



State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network

School Readiness Policy and Budgeting: Template for Collecting State Baseline Information

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Network Resource

About the State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network (SECPTAN)

State decision-makers face awesome challenges in developing public policies. They must balance competing demands across broad issue areas, with finite resources. They must respond to diverse political pressures while seeking solutions that ultimately best reflect societal values. They must be good stewards of public resources, requiring accountability based upon efficiency and effectiveness.

State decision-makers must do all this under time and resource constraints that often make securing credible information to inform their decision-making problematic. Particularly for early childhood issues, there often are not recognized and easily available sources for the most current evidence in the field.

The State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network (SECPTAN) was created to assist these state decision-makers in the important area of accessing the best available information and evidence about effective policies and practices on early childhood issues.

The Child and Family Policy Center administers SECPTAN, which is funded through the joint efforts of the Ford Foundation, the Kauffman Foundation, and the Packard Foundation. SECPTAN currently operates in the seventeen states that are part of the School Readiness Indicators Initiative, a companion grant administered by Rhode Island Kids Count.

One aspect of SECPTAN's work is to make current information about early childhood policy initiatives readily available to state policy makers. This publication is part of that work. SECPTAN would like to thank the following individuals for reviewing and providing comments on this publication: Nilofer Ahsan, Joan Lombardi, Anne Mitchell, Marion Pines, Ed Schor, and Karen VanLanderghem.

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The 1st National Education Goal states that “all children start school ready to learn.” States are examining what policies and investments of resources they can make to achieve this goal. They are seeking to determine what they are investing today in school readiness and what gaps exist in their current policies and funding that need to be filled to better achieve this goal.

Clearly, there is no single program or magic bullet to produce school readiness. Instead, achieving the 1st National Education Goal requires attention to insuring that a full range of children’s needs are met. Fortunately, most of these needs are met for most children and families most of the time, but too many children remain at risk.

The following outline is designed to assist states in developing the baseline information they need to assess where they are in meeting the school readiness needs of young children. The outline is organized into six subject areas, based upon policy and program responses to meeting the first four universal child needs.

Each subject area has three sections, the first suggesting demographic information and administrative data that can provide a picture of the overall condition of children and/or systems related to the area, the second suggesting relevant policy indicators related to the area, and the third indicating the funding sources to be examined in determining the amount of investment in the area. The outline can be used as a template for a state in compiling information needed to inform school readiness planning.

Framework: Universal Child Needs and Their Policy and Program Counter-parts

Universal Need

Health and nutrition (adequate food and exercise for physical and mental growth, protection against and response to disease and injury, and early identification and treatment of health risks and special health needs)

Competent and confident parenting (at least one, and preferably two, parent figures who provide nurturing, protection, and stimulation and with whom the child bonds and forms attachments that is constant and consistent through the early years)

Constant, stable, appropriate supervision (continuous adult oversight and support enabling the child to safely explore the environment)

Guidance and instruction (help and practice in developing large and small motor skills, pre-literacy cognitive development, and socialization with adults and children)

Safe and supportive communities (safe conditions within the child's immediate environment, including environmental and physical safety, and supporting social networks, including relatives, friends, and neighbors who contribute to a positive environment for all children and families)

Program/Service Counterparts

Basic health and nutrition services

Health and developmental services to address identified special needs

Services promoting confident and competent parenting (e.g. family support programs, home visiting, and parent education programs)

Supports for safe, stable, and economically viable families

Parental supervision in the home and adult supervision in all supplemental arrangements

Developmentally appropriate child care and enriched pre-school programs, e.g. quality early childhood care and education

Housing, policing, and community development and community building programs and strategies, particularly focused on poor, disinvested neighborhoods

I. Basic Health and Nutrition Services

A. *Demographic Information/Child Outcomes and Administrative Data/Service Utilization*

Demographic Information/Child Outcomes

Family education

Family income

Infant mortality rate

Low birthweight rate

Late or no entry into prenatal care rate

Premature birth rate

Percent and number of children whose mothers reported using alcohol or smoking during pregnancy

Lead poisoning rates for children

Pre-natal care rate

Prevalence rates for specific diseases or conditions among children, e.g. asthma, diabetes, HIV, etc.

Unmarried women delivering infants

Number and percentage of intended, well-timed pregnancies

Number and percentage of women with healthy pregnancies

Rate of children with unintentional injuries

Administrative Data/Service Utilization

Number and percentage of children 0-5 with health insurance

Number and percentage of children under 200% of poverty covered by Medicaid, SCHIP, and private health insurance

Number and percentage of children receiving dental care

Number and percentage of families who qualify under broadest federal WIC guidelines who receive WIC

Number and percentage of families and children receiving food stamps

Number and percentage of children 0-4 on Medicaid/SCHIP who receive EPSDT screens

Number and percentage of children who qualify for Medicaid/SCHIP but are not enrolled

Number and percentage of children who receive additional services as a result of EPSDT screens

Immunization rate at age 2

Breast feeding rates

B. *Policies*

Medicaid/WIC eligibility level for pregnant women and children to age 5

Transition from Medicaid to SCHIP (with no gaps in service) for the duration of their for Medicaid and SCHIP eligibility

Ineligibility rates for Medicaid applications

Post-partum coverage for women

State WIC eligibility criteria including immigrant family, unemployed, and transitional benefit eligibility

Care coordination and enhanced care packages for pregnant women under Medicaid and SCHIP

Policies and programs helping to insure children have a medical home and receive comprehensive well-child visits, including any payment for outreach activities

Policies and programs helping to insure that EPSDT screens are thorough and result in follow-up services when special needs are identified

Policies and programs to insure that undocumented infants and toddlers receive health services

EPSDT payment rates, other provider payment rates

Policies and programs to ensure that mental health, dental and preventive services are available to low-income children and families

Policies regarding lead poisoning screenings and treatment

Policies linked to the availability of subsidized nutritious meals and snacks within child care and pre-school settings

Policies concerning financial barriers to reproductive health services by simplifying health insurance eligibility and enrollment processes, expanding eligibility for affordable health insurance, and advocating for health insurance to cover a variety of family planning and other reproductive services

Policies supporting training for health care professionals that encourage them to develop strong relationships with high-risk pregnant women

Policies for non-medical support services, such as home visits, social services and housing assistance

Policies that encourage the adoption of local ordinances that specify safety standards and establish penalties for code violations

Food stamp policies

C. *Budgeting*

Funding for maternal and child health services, including state funding beyond required match

Funding for WIC, including state funding

Funding for Medicaid and SCHIP for maternal and young child (prenatal to five) services, disaggregated where possible by age (family coverage)

Food stamp funding, including matching state funds for outreach

Social services block grant funding for child health and nutrition

Funding for child care food program

II. Health and Developmental Services to Address Identified Special Needs

A. *Demographic Information/Child Outcomes and Administrative Data/Service Utilization*

Demographic Information/Child Outcomes

Numbers and percentages of young children identified/estimated with special health care needs, especially on state registries and especially as related to MH/MR/DD concerns

Numbers and percentages of young children identified as malnourished or in hunger

Administrative Data/Service Utilization

Number and percentage of children receiving assessments under Part C and Part B (special education)

Number and percentage of children receiving follow-up services from Part C and Part B assessments

B. *Policies*

Definitions used for Part B and Part C eligibility (inclusive/restrictive, risk of delay)

Reflection of mental health/emotional health issues of young children in health insurance coverage requirements

Policies within child welfare system that stress attention to developmental issues and school readiness

Policies reflecting recognition of existence and importance in addressing young child mental health issues

Medicaid coverage for children and new mothers (especially as it relates to behavioral health services)

Availability and accessibility of respite care services

Policies that enable or support parents in caring for their children with special health care needs

Special needs provisions for foster care and adoption

Home and community based waivers to provide alternatives to institutional care

C. *Budgeting*

Spending on Part B and Part C services

Spending on other early intervention services for children with MH/MR/DD

Funding for health consultants/practitioners in early intervention, including consultants to child care centers and pre-school programs

Spending within child welfare system on developmental supports for young children

Medicaid spending on children with special health care needs

Medicaid spending for behavioral health for young children

Medicaid spending for behavioral health for new mothers

Title V spending, including state supplementations

III. Services Promoting Confident and Competent Parenting

A. *Demographic Information/Child Outcomes and Administrative Data/Service Utilization*

Demographic Information/Child Outcomes

Number and percentage of young children in single parent families

Number and percentage of babies born to adolescent mothers

Percentage of all adolescents giving birth

Educational attainment levels of parents/mothers giving birth

Number of abandoned infants

Percent of fathers who undertake 40% or more of the parenting responsibility and time

Amount of time parents spend with their children

Number and percentage of children raised by grandparents, or other relatives

Parental stress level

Parent knowledge of parenting

Parent empathy for child

Size and utilization of parental social support network

Number of well-trained, supervised adults who offer support during pregnancy, childbirth, and during a child's early life

Administrative Data/Service Utilization

Child abuse and child neglect numbers and rates for children 0-5

Number of children 0-5 placed outside the home by child protective services

Number of families receiving preventive services (availability and utilization of services)

Number of families receiving family-centered services (availability and utilization of services)

Rate of access to primary services

Amount of family support services and centers

B. Policies

The Family and Medical Leave Act

Policies concerning the links between school systems and early childhood programs to allow information exchanges (in both directions) that help smooth transitions for children and families and maximize the chances that health care and other developmental supports will follow children from early childhood into school settings

Screening of children at birth for vulnerability

Support for parenting education, pre- and post- natal

Availability of support groups and other social networking opportunities for parents

Home visiting programs and policies

Specialized parent education and support for families with more intensive needs (special needs child or parent, drug or alcohol dependency, etc.)

Provision for family-centered services within child welfare

Provision for family-centered activities and parent engagement programs within state-funded pre-school programs and other services

Support for caregiving relatives, including grandparents

Programs and policies for adolescent parents staying in school

Programs and policies for adolescent parents under TANF

Programs to promote fathering and the engagement of non-custodial parents in their children's lives

Provisions for parent involvement on boards, commissions, task forces, and planning groups related to early childhood concerns

C. Budgeting

Funding for parenting education, home visiting, and other family support programs

Funding for family centered services and other developmental services under child welfare

Funding for EFNEP workers, family development specialists, and family service workers under federal and state programs

Funding for Early Head Start

Funding for the integration of family support activities and services into state funded pre-school and childcare.

IV. Supports for Safe, Stable and Economically Viable Families

A. *Demographic Information/Child Outcomes and Administrative Data/Service Utilization*

Demographic Information/Child Outcomes

Number and percentage of families with young children where both (or only) parent(s) work

Number and percentage of families with young children who pay more than thirty percent of their income for rent

Number and percentage of families with young children below state self-sufficiency standard (or 200% of poverty)

State median income for families with young children

Number and percentage of young children with at least one parent working full time who remain in poverty

Number and percentage of families with young children below state self-sufficiency standard (or 200% of poverty), but have at least one parent (or both parents) working full or part time

Number and percentage of parents who speak a primary language other than English

Educational attainment level of parents

Rate of non-custodial parental involvement

Housing stability (i.e. number of times moved in the last two years or homeless rates in the state)

Number of children with a parent in prison

Number of children killed or injured by firearms

Percent and number of children living in a household without a telephone

Percent and number of children living in a household without a vehicle

Administrative Data/Service Utilization

Number and percentage of subsidized housing slots

Percent of non-custodial parents who are up to date on their child support payments

Domestic violence rates

Substance abuse utilization rates

B. *Policies*

Family leave policies and provisions for paid family leave
Work requirements under TANF
Support requirements under TANF
Basic payment levels under TANF
Presence of father involvement policies to encourage financial involvement as well as time involvement with their children.
Presence of pass through options, allowing a higher percentage of payments to reach custodial parents
Presence of child support disregards for TANF recipients
Domestic violence policies for health, government and law enforcement
Housing subsidy requirements and barriers
Gun control policies
Work and training requirements under WIA
Policies to support ex-offenders in socially and economically supporting their children

C. *Budgeting*

Funding for housing subsidies
Funding for family leave
Cash benefits for TANF recipients
General relief funds for families with young children
Funding for work and training programs for families on TANF and other individuals
Funding for substance abuse screening and treatment programming for families in need
Availability of a refundable dependent care credit
BBA (Balanced Budget Act) funds being used to provide work and training to non-custodial parents
State earned income credit, including its size and refundability
Overall tax liability for families at 200% of poverty and at other income levels
General tax treatment for dependents in relation to the costs of providing for basic living needs

V. Child Care Services

A. *Demographic Information/Child Outcomes and Administrative Data/Service Utilization*

Demographic Information/Child Outcomes

Number and percentage of families with young children (0-5) where both or the only parent works outside the home

Administrative Data/Service Utilization

Adult-Child ratios

Staff turnover rates

Registered and licensed/known providers of child care, by child age (infant and toddler care, pre-school care, before- and after-school care)

Characteristics of providers receiving subsidized child care

Number and percentage of accredited providers

Average salaries and benefits of child care providers

Availability of adequate care in all areas of state (urban and rural)

Child care availability to meet deficits (if it exists)

Percent of families eligible for federal child care assistance who receive it

Number and percent of single parent families whose co-pay for subsidized child care is 10% of income or more

Number of centers or homes that are accredited and number of total child care slots in accredited facilities

B. *Policies*

Policies concerning the number and proportion of parents of young children, especially infants and toddlers, who are able to choose between paid parental leave and child care that is nurturing, trustworthy, and affordable

Policy encouraging the development of a continuum of services and supports, including coordination between part-day Head Start and pre-Kindergarten programs, early education programs, and the child care subsidy system

Use of current market survey for payments to providers at 75th percentile

Eligibility levels for child care subsidies

Co-payment requirements for child care subsidies

Children who use Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF*) subsidies as a percent of those who would be eligible under maximum federal guidelines

Requirements regarding centers and homes subject to licensure or registration

Standards regarding training and credentials for child care

Child care standards regarding caregiver-child ratios

General quality of child care services besides ratio and credentials for staff

C. *Budgeting*

Funding for child care subsidy program — CCDF, TANF, SSBG, state

Funding for quality enhancements and type — e.g. GAIN

Funding through other sources (e.g. IV-E) for child care

Cost to state of Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit

State provided financial incentives for businesses and individuals to invest in child care programming and availability

* Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is now CCDF

VI. Enriched Pre-School Programs

A. *Demographic Information/Child Outcomes and Administrative Data/Service Utilization*

Demographic Information/Child Outcomes

Number of 3- and 4-year-olds at 100% of poverty or less and as percentage of all 3- and 4-year-olds

Number of 3- and 4 year-olds at 200% of poverty or less and as percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds

Administrative Data/Service Utilization

Number and percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds participating in pre-school, by income level

Number of children participating in Head Start and as percentage of those who qualify for Head Start

Number of children participating in state pre-school programs

Average annual cost of child care for a 4-year-old in a center

B. *Policies*

Standards established for state pre-school programs — teacher certification requirements, ratios of teachers to students, length of program, eligibility requirements for children

Focus on programming in a variety of areas including physical and motor development; social and emotional development; approaches toward learning; language, literacy, and communication skills, as well as cognitive skills

Awareness of family circumstances as well as child performance in the pre-school programming (services and resources are available for the family when needed)

Access to enriched preschool programs (average hours the programs are available during the day, transportation issues are addressed)

Standards in place for kindergarten programming

Programming to ease and monitor the transition into school (Kindergarten or first grade)

Policies to facilitate wrap-around child care with pre-school programs, including Head Start

Provision for voluntary, universal pre-school (for 4-year-olds or 3- and 4-year-olds)

C. *Budgeting*

Federal funding for Head Start

State funding for Head Start

State spending for other pre-school programs

Title I funding used for pre-school programs

TANF allocation used for pre-school programming

Cost to state of Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit

State-provided financial incentives for businesses and individuals to invest in early education

Family co-pay rates for pre-school



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