwpewcenteronthestatesorg/ new_beginnings.pdf
c. http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_862.pdf

care for infants and toddlers remains low, leaving most of this age group cared for by relatives and family child care providers. Infants and children below age 3 constitute a highly vulnerable population. More than half of the nation's roughly 5 million infants and children up to age 3 live in families with income below the federal poverty level. High-quality programs and services for this population are difficult to implement and sustain because they cost more than programs for older children.[33]

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has provided support to states through additional funding for Early Head Start, with a set-aside for infants and toddlers. The Program for Infant and Toddler Care is a national model that aims to improve the quality of infant and toddler caregivers and teachers through training videos, guides, manuals, and institutes. Currently, approximately 15 states use this model, including **California,** where it was developed.[34]

Targeted Resources to Serve High-Need and Special Populations

Many states target resources to high-need and special populations, such as children with special needs, children of immigrants, English language learners, and children in the child welfare system. In **South Carolina,** for example, the state's public-private early childhood partnership, called First Steps for School Readiness, also is the state's lead agency for intervention services under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This helps ensure that a focus on children with special needs is maintained in state policymaking.

Data-Driven Policymaking

States that continually collect and analyze information on early childhood program participation, early childhood program quality, and early childhood workers are better equipped to interpret outcomes and develop policy approaches to guide broader system improvement. Gathering, interpreting, and reporting data on early childhood care and education program effectiveness are especially important activities in a tough state fiscal climate. The KIDS COUNT national network has supported state multi-agency data collection and analysis efforts for the past 20 years to promote data-driven policymaking.[35]

Administrative data collection, analysis, and reporting can be used to identify correlations and trends. Yet understanding causality requires rigorous study. State administrative data can, over time, contribute to longitudinal research and evaluation. These findings can subsequently inform future policy.

Strong Linkages between Parents, Communities, and Schools

States are already relying on long-standing resources to link community networks and K–12 school systems. Supported by the federal Child Care and Development Fund, the state-based network of child care resource and referral agencies facilitates outreach and information sharing among child care programs, parents, state agencies, schools, and other community partners. The Educare model reflects a unique linkage between public and private resources to promote comprehensive, high-quality, community-oriented program centers. Educare currently operates in nine states, including **Nebraska,** where it began.[36] Another promising model is the Harlem Children's Zone, a New York City initiative that includes early childhood care and education among the supports it provides. The federal Promise Neighborhoods initiative stems, in part, from this successful model.

By prioritizing these critical system features, governors can develop an early childhood state system that is inclusive, comprehensive, and coordinated. Systemic reform is a long-term and incremental process. Fundamentally restructuring early childhood state systems requires strategic planning over time and sustainable resources. Governors play an essential role in defining a vision for system improvement and prioritizing the vision within a state policy agenda.

III. State Actions to Develop a Comprehensive, High-Quality Early Childhood System

Governors and other state policymakers can pursue several strategies to realize the promise and build the key features of a comprehensive, high-quality early childhood system. Specifically, state leaders can take these actions.

- **Coordinate early childhood governance through a state early childhood advisory council** that is designated by the governor, represents the full range of early childhood programs, and implements a strategic plan for comprehensive services statewide.
- **Build an integrated professional development system** that reflects aligned and research-based professional development standards, supports recruitment and retention through career pathways, and uses a professional development registry.
- **Implement a quality rating and improvement system** that measures different aspects of program quality, applies a common metric to all early care and education programs, and incentivizes program improvement.
- **Develop a longitudinal and coordinated early childhood data system** that tracks results, protects child and family privacy, and drives improvement by continually collecting, analyzing, and reporting information.

- **Align comprehensive early learning guidelines and standards for children from birth to age 5 with K–3 content standards** to bridge early experiences with the early elementary grades.
- **Integrate federal, state, and private funding sources** to support and sustain the core components of a comprehensive, high-quality early childhood system.

States can look to many promising practices to guide the development of this system. Some of the models of coordination and quality improvement come from other fields. They include the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Strategic Prevention Framework,[37] reform initiatives in state child welfare systems, and extended learning opportunity quality improvement efforts.[38]

ACTION 1: Coordinate Early Childhood Governance

States can undertake strategic planning and administrative reform to ensure coordinated governance for early childhood programs, including care and education programs and programs that address family support, physical and mental health, nutrition, special needs, and early intervention for children from birth to age 5. The goal is to effectively bridge categorical and historically siloed programs to promote healthy development and improve school readiness outcomes.

The Improving Head Start Act of 2007 called for states to establish an early childhood advisory council (ECAC) to improve the quality, availability, and coordination of programs and services for children from birth to age 5. Governors can establish an ECAC through an executive order, a statute, or a memorandum of understanding. ECACs are asked to provide recommendations on the development of a unified early childhood data system, a statewide professional development system, and research-based early learning standards. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) authorized $1.1 billion for noncompetitive, one-time state grants of at least $500,000 to support the initial development of ECACs over three years. Each state's funding allocation was determined by an assessment of state census and family income data.

Governors in nearly all the states have now acted to formally designate these councils and receive federal funds. Despite state budget constraints and the 70 percent required match of state funds, states have continued to meet the challenge of establishing ECACs. In 2009, while faced with one of the nation's largest budget gaps, **California**'s governor's office issued an executive order to formally recognize the state's Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care. This body will include the Early Learning Quality Improvement System Advisory Committee, previously established through legislation in 2008, as an official committee.[39]

Historically, many states have relied on a children's cabinet or special task force to encourage coordinated early childhood governance. Governors can designate such an entity to serve as the ECAC. In addition, some federally funded programs such as the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grant program and Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act require an interagency planning body. Governors can also build on these bodies to structure their ECAC.

Governors play an important role in articulating a comprehensive vision for children from birth to age 5 to guide the work of the ECAC, appointing ECAC members with decisionmaking authority, and ensuring the ECAC helps drive statewide policy change. **Ohio**'s ECAC was created in 2008, following the establishment of the state's Early Childhood Cabinet. The ECAC is an advisory board of the cabinet. One of the ECAC's priorities is to survey stakeholders and respond to their suggestions on effective communication strategies.[40] **Missouri**'s ECAC capitalized on the work of the state's long-standing ECCS Steering Committee and the more recently convened state Coordinating Board for Early Childhood. The governor's office has drawn from the strategic planning efforts of both bodies to devise a comprehensive outcomes framework for children from birth to age 5 and action steps to guide cross-agency coordination.

ECACs also afford an opportunity to link local system-building efforts to broader state plans. In **Colorado**, the governor's office is working to develop an early childhood system at the state level and build a statewide network of local early childhood councils. Colorado's ECAC will address early learning, physical and mental health, and family support/parent education issues as well as services and supports for children from birth to age 8. The state's strategic plan links multiple state agencies, the state's K–12 education system, and county- and local-level coordinating bodies.[41] **Iowa**'s ECAC, Early Childhood Iowa, and the governor's office are working to coordinate state-level

system-building efforts among the state's 58 local community empowerment areas.[42]

Strong public-private partnerships that have driven statewide system-building initiatives continue to play a role in the development of new ECACs. For example, **Vermont**'s governor's office signed an executive order in 2006 designating the state's public-private Building Bright Futures Council as the ECAC. The 21-member council includes business and community leaders and the heads of state agencies that serve young children. Twelve regional councils in the state will communicate local gaps in services and other data to the state's council in order to develop regional plans for improvement.[43]

States have also restructured administrative systems to support coordinated governance. **Pennsylvania** centralized its early childhood care and education programs from the department of education and the department of public welfare within the office of child development and early learning (OCDEL), which remains organizationally linked to both departments. The Early Learning Council serves as the state's ECAC, and was established through executive order as the advisory group for OCDEL as well. Working in partnership with OCDEL and co-chaired by the head of OCDEL, this group plays a leadership role in ensuring

consistency between the governor's policy framework and the development of a comprehensive, high-quality system. In **Washington**, the governor-established department of early learning (DEL) serves as a cabinet-level state agency, housing initiatives targeting young children that had previously been scattered across the department of social and health services, the department of community trade and economic development, and the office of the superintendent of public instruction. The state's ECAC will be closely tied to DEL's policy leadership through a statewide policy outcomes framework. In 2005, Maryland transferred all early care and education programs to the department of education and created the division of early childhood development. The state's ECAC is housed in this division and works collaboratively with other offices and local school districts. Additionally, the recently codified P-20 Leadership Council integrates leadership from private partnership organizations and state government to align curricular and development goals from early childhood through college and the workforce.

Establishing a state ECAC is an important step states can take toward building a comprehensive, high-quality early childhood system. As the state's chief executive officer, governors can ensure the ECAC brings together disparate early childhood care and education programs and services to address a strategic agenda.

ACTION 2: Build an Integrated Professional Development System

The knowledge, skills, and practices of early childhood care providers and teachers are critical factors in their delivery of high-quality developmental and educational experiences to young children. Although research continues to explore how professional skills and competencies interact with other environmental and child characteristics, a growing body of evidence shows that early childhood professionals benefit from professional development opportunities beyond minimal training. Moreover, these benefits are passed on to the children in their care and in their classrooms.[44]

The early childhood workforce involves professionals with varying levels of experience and qualifications. Most professionals who comprise the current early childhood workforce are not adequately prepared.[45] Recruiting and retaining a highly skilled early childhood professional workforce is challenging. The annual early childhood care provider and teacher turnover rate averages 30 percent; this far exceeds the average turnover rate in nearly every other industry in the national economy.[46] Early childhood professionals with training specific to early childhood education and care are less likely to leave their current position. However, many members of the workforce are not exposed to training that offers even a fundamental understanding of child development. To build an integrated early childhood

Common Categories of Standards and Indicators in Statewide Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

CATEGORIES	INDICATORS
Staff qualifications and professional development	• Credentials/degrees required to qualify for a particular staff role. • Number of hours of ongoing training for program staff.
Learning environment	• Classroom assessment or self-assessment using tools such as an environmental rating scale.
Curriculum	• Use of specific curricula or curricula that aligns with state's early learning guidelines. • Use of child observations and assessments to guide use of appropriate curricula.
Administration	• Personnel policies, such as performance evaluations and regular staff meetings. • Financial management measures, such as an annual budget and audit and financial recordkeeping. • Staff compensation measures, such as a salary scale and employee benefits.
Parent and family involvement	• System for family engagement, such as regular conferences or written updates on daily events. • Formal parent support system, such as home visits and health and mental health consultation.
Licensing compliance	• License in good standing with no substantiated complaints or serious noncompliance.
Staff-child ratios and group size	• Staff-child ratios and group sizes lower than those required by licensing.

Source: National Child Care Information Center, Quality Rate and Improvement System Resource Guide (Vienna, VA: National Child Care Information Center, 2010), http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/qrisresourceguide (accessed June 24, 2010).

professional development system that supports a highly qualified professional workforce, states can create and align research-based standards of professional development, support recruitment and retention through career pathways, and use a professional development registry.

Create and Align Research-Based Professional Development Standards

Professional standards establish requirements for the preparation and ongoing development of early childhood professionals. Child development and pedagogical research can guide states on how to establish standards for professional competencies and content knowledge.

States can align standards for early childhood workforce quality across all program types, including child care, Head Start, and state-funded prekindergarten programs. At least 25 states now have a bachelor's degree requirement for teachers working in state-funded prekindergarten programs for 3- and 4-year-olds. Yet many of these same states have no requisite training or education requirements for the staff of center- or home-based child care programs.[47] State policies can specify varying levels and content of professional preparation and ongoing development as requirements for professionals to successfully meet position qualifications.

Pennsylvania's Early Learning Keys to Quality Initiative, overseen by the office of child development and early learning, has integrated standards for professional certification and continuing professional development requirements for all types of practitioners.[48] **New York** has adopted a more comprehensive approach by expanding its standards to apply to the qualifications of
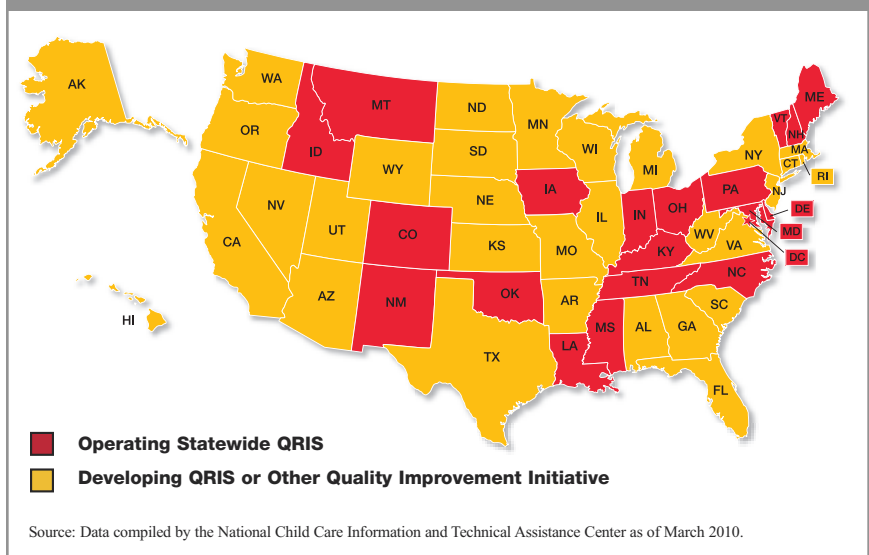
health, education, and human service providers working with young children in order to ensure they "have the knowledge and skills needed to promote positive child and family development." New York and Pennsylvania also link their professional development standards to their statewide quality rating and improvement system.

Support Recruitment and Retention through Career Pathways

States can implement recruitment and retention policies that will improve access to professional development opportunities. Career pathways help early childhood professionals increase their qualifications and understand professional opportunities offered by the state higher education system and training and credentialing programs. Some states refer to these pathways as career ladders or lattices. **Iowa**'s professional development system plan, for example, addresses career pathways for professionals in all early care and education programs, including early intervention and special education, as well as those in the related systems of physical and mental health, nutrition, and family support.[50]

States can also strengthen recruitment policies for early childhood professionals through a focus on articulation— the transfer of professional development credentials, courses, credits, and degrees from one program or institution to another without a loss of credits. Colleges and universities can be required to enter into articulation agreements that help early childhood professionals move through and across undergraduate and graduate degree

Figure 5. States Operating or Developing a Statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System

■ Operating Statewide QRIS

■ Developing QRIS or Other Quality Improvement Initiative

Source: Data compiled by the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center as of March 2010.

programs. Governors can support policies that enable their higher education system to serve professionals from all sectors, workplace settings, and roles by clearly defining and publicizing career pathway opportunities.

Through effective career pathways, states can support individuals entering the early childhood field from other occupations. Effective career pathways within the state can also support early care and education professionals who want to shift among types of early childhood programs or roles. In **Massachusetts**, the Early Educators Scholarship program supports currently employed early childhood educators who are pursuing associate and bachelor's degrees. The state's Building Careers program supports nontraditional students who are seeking to enter the early childhood field by scheduling courses at times convenient for working adults.[51] On-site training programs and distance learning strategies also are important resources in extending career pathway opportunities to all early childhood professionals.

Use a Professional Development Registry

Early childhood workforce data are essential to governors planning and evaluating the impacts of state recruitment, retention, and professional development initiatives. States can improve the collection and analysis of early childhood workforce data by implementing a professional development registry that tracks the effectiveness of policies to recruit, retain, and develop a highly qualified early childhood professional workforce. Thirty-one states currently maintain a workforce registry database, a computerized record of a state's early childhood professionals' qualifications, credentials, and ongoing professional development.[52] For example, Traveling **Arkansas'** Professional Pathways guides professionals to development and training opportunities and collects information on qualifications.[53] Early childhood workforce data can be gathered and maintained by partnerships between state agencies and higher education institutions. In **Connecticut**, five state agencies—the departments of children and families, education, higher education, public health, and social services—collaborate to gather data on more than 4,000 early childhood professionals.[54]

Governors can play a leading role in helping states plan and implement comprehensive professional development systems. Connecting professional development systems to collaborative early childhood governance mechanisms such as the ECAC and a statewide quality rating and improvement system will foster coordination among early childhood programs in the state and with the state's system of higher education.

ACTION 3: Implement a Quality Rating and Improvement System

A quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) is a measurement and program improvement tool that gathers and disseminates information on the quality of early childhood care and education programs to parents, policymakers, and practitioners. States often use a star rating system, and they may provide technical assistance and other incentives to further encourage quality improvements. States can develop a QRIS that measures different aspects of program quality, applies a common metric to all early care and education programs, and promotes program improvement. Four percent of CCDF funds are reserved for quality improvement initiatives and many states use these resources to support QRIS development and expansion. Currently, 20 states and the District of Columbia operate a QRIS, and many more states are developing one[55] *(see Figure 5)*.

A statewide QRIS enables states to apply consistent measures of program quality across various early childhood programs that otherwise comply with separate federal and state monitoring procedures and reporting requirements. To make informed decisions, policymakers need information on commonly identified, comprehensive measures of quality across programs. All of the currently operational quality rating and improvement systems include child care centers and Head Start Programs, while 18 include family child care homes and 17 include state prekindergarten programs. In **Illinois**, the QRIS also includes unlicensed child care providers.[56]

More research is needed on the program components that have the greatest influence on child outcomes. However, current findings show that high-quality programs consistently share similar attributes, including low teacher-child ratios and high rates of teacher-child interaction.

CRITICAL POLICY QUESTIONS DRIVE DATA SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

The Early Childhood Data Collaborative engaged a wide range of outreach and consultation efforts to determine the most critical policy questions confronting state policymakers as they allocate resources and provide oversight for early care and education (ECE) programs. States may identify additional policy questions and, in turn, additional data to collect, but these questions and related ECE Fundamentals form the foundation for coordinated state early care and education data systems:

- **Are children, birth to age 5, on track to succeed when they enter school and beyond?**

- **Which children have access to high-quality ECE programs?**

- **Is the quality of programs improving?**

- **What are the characteristics of effective programs?**

- **How prepared is the workforce to provide effective education and care for all children?**

- **What policies and investments lead to a skilled and stable ECE workforce?**

States can frame broader measures of system quality through three types of indicators.
- **Program-level indicators**—include program quality standards, licensure, and monitoring via site visits and observation.
- **Child-level indicators**—include early learning standards or guidelines and child assessment.
- **Workforce-level indicators**—include professional qualification standards, licensure, and monitoring via observation.

The strongest QRIS will integrate these quality measures along with technical assistance and other capacity building to assist programs in improving quality and outcomes.[58] Most of the operating quality rating and improvement systems use an environmental rating scale to gauge program quality, though variations exist in the frequency of this kind of evaluation, the number of classrooms that are observed, and how the scores are used to determine ratings. In Oklahoma, for example, licensing specialists monitor programs based on the statewide Reaching for the Stars criteria three times per year.[59] The majority of state QRISs include national accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children as a quality measure.[60] The quality measures in a robust statewide QRIS should also correlate to professional development standards, licensure and regulation, compensation, early

learning guidelines, early content standards, and other state policies. *(See Common Categories of Standards and Indicators in Statewide Quality Rating and Improvement Systems on page 13.)*

Participation in a QRIS tends to be voluntary, but three states require participation. **New Mexico, North Carolina,** and **Tennessee** mandate QRIS participation for all licensed child care programs, allowing voluntary entry only at higher ratings. In New Mexico, higher ratings are then linked to the state's tiered reimbursement system for child care programs. Twelve of the 20 operational QRIS link to their state's tiered child care subsidy reimbursement program.[61] In **Kentucky**, both incentives and supports are given to early care and education programs that participate in the voluntary STARS for KIDS NOW QRIS.[62]

ACTION 4: Develop a Coordinated, Longitudinal Data System

Within a single state, data on children in publicly funded early childhood care and education programs typically are stored by multiple agency data systems—for example, education, human services, and economic or workforce support—that are not linked. Additional agencies collect and store data on children's physical and mental health, special needs and early intervention involvement, and family support services, including child welfare. Linking data on young children in order to track their academic progress in the K–12 education system also has proven challenging in most states. Without a systematic approach to gathering and interpreting data on young children, state early childhood systems lack the capacity to close service gaps, improve the quality of early childhood experiences for the most vulnerable children, or understand what aspects of these experiences contribute to early developmental and school success.

A coordinated, longitudinal early childhood data system affords governors and other state policymakers a tool to understand developmental and school readiness outcomes for children, improvements in programs, and the qualifications and professional development efforts of the early childhood workforce. By linking key data elements across programs and agencies through unique identifiers for children, program sites, and early childhood professionals, states can bridge historically siloed programs and track the progress of each child over time through different early care and education experiences prior to school entry.

By capturing important child-level information, such as risk factors and special needs, states can be equipped to

provide children with services that will enhance their early development and school readiness. Collecting information on programs can give policymakers data on the availability of services and the program characteristics likely to produce positive results. Professional workforce data can reveal the qualifications of who cares for and educates young children, the impact of various professional qualifications and credentials on the experiences children have, and how best to support professional training and development.

State leaders are at various stages of developing early childhood data systems, and momentum for this challenging work continues to grow based on increased federal support and a heightened need for fiscal accountability. The Early Childhood Data Collaborative (ECDC) is a consortium of national organizations convened to help state policymakers develop and effectively use coordinated, longitudinal early childhood data systems. ECDC has produced a policy framework that outlines the critical policy questions that should drive state policymakers' early childhood data system development *(see Critical Policy Questions Drive Data Systems Development on page16)*. The policy framework also details key components of a data system for early childhood programs *(see 10 ECE Fundamentals at a Glance on this page)*.[63]

Coordinated governance at the state level is an essential support to developing an early childhood data system that links information among and between programs and other state systems, such as the K–12 education system. Governors can play a significant role in setting and guiding the data collection policies and protocols that determine how data are collected, accessed, and shared by state agencies. In 2007, **Pennsylvania** created the state-level office of child development and early learning (OCDEL), a joint initiative between the departments of education and public welfare. OCDEL's information management system, Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks (PELICAN) now integrates data from the state's prekindergarten, child care, and early intervention programs. It also links to the state QRIS and professional development system. OCDEL relies on systematic gap analyses, needs assessments, and quality improvement data across programs as fundamental tools for analysis and policymaking.

The Program Reach and County Risk Assessment is a tool OCDEL uses to track progress at the local level on state outcomes for children from birth to age 5. The assessment identifies average risk levels for each county by tracking several factors among children and families, including the mother's high school graduation status, the number of female-headed families living below the poverty level, and

10 ECE FUNDAMENTALS AT A GLANCE

After identifying the critical policy questions confronting state policymakers, the Early Childhood Data Collaborative identified the following 10 Fundamentals of coordinated state early care and education (ECE) data systems that provide the foundation to answer these questions:

1. **Unique statewide child identifier**
2. **Child-level demographic and program participation information**
3. **Child-level data on child development**
4. **Ability to link child-level data with K–12 and other key programs**
5. **Unique program site identifier with the ability to link with children and the ECE workforce**
6. **Program site data on structure, quality, and work environment**
7. **Unique ECE workforce identifier with ability to link with program sites and children**
8. **Individual ECE workforce demographics, including education, and professional development information**
9. **State governance body to manage data collection and use**
10. **Transparent privacy protection and security practices and policies**

Source: The Early Childhood Data Collaborative, *Getting Started: 10 Fundamentals of Coordinated State Early Care and Education Data Systems* (Washington, D.C: Data Quality Campaign, 2010).

third-grade math and reading proficiency. These risk data are then matched with data collected on the reach of OCDEL programs in each county to determine gaps in access. OCDEL also tracks public statewide investment per child. The assessment tool already reaches all public early care and education programs overseen by OCDEL.

Other governance strategies have contributed to successful data efforts in states. For example, **Maryland**'s 2005 decision to house all its early childhood programs within the state education department's division of early childhood development offers a streamlined approach to collecting and analyzing data and using the information for policymaking. The Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) provides a common set of definitions for early childhood terms and data elements. MMSR also establishes a shared measure of school readiness, the Work Sampling System, a comprehensive, observational assessment of progress that is administered to all children who have entered kindergarten.[64]

As states develop effective governance strategies for data management, ensuring privacy and security should be a high priority. State agencies that oversee programs serving young children and their families must protect these individuals' privacy and preserve the confidentiality of information on them. States are capable of data sharing within the guidelines of federal and state privacy laws when rigorous levels of data confidentiality and security are maintained. Articulating clear policy uses of data and identifying the stakeholders who will have access to different types of data are steps state governance bodies can take to maintain data privacy and security.

ACTION 5: Align Comprehensive Early Learning Guidelines and Standards

Nationwide, governors are recognizing that standards serve as a tool for parents, policymakers, and the public in supporting the healthy growth and development of children from birth to age 5. For most states, policy initiatives that seek to improve developmental and school readiness outcomes for young children are anchored by a framework of early learning guidelines and standards. Early learning guidelines and standards define expectations for what children should know and be able to do based on their age and stage of development. In turn, these skills and competencies shape early childhood programmatic standards, professional development policies, and the selection of curricula and assessment.

Since 2000, the number of states with prekindergarten standards has increased from three to 50. Approximately 23 states have undertaken the development of standards for infants and toddlers.[65] Federal standards also have been developed for some early childhood programs. A

revised Outcomes Framework for the Head Start and Early Head Start programs will be released in 2010, and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education has developed guidelines and standards for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with disabilities.[66]

For young children, school readiness hinges not only on academic preparedness, but also on supportive, caring relationships with adults in safe environments. Comprehensive, integrated early learning guidelines and standards promote positive early learning experiences for children and align these experiences with their transition to kindergarten and the early elementary grades. States can ensure that early childhood standards are research- and evidence-based and are tied to the appropriate use of curriculum and assessment. All these factors are important in accounting for the variability of young children's learning processes and program environments where young children are cared for and learn.

Early developmental and learning standards also play a central role in state early childhood professional development systems. Effective standards should readily communicate essential skills and concepts to all types of early childhood practitioners and educators. Many states already provide pre-service training and professional development opportunities that are shaped by early childhood standards. States can work to ensure appropriate use of the standards by the full range of early childhood professionals working in various program settings.

States can assess the progression of children from early childhood settings into the K–12 education system more accurately when early childhood and early elementary standards are aligned. Despite widespread budget shortfalls, many states have targeted funds to support school readiness initiatives that align early childhood standards with entry into kindergarten. In 2010, **Washington** allocated funds to the state department of early learning to partner with the office of the superintendent of public instruction on developing and piloting a voluntary kindergarten readiness assessment tool that is based on expectations and skills identified in the state's early learning standards. Washington has further leveraged private money to pilot the assessment tool and conduct a review of the state's early learning benchmarks to ensure that they are culturally relevant and connect seamlessly with K-12 learning standards.

The K–12 Common Core State Standards initiative represents a new opportunity to address effective transitions to school entry by supporting the development of state standards for children from birth to age 5 and

strengthening the alignment between these standards and K–3 standards. By doing so, states can support an effective learning continuum for children from birth to age 8. A partnership between the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers produced the common core standards, which provide clear and focused learning progressions from kindergarten through 12th grade in English/language arts and mathematics. States that have agreed to adopt the standards will continue to implement them throughout summer and fall 2010.

ACTION 6: Integrate Funding Sources to Support System Development

States can identify federal, state, and private funds they may use to support the core components of a comprehensive, high-quality early childhood system. Innovative funding strategies have always been important to building state early childhood care and education systems. The categorical funding of early childhood programs at both the federal and state levels has long challenged the work of comprehensive system building. Although only 8 percent to 12 percent of federal funding supports state K–12 education systems, early childhood care and education programs rely largely on a diverse base of federal funding.[67] Federal investments support numerous programs that touch young children, and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) brought one-time funding increases to many of these early childhood programs. Yet states continue to face the necessity of integrating funds across programs to support comprehensive system-building efforts.[68]

Several states have increased their investments in early childhood system improvement with federal support. For example, **Idaho** allocated $1.6 million in ARRA funds to the Idaho STARS QRIS. In fiscal 2010, **Minnesota** allocated $1.5 million for the School Readiness Connections pilot program

that will spend approximately $3,000 more per child in subsidized child care, enabling each to receive high-quality, full-day, and year-round child care. This investment leverages state general funds, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families dollars, and ARRA monies.[69] **Washington** is combining state general funds and ARRA dollars to sustain the current level of funding for its career and wage ladder, which creates professional pathways for early childhood workers.[70]

States have also traditionally relied on the Child Care and Development Fund's 4 percent quality set-aside to support comprehensive quality improvement efforts; $255 million of the $2 billion increase allocated for Child Care and Development Block Grants must be used for quality improvement. In **Minnesota**, some ARRA quality dollars will sustain a pilot program that seeks to increase the quality of family, friend, and neighbor child care providers.[71] The quality set-aside can also be used to support the development of state data systems that link child care data to other program information.

ARRA provides additional early childhood resources that states can direct to data system development. The law also authorizes $5 billion in Race to the Top funds for four target reform areas, including establishing data systems that track student achievement and link with early care and education data systems.

Despite the adverse impact of the economic downturn on the business and foundation communities, many states also continue to rely on strong public-private partnerships to support investments in early childhood initiatives. Oklahoma will leverage $15 million in State Fiscal Stabilization Fund dollars—a K–12 stream of ARRA that states may also direct to early childhood care and education programs—with $2 million of Title I ARRA funds and a $15 million match from the George Kaiser Family Foundation. The monies will fund three early childhood development centers for children ages 3 and older administered by the Tulsa Public School District.[72] **Oregon** will use its ARRA child care quality funds to support the first phase of its Education and Quality Investment Partnership, a public-private partnership focused on improving child care quality throughout the state.[73]

State early childhood system-building efforts are benefiting from the infusion of federal dollars through ARRA, but these one-time dollars do not represent a sustainable or dedicated funding stream. Sustainability will remain a priority and a challenge for states and governors in planning strategically to continue or initiate this work. ECACs can play a pivotal role in coordinating and leveraging federal and state resources targeted to early childhood programs.

IV. Getting Started

System building is a long-term process that involves incremental steps and investment. Although all of the six actions described here are integral to a fully comprehensive system, many states may not able to pursue them all. States have limited resources to invest within the current economic climate. In 2009, 46 states faced budget shortfalls that totaled approximately $300 billion, and this trend is likely to continue for the next several budget cycles.[74] While many of these strategies may result in cost savings and increased efficiencies for state governments, they are not all low or no cost measures. As states grapple with fiscal constraints, policymakers will need to prioritize areas of the system to address one at a time.

An initial focus on building collaborative governance is a low-cost approach to establishing the foundation for a comprehensive, high-quality early childhood state system. Nearly all states have identified a coordinating governance entity for early childhood care and education, and most states have received federal funds to support an ECAC through 2013. Despite tight budgets, states can rely on these bodies to actively engage in important system-building work, including strategic planning, engaging new stakeholders, and building public and political will. Other system-building approaches may produce initial cost-savings for states. States may begin developing a longitudinal, coordinated data system by mapping the current of flow of the state's early childhood data. This activity can identify data collection redundancies or inefficient protocols that may be streamlined to improve cost and service outcomes.

Recent developments in federal leadership also hold promise for early childhood state system-building efforts. New partnerships between the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services may improve policy alignment and streamline program administration. Although the multiple funding streams that support early care and education programs may never be collapsed into a single source, interagency coordination at the federal level will support needed connections to reduce program and policy fragmentation at the state level.

States have made significant progress toward developing policies and strategies that incrementally build the components of a comprehensive, high-quality early childhood state system. By delivering on the promise of such a system, governors and other policymakers can help ensure that more children will enter school healthy and ready to learn, that high school graduation rates and the academic achievement gap will be positively affected, and that the economic viability of their state will be enhanced by a population that is more college- and career-ready. Ultimately, this commitment will position states to nurture the next wave of learners, workers, and parents who will shape future generations.

NOTES

[1] http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/?q=node/280 (accessed June 3, 2010).

[2] http://www.aecf.org/~/media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/ 123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC_report_color_highres.pdf (accessed June 3, 2010).

[3] James Heckman, *The Heckman Equation: A Solution for Better Education and Health Outcomes, Less Crime and Poverty and Greater Economic Security* (Chicago: The Heckman Equation, 2009), http://www.heckmanequation.org/system/files/050609_HeckmanOneSheet_hires.pdf (accessed June 3, 2010).

[4] Ibid.

[5] http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/?q=node/280 (accessed June 3, 2010).

[6] The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, *A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy* (Cambridge: The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, August, 2007).

[7] Ibid.

8 National Center for Children in Poverty, *United States: Early Childhood Profile* (New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, 2010), http://www.nccp.org/profiles/US_profile_16.html#3 (accessed June 3, 2010).

[9] Ibid.

[10] http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/Child_CareMar5singles.pdf?docID=7866 (accessed June 3, 2010).

[11] Lisa Klein and Jane Knitzer, *Promoting Effective Early Learning: What Every Policymaker and Educator Should Know* (New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, 2007), http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_695.pdf (accessed June 3, 2010).

[12] http://www.fpg.unc.edu/NCEDL/PAGES/cqpr.cfm (accessed June 3, 2010).

[13] C. Howes et al., "Ready to Learn? Children's Pre-Academic Achievement in Pre-Kindergarten Programs," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (2008): 429–30.

[14] Sara Rimm-Kaufman et al., "The Contribution of Children's Self-Regulation and Classroom Quality to Children's Adaptive Behavior in Kindergarten," *Developmental Psychology* (in press). See, also, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network, "A Day in Third Grade: A Large-Scale Study of Classroom Quality and Teacher and Student Behavior," Elementary School Journal 105 (2005): 305–23.

[15] Chicago Longitudinal Study Newsletter, Issue 2 (2002), http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/cls/NEWSLETTER2.PDF (accessed June 3, 2010).

[16] L. J. Schweinhart, J. Montie, Z. Xiang, W. S. Barnett, C. R. Belfield, and M. Nores, *Lifetime Effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40* (Ypsilanti, MI: HighScope Press, 2004).

[17] Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, *Early Learning, Later Success—The Abecedarian Study: Early Childhood Educational Intervention* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1999), http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~abc/ells-04.pdf (accessed June 3, 2010).

[18] Alan Vanneman et al, "Achievement Gaps: How Black and White Students in Public Schools Perform in Mathematics and Reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress," NCES 2009-455, (Washington, D.C., July, 2009).

[19] Daniel Princiotta and Ryan Reyna, *Achieving Graduation for All: A Governor's Guide to Dropout Prevention and Recovery* (Washington, DC: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2009), http://nga.org/Files/pdf/0910ACHIEVINGGRADUATION.PDF (accessed June 3, 2010).

[20] Chicago Longitudinal Study Newsletter, Issue 2 (2002), http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/cls/NEWSLETTER2.PDF (accessed June 3, 2010).

[21] Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, *Early Learning, Later Success—The Abecedarian Study: Early Childhood Educational Intervention* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1999), http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~abc/ells-04.pdf (accessed June 3, 2010).

[22] Schweinhart et al.

[23] J. Smink and M.S. Reimer, *Fifteen Effective Strategies for Improving Student Attendance and Truancy Prevention* (National Dropout Prevention Center, 2005).

[24] James Heckman, *The Heckman Equation: A Solution for Better Education and Health Outcomes, Less Crime and Poverty and Greater Economic Security* (Chicago: The Heckman Equation, 2009), http://www.heckmanequation.org/system/files/050609_HeckmanOneSheet_hires.pdf (accessed June 3, 2010).

[25] Ibid.

[26] Schweinhart et al.

[27] Leonard Masse and W. Steven Barnett, *A Benefit-Cost Analysis of the Abecedarian Early Childhood Intervention* (New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2002), http://nieer.org/docs/index.php?DocID=57 (accessed June 3, 2010).

[28] National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, *Building the Foundation for Bright Futures: A Governor's Guide to School Readiness* (Washington, DC: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2005), http://www.nga.org/cda/files/0501taskforcereadiness.pdf (accessed June 4, 2010).

[29] Charles Bruner, *Federal Funding and Young Children: Directions, Opportunities, and Challenges to States in Building Early Childhood Systems* (Silver Spring, MD: BUILD Initiative, September 2009), http://www.buildinitiative.org/files/Federal%20Funding.pdf (accessed June 4, 2010).

[30] http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net/index.php (accessed June 3, 2010).

[31] http://iecam.crc.uiuc.edu/data/pdf/report-final3.pdf (accessed June 3, 2010).

[32] http://nieer.org/resources/factsheets/23.pdf (accessed June 3, 2010).

[33] Vanessa R. Wight and Michelle Chau, "Basic Facts About Low-Income Children, 2008: Children Under Age Three" (New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, November 2009), http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_894.pdf (accessed June 4, 2010).

[34] http://www.pitc.org/ (accessed June 3, 2010).

[35] http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/KIDSCOUNT.aspx (accessed June 3, 2010).

[36] http://www.educarecenters.org/ (accessed June 3, 2010).

[37] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency, "SAMHSA Awards 25 Grants Totaling $190 Million for Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Programs," Press Release, July 24, 2009, http://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/advisories/0907245715.aspx (accessed June 4, 2010).

[38] Daniel Princiotta and Ayeola Fortune, *The Quality Imperative: A State Guide to Achieving the Promise of Extended Learning Opportunities* (Washington, DC: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, March 2009), http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0904ELOQUALITYIMPERATIVE.PDF (accessed June 4, 2010).

[39] Office of the Governor of California, "Governor Takes Action to Secure Available Recovery Act Funds for Early Childhood Education," Press Release, November 9, 2010, http://gov.ca.gov/press-release/13812/ (accessed June 4, 2010).

[40] http://www.governor.ohio.gov/earlychildhoodeducation.aspx (accessed June 4, 2010).

[41] http://www.colorado.gov/cs/satellite/leftltgov/LLG/1190796318656 (accessed June 4, 2010).

[42] http://buildingbrightfutures.org/ (accessed June 4, 2010).

[43] Ibid.

[44] M. Welch-Ross et al., "Improving Connections Between Professional Development Research and Early Childhood Policies," in *Critical Issues in Early Childhood Professional Development,* ed. M. Zaslow and I. Martinez-Beck (Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes, 2006), 369–94.

[45] S. Herzenberg, M. Price, and D. Bradley, *Losing Ground in Early Childhood Education: Declining Workforce Qualifications in an Expanding Industry, 1979–2004* (Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute, 2005).

[46] Rachel Demma and Sarah LeMoine, "Building an Early Childhood Professional Development System," Issue Brief (Washington, DC: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, February 4, 2010).

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ajay Chaundry et al., *Rethinking Child Care: An Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development in New York City: Administration for Children's Services, Division of Child Care and Head Start Strategic Plan* (New York: New York City Administration for Children's Services, October 2005), http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/downloads/pdf/rethinking_new.pdf (accessed June 4, 2010).

[50] http://www.iowa.gov/educate/ecpd/ (accessed June 3, 2010).

[51] National Association for the Education of Young Children, *State Early Care and Education Public Policy Developments FY 10* (Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, October, 2009. http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/policy/state/StateECEPublicPolicyDevelopmentsFY10.pdf (accessed June 4, 2010).

[52] http://registryalliance.org (accessed June 3, 2010).

[53] http://professionalregistry.astate.edu/registry.asp (accessed June 3, 2010).

[54] Rachel Demma, "Building an Early Childhood Professional Development System," Issue Brief (Washington, DC: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, February 4, 2010).

[55] Anne Mitchell, *Quality Rating and Improvement Systems as Framework for Early Care and Education System Reform* (Silver Spring, MD: BUILD Initiative, 2009).

[56] National Association for the Education of Young Children, *The NAEYC QRIS Toolkit* (Washington DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009), http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/policy/state/QRSToolkit2009.pdf (accessed June 4, 2010).

[57] National Center for the Developing Child, *In Brief: Early Childhood Program Effectiveness* (Cambridge, MA:Harvard University), http://developingchild.harvard.edu/library/briefs/inbrief_series/inbrief_program_effectiveness/ (accessed June 4, 2010).

[58] National Association for the Education of Young Children, *The NAEYC QRIS Toolkit.* http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/policy/state/QRSToolkit2010.pdf (accessed June 3, 2010).

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] The Early Childhood Data Collaborative, *Getting Started: 10 Fundamentals of Coordinated State Early Care and Education Data Systems* (Washington, D.C: Data Quality Campaign, 2010).

[64] http://mdk12.org/instruction/ensure/MMSR/MMSRFA1.html (accessed June 3, 2010).

[65] Council of Chief State School Officers, *State Early Childhood Standards and Assessments: Five Years of Development* (Washington, D.C: Council of Chief State School Officers, 2009).

[66] Ibid.

[67] Government Accountability Office, *Federal Education Funding: Overview of K–12 and Early Childhood Education Programs* (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, January 2010), http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d1051.pdf (accessed June 4, 2010).

[68] Charles Bruner, *Opportunities to Incorporate Young Child Data into Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (ARRA) Funding (Washington, D.C: The Build Institute, 2009).

[69] National Association for the Education of Young Children, *State Early Care and Education Public Policy Developments FY 10* (Washington, D.C: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009).

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Jennifer Loren, "Stimulus Dollars Give 3-Year Olds Early Jump on Education," News9.com, December 30, 2009, http://www.news9.com/Global/story.asp?S=11750962 (accessed June 4, 2010).

[73] National Association for the Education of Young Children, *State Early Care and Education Public Policy Developments FY 10.*

[74] http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=711 (accessed June 3, 2010).

NGA CENTER DIVISIONS

The NGA Center is organized into five divisions with some collaborative projects across all divisions.

- **Economic, Human Services & Workforce** focuses on best practices, policy options, and service delivery improvements across a range of current and emerging issues, including economic development and innovation, workforce development, employment services, research and development policies, and human services for children, youth, low-income families, and people with disabilities.

- **Education** provides information on best practices in early childhood, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education. Specific issues include common core state standards and assessments; teacher effectiveness; high school redesign; science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education; postsecondary education attainment, productivity, and accountability; extra learning opportunities; and school readiness.

- **Environment, Energy & Transportation** identifies best practices and provides technical assistance on issues including clean energy for the electricity and transportation sectors, energy and infrastructure financing, green economic development, transportation and land use planning, and clean up and stewardship of nuclear weapons sites.

- **Health** covers a broad range of health financing, service delivery, and coverage issues, including state options under federal health reform, quality initiatives, cost-containment policies, health information technology, state public health initiatives, and Medicaid.

- **Homeland Security & Public Safety** supports governors' homeland security and criminal justice policy advisors. This work includes supporting the Governors Homeland Security Advisors Council (GHSAC) and providing technical assistance to a network of governors' criminal justice policy advisors. Issues include emergency preparedness, interoperability, cyber-crime and cyber-security, intelligence coordination, emergency management, sentencing and corrections, forensics, and justice information technology.