



Early Learning Community
Action Guide

Center
for the
Study
of
Social
Policy

NLC NATIONAL
LEAGUE
OF CITIES
INSTITUTE FOR YOUTH,
EDUCATION, AND FAMILIES





ACTION GUIDE

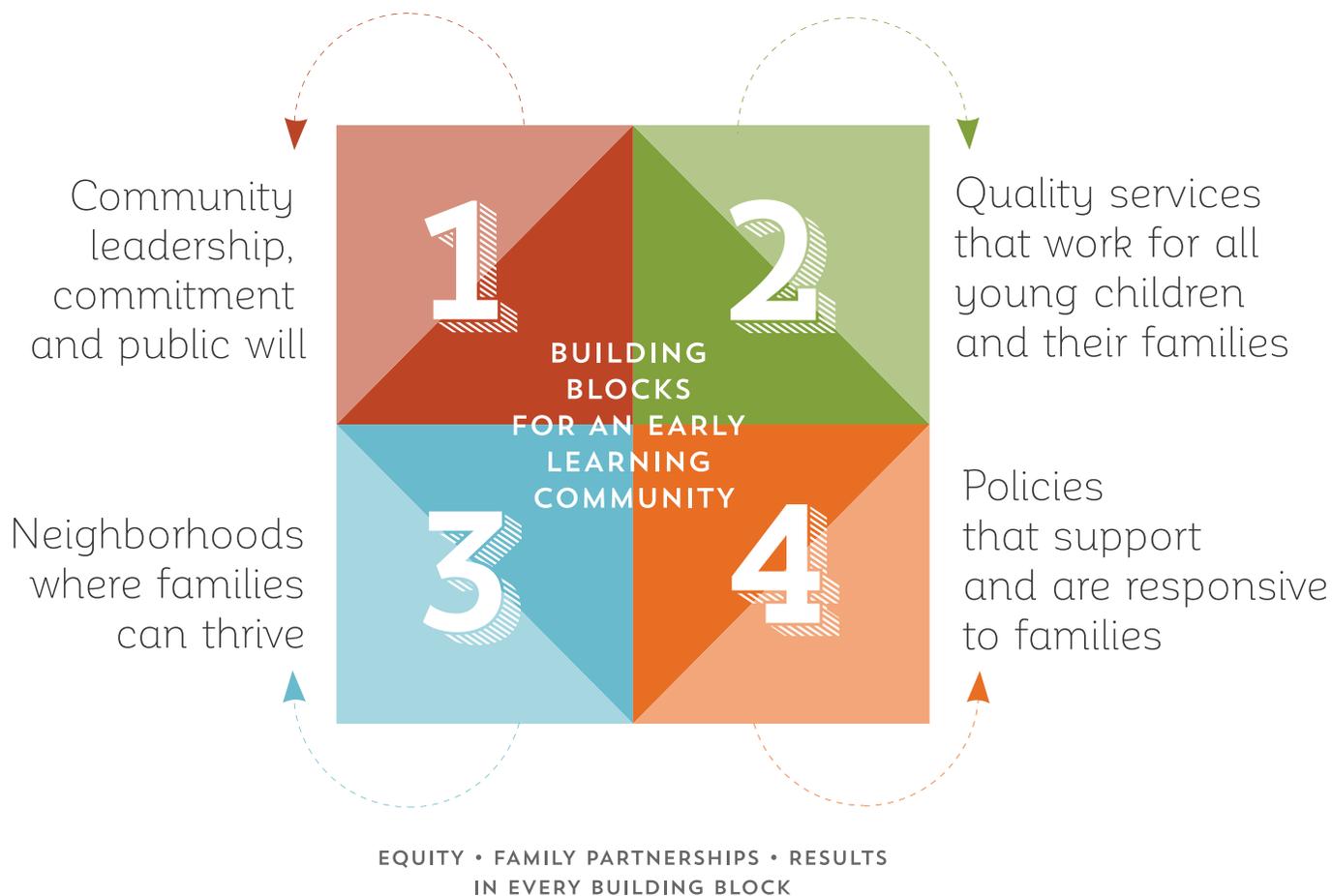
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A top-down photograph of a baby lying on a blue carpet. The baby is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and grey patterned pants. The baby's feet are visible, pointing towards the top of the frame. Scattered around the baby are various toys: several colorful blocks in red, yellow, and green, and two wooden blocks. A dashed white circle is drawn around the text in the upper right quadrant.

EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITY

ACTION GUIDE



Early Learning Communities:

From Building Blocks to Action

Leaders in communities across the country recognize the importance of ensuring that young children and their families thrive – they understand that child well-being and thriving communities go hand-in-hand. Elected officials, business and civic leaders, parents and residents from all walks of life are working to create true Early Learning Communities – places that promote learning and development prenatally through the early years of elementary school, making sure that the “building blocks” for early and lifelong success are in place.

In a previous publication, *Early Learning Communities: Building Blocks for Success*, the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) and the National League of Cities (NLC) described four building blocks that make up an Early Learning Community:

1. Community leadership, commitment and public will to make early childhood a priority
2. Quality services that work for all young children and their families
3. Neighborhoods where families can thrive
4. Policies that support and are responsive to families

With this Action Guide, we provide further guidance for city, county and other local leaders looking for ways to put their commitment to early childhood into action and achieve better outcomes for young children and their families.

Ensuring that All Children Thrive:

The “North Star” for Early Learning Communities

The goal of an Early Learning Community is to ensure that all young children get a great start, setting the foundation for life-long success and well-being. This means that children are healthy and can learn and thrive in strong families and in safe, stable communities. Early learning occurs across multiple domains – physical, cognitive, social and emotional – in the context of young children’s relationships with their parents and other caregivers. Early Learning Communities align their efforts toward three broad sets of results for young children and their families, the kind of results that every parent wants for his or her child:

- Pregnant women and young children are healthy.
- Children are ready to succeed in school.
- Children live in safe, stable and nurturing families and communities.

These are universal goals that, when achieved, benefit not just individual children and their families, but the community as a whole. Early investments toward achieving these goals pay off in increased academic achievement, fewer behavioral problems in schools and less involvement with the criminal justice system. An Early Learning Community employs targeted strategies to ensure that all children, families and communities have equitable opportunities to reach these outcomes.

Keeping a Focus on Results

Becoming an Early Learning Community requires continuous attention: both to your efforts and to the results of those efforts. That means clearly defining your goals from the beginning and identifying and gathering the data that will show whether you are achieving those goals. Early childhood systems function best when data are consistently used to drive change – to keep stakeholders focused on the outcomes of their efforts, improve progress toward those desired outcomes for all children and families and increase effectiveness of various programs and of the system itself. When appropriate, formal evaluations of programs or initiatives focused on specific outcomes may be conducted. However, a results focus is broader than program evaluation.

In an Early Learning Community, diverse stakeholders agree to focus on common outcome metrics and devise ways to share their data, which can inform strategic planning and decisions about where to invest resources. CSSP has been working with a group of Early Learning Communities to identify a core set of indicators associated with the three outcomes described above (such as percentage of children who are assessed as ready for kindergarten) as well as a set of “systems performance measures” that capture how well the early childhood system is working (such as how consistently children and families receive the services they need). (See a list of the indicators being explored in an [interim report](#) on this work.)

Whichever indicators a community chooses to target, it should track them from all neighborhoods, disaggregating the data to see which population groups are thriving and which are struggling. Leaders should work to understand the reasons for those results and develop a plan for how to improve them. It is also important that leaders report progress regularly and help the community understand the numbers and the story behind the numbers.









Attention to Equity:

Ensuring All Means All

Achieving the “North Star” outcomes for **all** young children requires intentional effort focused on equity. That means understanding the current conditions in your community that contribute to disparities among different populations, and how those conditions affect families.

Inequitable access to opportunity persists in communities across America, including in the form of uneven investments in public infrastructure, school systems and services, as well as reduced private investment. Along with the high degree of racial segregation in America’s neighborhoods, this means that children of color are more likely to live in communities with high rates of concentrated poverty and have poorer health and educational outcomes, which can influence their trajectory throughout life. Race and ethnicity interact with a number of other identities – including gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status, ability and socioeconomic status – to further influence outcomes for children and families.

Becoming an Early Learning Community requires that elected officials, advocates and business and civic leaders include and listen to people who have historically been left out of the decision-making process and those who face barriers to accessing services. Your action plan should include whatever changes are necessary to better meet the needs of underserved families in your community. This may mean, for example, that your efforts will focus on particular neighborhoods or cultural or language groups to ensure access to services that may already be available to other neighborhoods or groups.

Becoming an Early Learning Community

Becoming an Early Learning Community is an ongoing process, where there are always opportunities to make progress. In the infographic on pages 12-13, the steps your community can take are illustrated as a community coming together to build a playground. There are common elements in Early Learning Communities, but, like playgrounds, these elements can be assembled in many different ways. Some communities may choose to make minor renovations or additions to an established playground, while others are breaking ground for the first time. Wherever you are in the process, some elements are critical to your success.

Commitment

Making a commitment to value and support early learning and development for all young children in your community – and particularly those who lack equitable access to opportunities for success – is a critical first step.

Leadership

Becoming an Early Learning Community will not happen without dedicated leadership. It is critical to create or identify a diverse, inclusive leadership group with cross-field experience in areas such as early care and education, health and dental care, public health and family support, as well as parents and community residents. It will also be important to designate an office, agency or staff person to coordinate and monitor the cross-sector work, identify opportunities for collective action and guide the community narrative about the commitment to early childhood and the potential for all children to succeed.

Assessment

Once that commitment has been made – by a mayor or city council, a county executive or county board, a parent group, other local leadership or ideally by all of these stakeholders – the next steps depend on the unique characteristics of your community. For example, you will need to build on existing policies, programs and initiatives within or across the sectors that touch young children and their families, and in some cases create new policies, programs and initiatives. You will also have to take into account how state and federal programs are implemented in your community. Considering current child and family well-being status will help you identify where changes and improvements are needed, and allow you to measure change over time. This is especially important for assessing well-being for various racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups within the community and the disparities among groups.

Action

With the commitments made, the right stakeholders at the table and data in hand, the next steps are up to you. Some communities will choose to focus on one or two building blocks, while others will take on all four building blocks at once. Some will choose to enhance areas where there is already a strong foundation, while others will focus on a building block where very little has been done so far. This Early Learning Community Action Guide is designed to help you identify the right next steps.





Throughout your journey to becoming an Early Learning Community, no matter where you are or what action steps you choose to take, you will need to consider how to:

- advance equity
- promote partnerships with families
- determine whether you are achieving results

Build Your Early Learning Community

Every Early Learning Community is unique. The building blocks in this Action Guide describe common elements that are present across all Early Learning Communities but, like the elements of a playground, they can be assembled in many different ways. There is no one design that will fit every community. Each community will choose the actions that fit their community best. However, there are steps your community should take as you begin your journey that will give you a strong foundation and help sustain your efforts into the future. These are the steps to help you get started.

1

Identify one or more champions – that might be you!

2

Pull together stakeholders with an interest in early childhood.

Ensure that representation is equitable and inclusive of parents and other caregivers and folks with many different backgrounds and experiences (including neighborhoods, socioeconomic statuses, sexual orientations, abilities, races and ethnicities).

3

Designate a person to coordinate efforts, make connections across partners and keep the work moving.

This person will bring the community and stakeholders together, facilitate conversations and decision-making, keep the group focused on the vision and build relationships with and among stakeholders in the community. He or she will also coordinate efforts to support and fund different actions and initiatives.

Identify potential funding sources for your improvement efforts and for longer-term investment in early childhood.

4

Use the Progress Rating Tool to determine how well your community is progressing toward each of the targets of the building blocks.

Be sure that your assessment of your current status reflects the experience of different population groups within the community – by looking at disaggregated data and by asking members of various population groups to share their experiences and perspectives on the community.

Focus on equity and closing gaps – Look at how children from various subgroups in the community are doing, to identify where additional investments or coordination are needed.

5

Develop an Action Plan focusing on a few building blocks or targets where you would like to advance to a higher level.

The more specific you can be about planned action steps, timeline, budget and who is responsible, the better!

As you make your Action Plan, be clear about your desired results, how you will know whether you are making progress and how you'll gauge whether your efforts are making a difference.

7

Regularly review your community's status on the progress rating tool as your community takes actions and makes progress. Determine where your community wants to go next and assess what actions will take you to the next level.

6

Engage parents, service providers and community residents in developing plans to move your community to a higher level.

Partner with parents to find the best solutions – Parents in the community, and especially parents in underserved communities, will be your best partners in finding and implementing solutions that work for them. Engage parents, caregivers and other community residents at every point along the way.



The Early Learning Community Action Guide is a joint project between the National League of Cities (NLC) and the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), with generous support from the Bezos Family Foundation. CSSP and NLC are working with networks of cities and counties to achieve the vision of the United States becoming an Early Learning Nation made up of communities that prioritize kids and families and promote learning and development for early and lifelong success.

www.cssp.org
www.nlc.org

Structure of the Guide

Targets and Levels

Each building block is divided into three to six targets, describing the ideal conditions you would see when that building block is in place in a community. Certain targets are marked with a bridge icon to indicate that they make up the critical infrastructure of an Early Learning Community.

Within each target are three levels that describe how close a community is to reaching the target:

“LEVEL 1” describes the starting point and is the first thing a community will want to establish on their path to reaching that target. In many cases, the first level involves assessing the current situation in order to identify strengths and areas of need.

“LEVEL 2” describes a next step and shows that a community is taking initiative and making continued progress toward the target.

Finally, **“LEVEL 3”** indicates that a community has made a deep commitment to reaching this target and is fully integrating their efforts across the early childhood system and other sectors.

The levels are meant to be hierarchical so that a community can build on its progress. Keep in mind that a community may achieve Level 3 but still have room for improvement in Levels 1 and 2. Even if a community has been working for many years to improve early childhood systems, community leaders should assess objectively how well they are progressing toward each target and consider whether they could take actions to more fully reach all three levels. Communities will likely be at different levels for different targets.

Actions

The actions described beneath the levels are examples of steps a community might take to meet each level. The particular actions a community chooses will differ depending on its social, political, financial and historical context. These are suggested actions and are not requirements for meeting the levels. A community may decide to try to implement every action listed, or a community may find that only one action in the list is appropriate and stakeholders need to design their own actions that will help them reach that target. In the Progress Rating Tool in Appendix B, you have the opportunity to select actions you have taken from the provided list, or to write in your own actions. Whatever actions you identify, make sure they are grounded in the needs and desires of families.



HOW TO USE THIS ACTION GUIDE

Wherever you are in your process of becoming an Early Learning Community, elements of this Action Guide and related materials available at www.earlylearningnation.org may be useful:

- Refer to the “Building Your Early Learning Community” infographic to guide the process and identify the next steps in your journey toward becoming an Early Learning Community. Slides and a handout version of the infographic are also available.
- The detailed description of the building blocks, targets and action steps communities can take to reach each target, may be best shared with the people most closely involved with each building block or those who will focus on an action plan for a given building block. Not all stakeholders need to engage with the details of every building block or target.
- Pay special attention to the “critical infrastructure” targets marked with a bridge icon, particularly if you are having trouble advancing your early learning efforts or if you are ready to formalize your work for greater effectiveness.
- In the At-a-Glance overview in Appendix A, you can quickly track where your community stands on each of the targets of an Early Learning Community and identify areas to take action. This may be the level of detail needed for some stakeholder groups or meetings.
- Use the Progress Rating Tool in Appendix B (or use the online version) to assess your status and identify action steps. The results from the Progress Rating Tool may be a good messaging tool to elected officials, local foundations and the public.
- Create an Action Plan for your Early Learning Community initiative, selecting areas where you will focus your efforts in the next six months or year.
- The Glossary in Appendix D will be particularly useful if you are bringing together a disparate group of people who don’t all use the same vocabulary.

Depending on where you are starting from, here are some special considerations:

- **Just Getting Started:** If you are bringing together stakeholders for the first time to focus on becoming an Early Learning Community, the steps in this Action Guide should be very straightforward. Be sure to assess the number and quality of services currently available and engage the leaders of any previous or current initiatives focused on quality improvement or cross-systems partnerships.
- **Building on Progress:** If your community already has a track record of partners working together with a focus on early childhood issues, the Early Learning Community Action Guide and the Progress Rating Tool can help you to identify your next steps – whether you choose to deepen your work in a particular area, or expand your reach to new areas. For example, if your efforts have been primarily focused on child- and family-serving programs and services, you might use the Early Learning Community Action Guide to move your group into focusing on neighborhood issues or on policies that would better support families in raising children. For you, becoming an Early Learning Community may mean bringing in new partners and broadening your scope, or infusing your work with new energy and focus.
- **Already Doing Well:** If your community already has a strong early childhood system, the Early Learning Community Action Guide and the Progress Rating Tool may serve as way to validate your current efforts and identify some areas to focus new energy. For example, you may find that your community is already at a level 2 or 3 and close to reaching many of the targets in the Progress Rating Tool, and you will focus on the few targets where you haven’t made significant progress. Or you may choose to deepen your work by focusing on equity and ensuring that all families with young children in your community are benefiting from your efforts. If your community has an existing early childhood plan, you may pull some language or concepts in from the Early Learning Community Action Guide for ideas or actions that aren’t currently addressed in your plan.



ACTION GUIDE

Creating a Context in Which Young Children and Families Can Thrive

While communities vary greatly by history, culture, demographics and geography, Early Learning Communities stand on four key “building blocks” – that is, community characteristics and actions that promote healthy child development and family well-being:

- Community leadership, commitment and public will to make early childhood a priority;
- Quality services that work for all young children and their families;
- Neighborhoods where families can thrive; and
- Policies that support and are responsive to families.

In an Early Learning Community, these building blocks are aligned, bolstered and assembled by design, in a way that builds on the strengths of the community, recognizes the challenges families face and addresses disparities across racial, ethnic, sociodemographic and/or geographic lines in the community. Putting these pieces together requires an early childhood infrastructure that includes effective leadership, sustainable financial backing, supports for service providers and the use of data to drive change. Targets related to these critical elements are marked with a bridge icon where they appear in Building Blocks 1 and 2.



BUILDING BLOCK #1

Community Leadership, Commitment and Public Will to Make Early Childhood a Priority

At the heart of an Early Learning Community is a common understanding that children and families are a priority – a community commitment to valuing and supporting families and public will to maintain that commitment with funding, volunteerism and neighborliness. This commitment is what makes a community a place where parents want to raise their children.

BUILDING BLOCK #1 | Resources

- *A Divided Electorate is United on Early Childhood Education - First Five Years Fund*
- *Building Our Future: Supporting Community-Based Early Childhood Initiatives - Child Trends*
- *Developing a Plan for Communications - from the Community Toolbox - Workgroup for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas*
- *Using Cafe Conversations to Build Protective Factors and Parent Leadership - Center for the Study of Social Policy*
 - *Parent Café - Be Strong Families*
 - *Community Café - National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds*



TARGET 1.1

Local leaders work together across systems with a focus on early childhood

Building and strengthening the infrastructure for an Early Learning Community requires committed local leadership, a trusted convening entity, a champion and a broader group of engaged stakeholders. This leadership can come from elected officials, city or county staff, non-profit leaders, service providers and community members.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP | Resources

- *Toolkit for Collaboration - FRIENDS Resource Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention*
- *Community Toolbox - Workgroup for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas*
- *Making Network-Based Strategy Work: A Field Guide - Community Wealth Partners*

LEVEL 1

A group of stakeholders committed to early childhood meets regularly to identify areas of overlap and possible areas of future work.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Hold multiple listening sessions across the city or county, using community liaisons to recruit broad participation, to learn what the community wants for children and what their aspirations are for their community. Foster a culture of trust, respect and inclusion to ensure you receive authentic feedback. All members of the community must feel free to share their own opinions, experiences and ideas and feel recognized and accepted for who they are.
- Activate an existing group of stakeholders or host a community-wide early learning summit to identify partners who would be willing to serve. The local United Way may be able to help identify potential partners. Parents of young children and early care and education providers from the community should be included in this group.
- Consider who is not at the table and ensure that representation is equitable and inclusive.
- Establish regular and open lines of communication between a core group of stakeholders and top community leaders, such as the mayor or county executive.
- Have each provider and community organization identify how they influence families' lives and identify overlaps and gaps.

LEVEL 2

A group of community members and representatives from a wide variety of organizations and institutions are jointly working toward a shared vision and common goals.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- After extensive outreach and multiple conversations with a diverse set of community members, develop a shared vision and shared goals among a core group of stakeholders committed to moving the work forward.
- Identify a few discrete areas to focus joint action. Create working groups or subcommittees around these areas.
- Establish regular and open lines of communication between a core group of stakeholders and top community leaders, such as the mayor or county executive.
- Evaluate how different partners' organizational and programmatic strategies and goals intersect. Consider aligning plans across the community to work on shared goals. For example, align the city plan with the school district's plan or the community development plan.

LEVEL 3

A broad group of stakeholders with dedicated leadership and community input works together to promote the healthy development of young children.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Formalize the administration of this group of stakeholders with a coordinator at an existing non-profit – or create an office of early learning or young children at the city or county level. Identify funding for the sustainability of this position or office.
- Ensure that the partnership is diverse and representative of the community. It should include regular and routine input from families and sectors beyond early childhood that impact families such as transportation and workforce. Representation should be equitable and inclusive of folks from different backgrounds, neighborhoods, socioeconomic statuses, races and ethnicities.
- Sign commitment letters or memoranda of understanding to formalize the partnership and demonstrate each organization or individual's staff, financial and in-kind commitments.

When planning events, listening sessions or focus groups, include venues in neighborhoods outside the city center and where families go such as laundromats, parks, places of worship, libraries and other cultural institutions.



TARGET 1.2

The community invests in young children and families

The difference between an Early Learning Community and any other community may come down to a sustained, visible and broadly supported investment in the early learning and healthy development of young children and their families – a commitment that shows up in actions by elected officials, civic leaders, neighborhood activists and voters.



LEVEL 1

The community uses its available resources, including existing funding streams, to effectively support families and promote healthy child development.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Provide space at publicly owned buildings, such as recreation centers, libraries or school buildings, for providers to deliver services, host parent gatherings and address other community needs.
- Use public media, like the local open access channel, and other public assets to get the word out about early childhood development.
- Put tips for how parents can engage children in brain-building moments, inside utility bills, on the sides of buses and trash trucks, in public transportation stations and depots or on other city owned vehicles.
- Survey or interview early care and education providers about the resources they have, challenges they face and the supports they could use as they work to improve quality. This could also be an opportunity to connect providers to community supports, services and their elected officials.
- Partner with school districts to assess how public education funds are being used and whether they can be used to support early childhood programming within schools and the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Engage city or local government departments that are funding programs for healthy and safe communities and strengthening families, such as crime prevention, family literacy or mentoring for school-age children and youth.

LEVEL 2

Community and early childhood partners work together to identify points of intersection to use existing funds and resources creatively as well as to find new funding sources.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Consider what assets each partner has (financial and otherwise) and how they might be employed to further common goals. For example, when the school district is hosting trainings or conferences for pre-k teachers, community-based pre-k providers could be invited to attend. Parent leadership groups can be powerful allies to increase parent and family engagement in city or county level planning and initiatives.
- Learn from service providers about how they “blend and braid” funding to meet family needs, and explore whether there are ways to formalize those strategies or support other programs in making similar innovations.
- Use business development resources and tax incentives to help early care and education providers better manage the business side of their centers and improve quality.
- Consider the current needs of the early childhood system and develop an improvement or strategic plan.
- Engage the philanthropic and business community through public/private partnerships focused on specific issues or neighborhoods, or to fund programs, evaluation efforts or your Early Learning Community efforts in general.
- Provide technical assistance in a variety of areas, including organizing bulk buying groups and participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program to provide subsidized meals to children in early care and education centers.
- Encourage providers to use a shared services model to reduce or share costs through joint purchasing, staff sharing or centralized administration to ease the administrative burden. Consider how local government could help administer this model.
- Partner with agencies and providers to write proposals and apply for grants. Use the opportunity to showcase what combined strengths and resources can accomplish.



LEVEL 3

The community's support for early childhood is formalized, and support for the families who need it most (including families with low incomes, families of color, immigrant and refugee families and families with LGBTQ members) is prioritized.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Identify consistent, dedicated funds for early childhood services, care and education.
- Ensure that resident priorities, drawn from a representative group from within the community, drive how funding is directed and how services are provided.
- Engage a broader range of community leaders to be champions and advocate for additional financing mechanisms to support early childhood services, care and education.
- Develop a coordinated or universal application and/or reporting requirements for city-managed resources to reduce the administrative burden on providers and families. Encourage other public agencies and private funders to do the same.
- Create a dedicated source of revenue through a local sales or property tax, or earmark a portion of existing taxes for early learning programs.
- Establish a developer impact or linkage fee to fund new early care and education centers or seats within existing centers to meet demand created by new development.

INVESTING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD | RESOURCES

- *Helping the Early Childhood Field Achieve Financial Sustainability and Strong Child Outcomes through Shared Services - Opportunities Exchange*
- *Innovative Financing Strategies for Early Childhood Care - The Pew Center on the States*
- *Braiding, Blending, and Layering Funding Sources to Increase Access to Quality Preschool - Preschool Development Grants Technical Assistance Team*
- *Systems Building Resource Guide 7: Financing Strategically - Child Care State Capacity Building Center*
- *Local Funding for Early Learning: A Community Toolkit - North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation*
- *Finance Strategies - Alliance for Early Childhood Finance*
- *Financing High-Quality Center-Based Infant-Toddler Care: Options and Opportunities - Early Educator Central, from the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families*





TARGET 1.3

Community members support and understand the importance of early childhood health, learning and well-being

Public will is built in part through efforts to share knowledge about the science of early childhood with parents and other members of the community in a way that is relevant to their lives, and to help people see why supporting early childhood development is important for the future of their community and their own well-being. Special campaigns may focus on literacy development, promoting parent-child attachment or understanding the importance of early childhood as a critical period for brain development.



LEVEL 1

Information about developmental science, early health and learning and parenting is disseminated to the community with messages that are accessible and relevant to members of different cultural groups.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Post information about child development and available services in all city and county buildings and cultural and community centers.
- Ensure that elected officials and other high-level city and county staff understand and talk about the importance of early childhood at speaking engagements both with community members and with other stakeholders such as business leaders and agency heads. Pass a resolution in local government demonstrating community support for early childhood.
- Host story times in libraries and recreation centers in languages spoken in the community for different age groups with developmentally appropriate books and activities.
- Align messaging across agencies and groups to reduce confusion and conflicting messages.
- Assess how families are acquiring and viewing information. Optimize online materials for viewing on smartphones.

LEVEL 2

Families and the entire community are engaged in a conversation about the importance of early childhood well-being and what families need and want to succeed. This should go beyond one-sided messaging.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

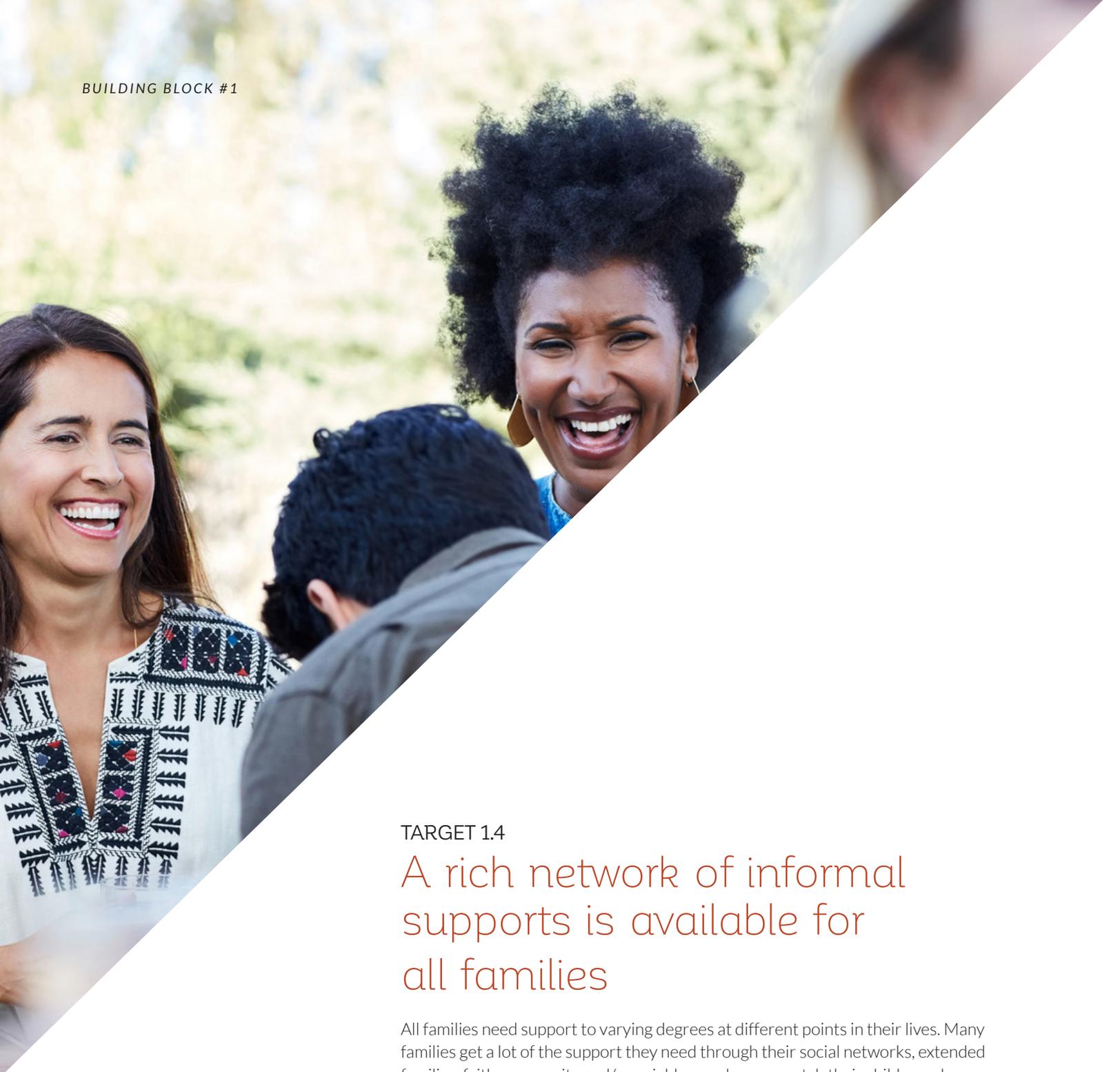
- Host co-created community events, such as a parent night at public housing complexes or a public recreation center, with a focus on child and family well-being. Consider including a “parents and caregivers only” portion where they might learn about brain development and family portions where caregivers can try out activities with their children that promote development and well-being. Working with families to co-create these events will make them more successful. Tip: Providing food and child care goes a long way toward allowing families to participate.
- Host “film nights” with documentaries and films related to early childhood to spark conversation.
- Host ongoing trainings for providers from a variety of fields to help them learn about child development, new strategies for encouraging healthy development and how to engage with parents and families, including recognizing parents’ expertise about their own children, families and communities.
- Invite faith-based communities to consider what they can do to support families in promoting healthy child development, including hosting the types of events described here.

LEVEL 3

Everywhere families go, they receive culturally relevant messages about early childhood health, learning and well-being.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Promote brain-building moments throughout the community with multi-platform tools such as [Vroom](#) and [Talk Read Sing](#).
- Consider who you can partner with to disseminate your message (such as local public radio and television stations) and how and when you already touch families with young children (when they pay bills, at the library, in public housing, at local medical clinics). Encourage businesses to think about how they can post materials in their offices both for employees and customers. For instance, grocery stores can post brain development information or activities on their shopping carts.
- Partner with parent leaders to develop an advocacy campaign that shows the importance of investing in early childhood and how the investment benefits everyone in the community.
- Reach out to “unusual suspects” or groups that have influence such as seniors, the business community or civic organizations.
- Use a “Children in All Policies” or “Children First” approach to promote awareness of how all policies affect children and to endorse the commitment the community has made to children and their well-being.



TARGET 1.4

A rich network of informal supports is available for all families

All families need support to varying degrees at different points in their lives. Many families get a lot of the support they need through their social networks, extended families, faith community and/or neighbors, who may watch their children when they need a break, bring a meal at the birth of a child or lend money when finances are tight. However, some families lack these informal supports, and may be more dependent upon formal services unless they have opportunities to build their social networks. Early Learning Communities encourage and facilitate informal supports for all families by ensuring access to safe public spaces where families can meet and build relationships, including facilities such as public libraries, museums and playgrounds. In some neighborhoods where many families are isolated, as is often the case in high-poverty areas, intensive efforts may be needed to weave a stronger social fabric. Similarly, communities may need to tailor supports and outreach to families that are marginalized due to disabilities, language barriers or immigration status.





TARGET 1.5

Community resources for children and families are well known, accessible and easy to use

Communities can also invest in ensuring that families and other community members are aware of the services and resources available in the community, and able to access them when needed. When this is working well, a family needing support will know where to turn – or their neighbor will know and give them a number to call. For example, up-to-date referral resource centers can help connect families to ongoing services in real time, and hotlines can provide immediate support for families under stress.



LEVEL 1

An up-to-date directory is available and accessible for all families to find services and for service providers to refer families to additional services and resources.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Create online and hard copy versions of the directory and ensure that they are updated at least once a year by giving listed organizations and providers an opportunity to edit their contact information and services offered.
- Visit early care and education centers to show providers and families how to use the directory.
- Encourage the local information and referral providers to invest in an easy-to-use mobile interface for their online service directory.

LEVEL 2

Non-traditional partners are aware of and use the directory to make referrals. Barriers that prevent families from accessing care are addressed.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Host trainings for partners such as health care providers, clergy members and business owners on how to use the directory and make referrals.
- Address practices and policies that stigmatize families who seek support. Ask families about sources of stigma and their experiences with different service providers. Incorporate a way for parents and caregivers to rate and/or review the services and resources listed in the directory.
- Hold listening sessions to learn root causes of the barriers to accessing needed services.
- Assess language needs among families in the community. Make language services available to families whose primary language is not English, and translate marketing and application materials.

LEVEL 3

A “no wrong door” approach is used by public service and community organization staff to connect families with appropriate services even if the service isn’t available directly through their agency or organization.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Promote implementation of this approach by training support staff who interact with families, such as bus drivers and front desk staff.
- When possible, streamline application processes for services, using just one application for the different services a family might need.
- Encourage parents and other family members to become ambassadors in spreading the word about these services, compensating them for their time and expertise.
- Consider co-locating several social services into one location where families can access the resources they need to be successful. This one-stop shop can promote efficiency, leverage resources and support families.

Include services in the directory such as early care and education, food banks, domestic violence shelters, substance abuse and mental health services, food and clothing banks, health and dental care providers, insurance programs, maternal health resources, crisis intervention services, community meals, transportation services, disability services, housing and utility supports, summer camps and recreation programs, after school programs, family resource centers, mentoring and tutoring programs, protective services.



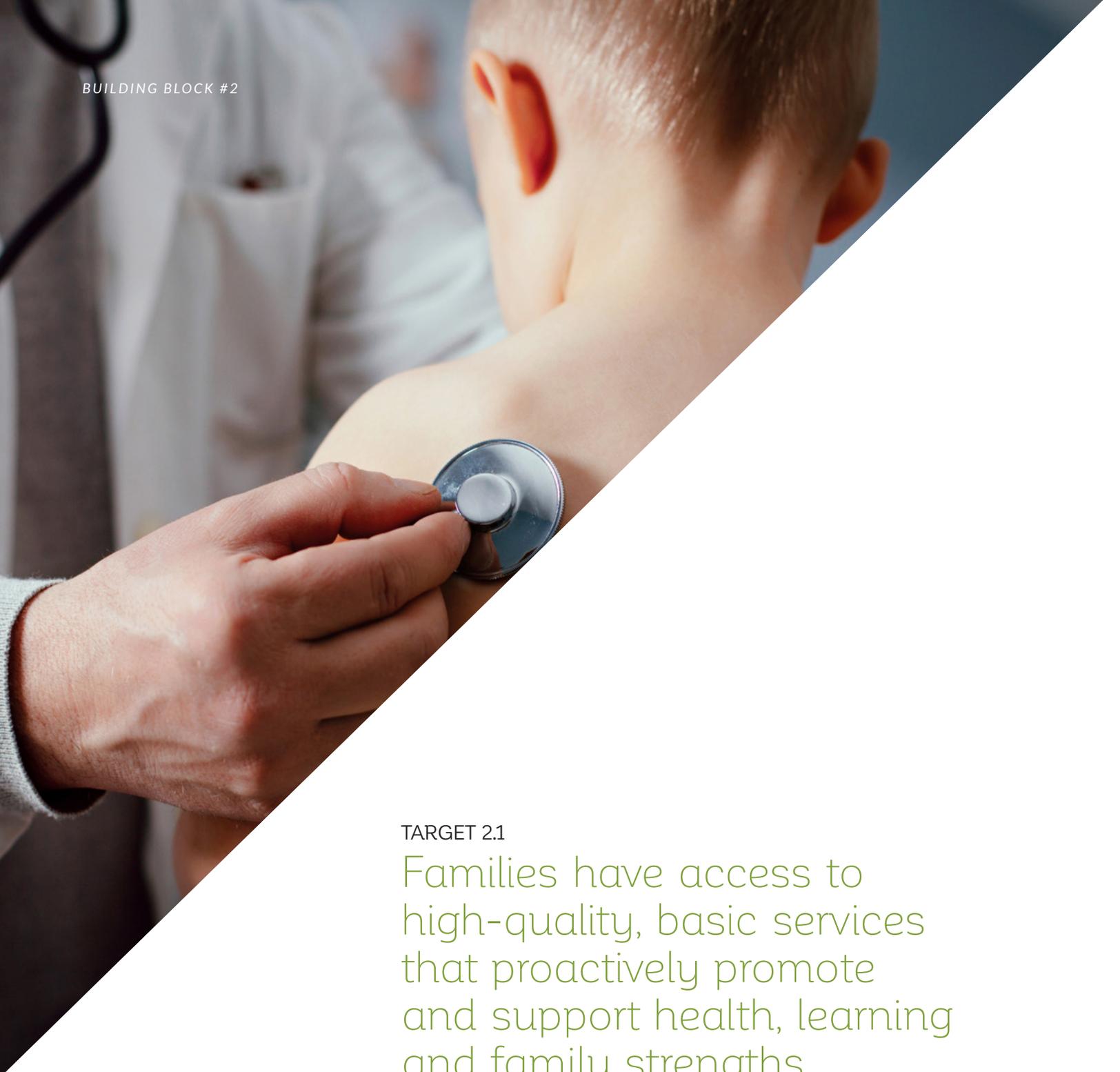
BUILDING BLOCK #2

Quality Services that Work for All Young Children and their Families

Families living in an Early Learning Community have access to high-quality services for their children and themselves, aligned in a way that makes them easy to use to meet their needs. Some combination of these services and supports are available in all communities. Progress toward better outcomes for the population as a whole comes about when communities coordinate services; ensure that all children and families who need services are able to get them; focus on improving quality; and assess from a system level where there are gaps or unnecessary duplication. Communities can then use current services as a springboard for innovation and customization of services and supports to meet families' needs.

BUILDING BLOCK #2 | RESOURCES

- *Defining and Measuring Access to High-Quality Early Care and Education: A Guidebook for Policymakers and Researchers - Department of Health and Human Services*
- *How Cities Embrace Their Infants and Toddlers - Early Childhood Action Collective*
- *Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive! A Compendium of Screening Measures for Young Children - Department of Health and Human Services*
- *Ripples of Transformation: Families Leading Change in Early Childhood Systems - Center for the Study of Social Policy*
- *Healthy Families: From ACEs to Trauma Informed Care to Resilience and Wellbeing: Examples of Policies and Activities - International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership*
- *Developing Culturally Responsive Approaches to Serving Diverse Populations: a Resource Guide for Community-Based Organizations - National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families*
- *National Parent Leadership Institute*
- *Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family and Community - American Institute for Research*
- *Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships - Department of Education*



TARGET 2.1

Families have access to high-quality, basic services that proactively promote and support health, learning and family strengths

Residents of an Early Learning Community have access to basic, high-quality services in the areas of health, early care and education and family support. This is necessary to build health and early learning and ensure that families are able to provide safe, stable, nurturing environments for their children. These basic services include a medical home for all children; access to quality early care and education; and playgroups and other informal settings where parents can build their social networks, gain knowledge about parenting and child development and interact with professionals who can answer questions and connect them to other services as needed. Universal supports also include outreach materials and information shared with all new parents, which might be delivered through birthing hospitals or universal home visits.



LEVEL 1

City or county leadership have a comprehensive overview of the quality of services available throughout the community and whose needs are not being met.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Map the availability of core services (pediatric and family practice clinics, early care and education programs and family support programs such as home visiting providers and family resource centers) in neighborhoods throughout the city alongside numbers of young children in each neighborhood and public transportation options linking neighborhoods to those where more services are available. Include demographic data, like income, race and ethnicity to help identify disparities in enrollment and usage and gaps in access.
- Identify tools that service providers can use to assess the level of quality appropriate to a variety of settings to stimulate conversations about quality improvement. Consider elements such as curriculum, professional development, planning time, pay and developmentally appropriate practices.
- Come to an agreement on shared language and common outcomes for children and families across child- and family-serving systems. Explore potential frameworks to capture the outcomes all relevant systems can embrace and connect their work to, and adopt the language of that framework across systems.
- Leverage assessments and surveys already conducted within or around your community. For example, many Head Start grantees and hospitals already do community assessments. Check with these entities to see if they have recent results.
- Survey or conduct listening sessions with parents of young children to learn about their needs, how they currently access services, what needs remain unmet and what would make accessing services easier for them. Take care to hear from parents in underserved neighborhoods and marginalized populations. Ensure that parents who can't attend a scheduled event have other opportunities to join the conversation such as through Facebook Live or Twitter chats and online surveys.
- Conduct listening sessions with early care and education providers to determine their needs for additional support for themselves or for the families they serve. As with parents, offer multiple avenues for providers to engage in these conversations.

LEVEL 2

Leaders, residents and service providers work together to increase access to high-quality services for underserved families.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Establish incentives for service providers (e.g., early care and education, mental health providers or anything else identified in gap analyses) to locate in areas of greater need or to better reach marginalized families, including supporting existing service providers to expand into additional neighborhoods or expand hours of operation to meet families' needs.
- Establish a cross-sector collaboration of providers in early care and education, health, social services and basic services in areas of most need, so providers may determine standards of quality and align services. Provide incentives or support for deeper collaboration, including cross-referral (with tracking for completion), data sharing and tracking of shared output and outcome measures.
- Reach out to informal (family, friend and neighbor) child care providers to find out what support they need to provide the highest quality care, and help interested providers move toward licensing.
- Encourage co-location of programs and services to expand the range of services available in underserved neighborhoods.



LEVEL 2 (continued)

- Promote the importance of “medical homes” for young children, both by educating parents about the benefits of finding a consistent provider for their children, and by supporting health care providers to provide comprehensive services for the children and families they serve.
- Implement a unified application and/or waitlist for early care and education programs so that parents only have to complete one application and get the first available spot that meets their needs.
- Support early care and education providers in providing professional development to staff. Host citywide trainings for teachers and joint trainings for pre-k and kindergarten teachers. Consider how trainings can be accessible to in-home providers and centers without staff to cover classrooms during the day.
- Implement high-quality preschool in a way that reaches underserved families and addresses gaps in school readiness.

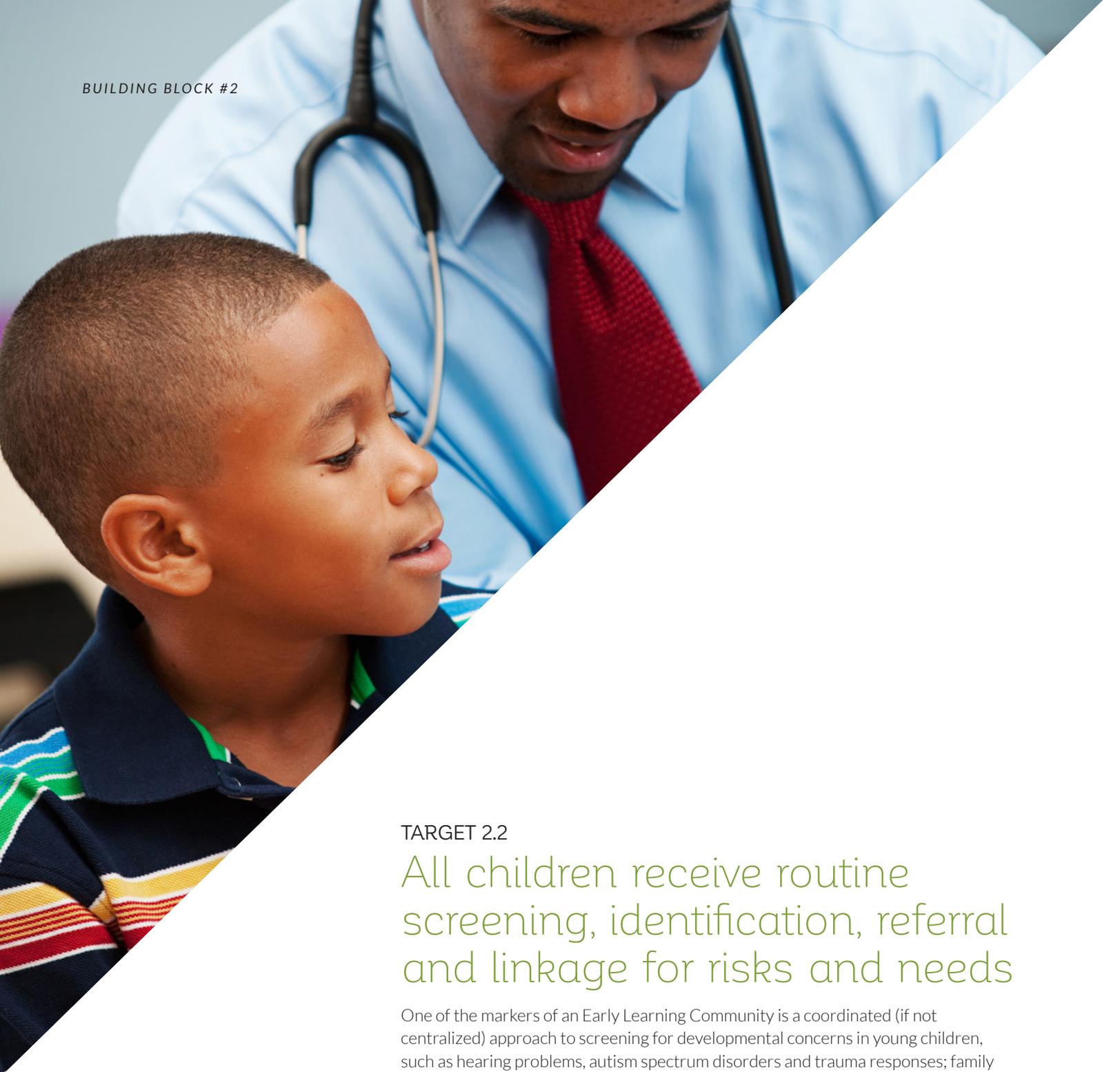
LEVEL 3

Quality services are available throughout the community and easily accessible to residents of historically underserved neighborhoods.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Invest in the development of an easily accessible service hub, anchored around a public entity such as a library with low-cost rental space available for other services such as a health clinic, child care center, legal aid office or family resource center.
- Develop transportation solutions to help community residents access services located outside of their own neighborhoods. For example, consider using online messaging programs to help small cohorts of families develop plans for ridesharing to early learning centers or libraries.
- Implement full service community schools in underserved neighborhoods, including family support and early childhood services.
- Measure parent and caregiver satisfaction with various programs or agencies. Improving “customer satisfaction” is an important step toward assessing and improving both access and quality.





TARGET 2.2

All children receive routine screening, identification, referral and linkage for risks and needs

One of the markers of an Early Learning Community is a coordinated (if not centralized) approach to screening for developmental concerns in young children, such as hearing problems, autism spectrum disorders and trauma responses; family risk factors such as maternal depression and parental substance abuse; and school readiness at entry to kindergarten. These screenings take place in the context of the basic services described in target 2.1, such as hospitals and clinics, early care and education programs and family resource centers, in order to reach the greatest number of children and families. In a well-integrated early childhood system, there are clear pathways for following up on any concerns identified, with further assessment, referrals and services. This works best when providers have access to a centralized point of intake for referrals when they identify a need for more rigorous assessment or specialized services.





TARGET 2.3

Children and families at risk and those with identified needs have timely access to more intensive services

For families facing increased risk of poor outcomes, more intensive preventive services and early intervention can help them to overcome or manage those challenges and, in many cases, keep them from needing far more expensive services later. Whatever a family's needs are, intervening as early as possible is critical, whether in health care, developmental services or family support. The coordination of these services in an Early Learning Community can be particularly beneficial for families facing multiple challenges, who often struggle trying to navigate several systems. Interventions also include the work of the child welfare system when abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred.





TARGET 2.4

Families and parents are actively engaged as partners

Service providers in an Early Learning Community make families a high priority. They welcome parents as partners and as experts on their own children and families. Whether at their child's six-month check-up or at preschool drop-off, parents experience respect and a feeling of partnership from the professionals they encounter. As a critical part of this, providers value and respect the cultural practices of the families they serve; they also take a "no wrong door" approach to connecting families to the services they need, regardless of what part of the early childhood system they first contact.





TARGET 2.5

Supports are in place for service providers

In an Early Learning Community, attention is paid to the workforce serving children and families. Efforts to strengthen and support the workforce are critical for improving the quality of services and supports provided to families, as well as the well-being of service providers and their families in the community. Continuing education, coaching and consultation can help service providers stay informed of advances in our understanding of the science of early childhood and align their practice to best nurture and support child development and family well-being. Communities can also take action to increase the diversity of the child- and family-serving workforce and leadership, by creating pathways to careers for parents and other community residents, providing mentoring and career development support and/or taking life experience into account in hiring decisions.

“A care and education workforce for children birth through age 8 that is unified by a foundation of the science of child development and early learning, shared knowledge and competencies, and principles to support quality professional practice at the individual, setting, systems, and policy levels.” - Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Target, The Institute of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council (NRC)



LEVEL 1

Professional development and workforce supports are provided across sectors to improve quality and reduce turnover.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Identify trainings that are relevant to providers in multiple fields (e.g., training on fostering parent leadership, empathy, trauma-informed care or mandatory reporting for child abuse and neglect), and use those trainings to build and strengthen relationships among providers at the neighborhood or community level.
- Host gatherings or trainings for kindergarten teachers and pre-k teachers in community- and school-based programs to align teaching practices, get to know each other and share information on students, curricula and classroom approaches.
- Disseminate information to providers about career pathways and opportunities to increase their qualifications.
- Host trainings for directors and supervisors in child and family serving programs that focus on issues such as leadership training, adult learning theory and business skills.
- Host listening sessions with providers in your community to identify key challenges and connect early childhood providers to community supports, services and locally elected officials.
- Connect early childhood providers to information about scholarship and tuition assistance opportunities to help pay for increased educational attainment.

LEVEL 2

A variety of opportunities are available for providers to get support to improve their practice, meet quality standards and advance their careers.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Provide targeted training, coaching and supports in neighborhoods or population groups lacking access to high-quality care to help providers meet quality standards such as those in a Quality Rating and Improvement System or state licensing requirements.
- Make arrangements for professionals in child- and family-serving fields to get continuing education credits for trainings that improve their ability to compassionately and respectfully serve families. For example, workforce registries can facilitate this for early care and education providers.
- Host site visits and learning sessions for elementary school principals in early care and education centers and pre-k classrooms to help inform them of early learning practices.
- Make infant mental health consultation available to all early care and education providers in the community, so that providers have access to on-site coaching and support to manage challenging behaviors, work with parents and keep children in their classrooms.
- Develop a coaching or mentoring program to support providers as they implement effective practices in their classrooms.
- Increase the community's capacity to serve families in their home languages, both by finding and supporting interested speakers of needed languages to become providers, and by supporting English-speaking providers to learn a needed language in their community.

SUPPORTS FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS | Resources

- *Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation: Policies and Practices to Foster the Social-Emotional Development of Young Children – ZERO TO THREE*
- *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Framework – Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council*
- *Resources on shared services – Opportunities Exchange*
- *Six Policies to Support the Early Childhood Workforce – Center for American Progress*



LEVEL 3

Attention is paid to issues related to the early childhood workforce, including diversity, fair compensation and career pathways.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Develop pathways for parents and caregivers, community residents and program participants to get necessary education and certifications to become professional providers to serve their communities.
- Work with child and family serving programs and system leaders to develop strategies to increase wages and benefits for providers, such as wage supplements or tax credits.
- Host a roundtable with providers and post-secondary institutions focused on what competencies are needed and the barriers to credentialing.
- Work with community colleges and universities to develop and enhance early care and education programs and to ensure that degree programs are accessible to providers already in the workforce.
- Build the diversity of leadership in the early childhood field through mentoring and targeted professional development to help interested providers from diverse backgrounds advance into program and system leadership roles.
- Create an articulated career pathway knitting together public and private educational opportunities for caregivers.







TARGET 2.6

Leaders use data to drive change

Early childhood systems function best when data is consistently used to drive change – to keep stakeholders focused on the outcomes of their efforts, improve progress toward those desired outcomes for all children and families and increase the quality and effectiveness of various programs and of the system itself. In an Early Learning Community, diverse stakeholders serving children have shared data and outcome metrics, which may feed into a process of continuous quality improvement.

LEVEL 1

Leaders within and across child- and family-serving systems have agreed on shared language and committed to common outcomes for children and families.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Explore potential frameworks to capture the outcomes all relevant systems can embrace and connect their work to, and adopt the language of that framework across systems.
- Identify what data is available, whether it is of high quality (including whether it is disaggregated by race, income and other relevant demographic characteristics) and what major gaps in data exist.
- Develop a data agenda outlining the data you would like to have and who you would need to work with to obtain it.
- Determine what data can be used to track progress and evaluate community needs, including data from non-early childhood focused sources, such as the US Census, the health system or criminal justice.
- Engage parents and other community residents in the process of arriving at shared language and common outcomes, and enlist their help in determining how to communicate that information to the community.

LEVEL 2

Agencies and programs share data with each other to advance their work toward shared outcomes.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Provide a template for Memoranda of Understanding to articulate data sharing agreements among agencies and across systems.
- Compile data from across systems and programs to identify disparate outcomes among particular neighborhoods, racial groups, income levels or other population groups, and adjust strategies accordingly.
- Formalize the adoption of a shared outcomes framework by having programs and agencies publicly sign on to it and identify how their work helps children and families meet the identified goals.
- Consider adopting a universal intake form for child- and family-serving programs and services to facilitate cross-referral and sharing of data and tracking of shared outcomes along with outputs.
- Share outcomes and data with the community in an accessible, easy-to-understand format.

LEVEL 3

Data is used to inform quality improvement efforts across sectors to meet identified needs and reach shared goals.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Implement a unique identifier, assigned to each child and used across systems to facilitate data sharing and tracking.
- Plan and carry out quality improvement efforts across systems with a focus on a particular outcome or indicator, including a focus on closing disparities among demographic groups.
- Develop a shared database for child and family service providers to contribute to and access, facilitating better cross-system coordination when families are involved with multiple systems.
- Engage community residents in analyzing and interpreting data and developing strategies to reach shared goals.

USE OF DATA TO DRIVE CHANGE | Resources

- *Collective Impact* – FSG
- *The 10 Fundamentals of Coordinated State Data Systems* – The Early Childhood Data Collaborative
- *Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework* – Center for the Study of Social Policy
- *Essentials for Childhood Framework: Steps to Create Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments for all Children* – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

A child in a red and white striped shirt is riding a blue scooter past a brick wall. A window with vertical blinds is visible in the background. The scene is captured with a motion blur effect, suggesting the child is moving quickly.

HOW DO NEIGHBORHOODS IMPACT EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT?

A growing body of research provides evidence that the places where children live, learn and play have significant impact on their health and development. For example, a number of neighborhood factors can undermine healthy early childhood development, like exposure to high rates of violence, exposure to environmental hazards, unsafe housing, inadequate access to grocery stores and a lack of economic opportunity for parents and caregivers. On the other hand, positive neighborhood factors – like safe public places to play, safe and affordable housing, accessible public transportation and good employment opportunities – can have a positive impact on early childhood development, setting children up for success in learning and in life.

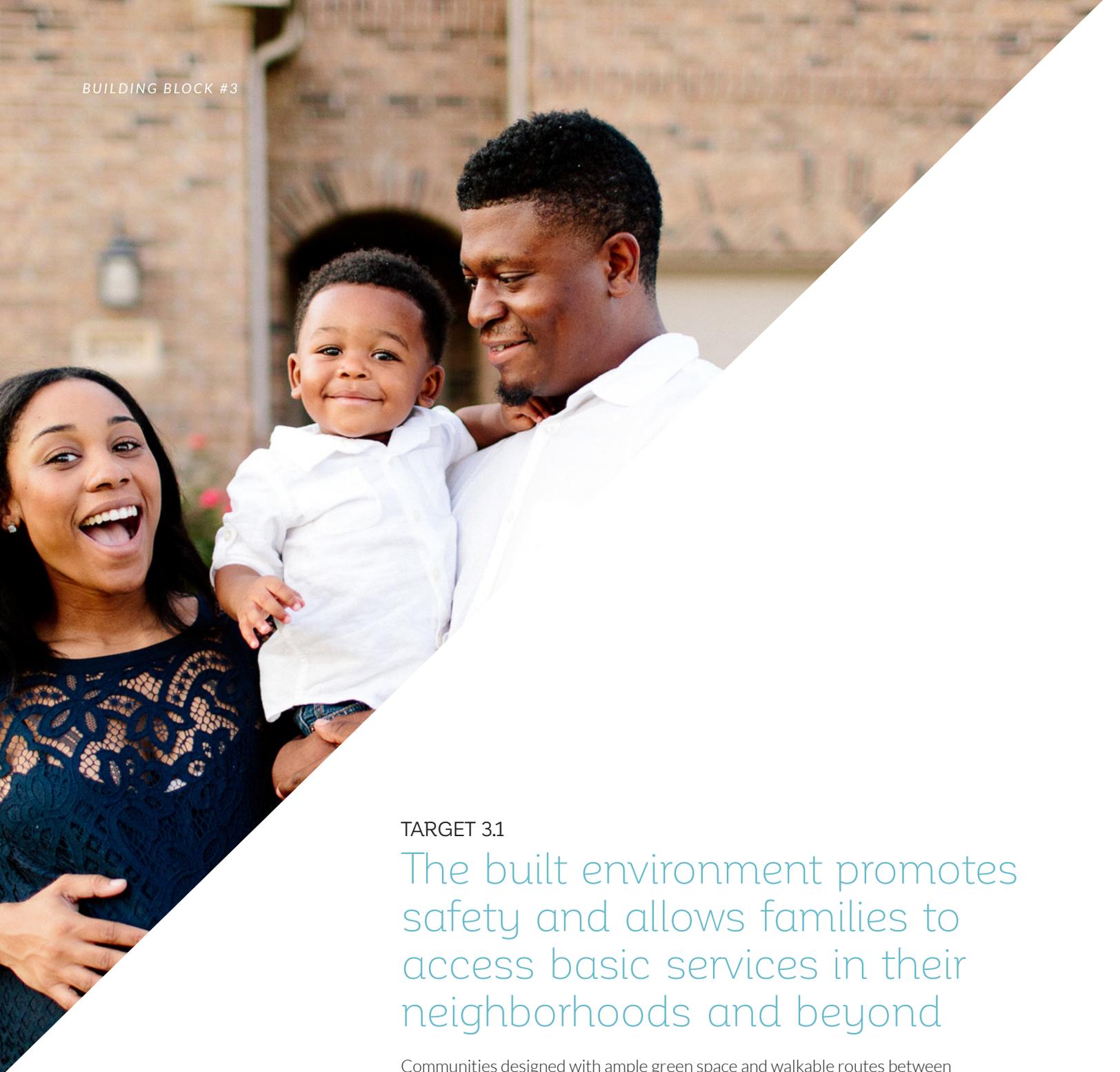
BUILDING BLOCK #3

Neighborhoods Where Families Can Thrive

Children’s development and well-being are affected by all aspects of the neighborhoods where they live – from whether they have access to healthy food and green spaces, to how safe their community is and whether residents have a sense of hope for their future. While these issues are beyond what we typically think of under the heading of “early childhood,” these community determinants of health are critical. Early Learning Communities are increasingly turning their attention to neighborhood living conditions, ensuring that all young children grow up in neighborhoods where they and their families can live safe, healthy lives. Neighborhoods that are safe and healthy foster the sense of belonging and networks of informal supports that are so critical for families to thrive.

BUILDING BLOCK #3 | RESOURCES

- *Equitable and Inclusive Civic Engagement* - The Kirwan Institute
- *The Asthma Improvement Collaborative at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital - Center for the Study of Social Policy*
- *Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience: A Framework for Addressing and Preventing Community Trauma* - Prevention Institute
- *Health in All Policies: A Guide for State and Local Government* - Public Health Institute
- *Build Healthy Places Network*
- *Where Place Matters Most: Young Children and Their Future* - BUILD Initiative
- *Tools for Healthier Food Environments* - ChangeLab Solutions
- *Community Engagement Toolkit* - Collective Impact Forum
- *Efficient, Effective Services: Career Pathways and Lasting Economic Stability for Families* - ASCEND, The Aspen Institute



TARGET 3.1

The built environment promotes safety and allows families to access basic services in their neighborhoods and beyond

Communities designed with ample green space and walkable routes between housing, schools and retail areas – with safety ensured in those public spaces – are neighborhoods where families can thrive. Neighborhoods should be free from violence and from environmental hazards such as lead, other water contaminants and air pollution that cause and aggravate health conditions. In Early Learning Communities families also have access to basic services nearby, including an adequate supply of safe and affordable housing, nutritious and affordable food and reliable public transportation that connects families to jobs, child care, schools and the community. Other types of infrastructure, including opportunities to connect to the Internet, are also critical for families to be full participants in their community.



LEVEL 3 (continued)

- Ensure that service providers are consistently trained on how to best serve communities facing multiple barriers to opportunity, including immigrant and refugee families, families that include LGBTQ individuals, non-English speakers, families involved in the child welfare system and others.
- Formalize the authentic engagement of parents and caregivers who are representative of the community in planning and zoning decisions, in the design and planning of public services like transportation and in community health strategies.







TARGET 3.2

Economic and employment opportunities are available to all

Children are more likely to thrive when their parents have access to a diversity of economic and employment opportunities where they live. Implementing two-generation strategies that consider both child and parent well-being can improve economic opportunities for families. Whether in the neighborhood or easily accessible by public transportation, parents need access to jobs that pay a living wage and offer family and medical leave and paid sick leave, as well as access to education and job training services. In addition, in family-friendly neighborhoods, banks and credit unions are available to meet families' financial needs and give them opportunities to build credit – rather than institutions that drain resources from the community and harm families through financial practices such as predatory lending.





TARGET 3.3

Residents feel a sense of belonging and hope within their neighborhoods and connection to the broader community

Ideally, families will feel a sense of belonging and ownership of their neighborhoods, a sense of kinship with their neighbors and a connection to the surrounding city or county. In neighborhoods where families can thrive, residents tell a story of hope about their neighborhood and feel they have power to shape their community. They feel that their neighborhood is connected to the broader community and that city or county leadership cares about them – that they matter in the eyes of elected leaders and fellow residents. Community leaders can contribute to these intangible aspects of a neighborhood, both in words and actions, by focusing on and investing in a neighborhood’s assets, and by listening and responding when residents organize and speak up to effect change in their neighborhoods.





BUILDING BLOCK #4

Policies that Support & Are Responsive to Families

The conditions in which young children and their families live – the building blocks already described – are all influenced by policy at the local, state and federal levels. In early learning communities, attention is paid to how local policy can support children and families, particularly those most vulnerable.

BUILDING BLOCK #4 | RESOURCES

- *Equitable Development as a Tool to Advance Racial Equity - The Government Alliance on Race & Equity*
- *Equitable Development Toolkit - PolicyLink*
- *Family Impact Institute: Using Research to Build Better Public Policy for Families - Purdue University*
- *One Fairfax Resolution - A formal declaration of commitment to racial and social equity by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and the Fairfax County School Board*
- *Family Friendly Workplace Policies Toolkit - Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment through Essentials for Childhood in partnership with Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC)*
- *Work & Family Policy Database - National Partnership for Women and Families*
- *Boost Your Competitive Edge: Actions for a Healthy, Productive Workforce - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*



TARGET 4.1

Policies that govern child and family services are equitable and responsive to families

The clearest link to policy in an Early Learning Community are the policies that govern services for children and families – the continuum of services described in the previous building blocks. Federal, state and local policies affect the quality, effectiveness and availability of these services. Many of these policies are made at the state or federal level, but local administration of those policies can determine how they affect families. For example, child care subsidies are critical to ensuring access to quality care for the lowest-income families, but how those subsidies are administered – including eligibility rules, where and how families can apply for services, how the intake process takes place, how data are collected and reporting requirements – can have positive or negative effects on accessibility, continuity of care and family stress. Similarly, local discretion in an Early Learning Community can pave the way for families to have greater access to health care and early intervention services, as well as more positive experiences in systems such as early intervention or child protective services. This is not just a question of how many programs and services are available, but of how responsive they are to families’ needs.



LEVEL 1

Local leaders take families' needs and experiences into account in their administration of federal and state policy.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Use tools like surveys and community listening sessions, to learn about families' needs in your community and their experiences accessing child and family services, including child care supports. Multiple formats to gather feedback and information should be used to reach a diversity of families.
- Fully integrate parents and caregivers and child-serving providers into all relevant committees, task forces and workgroups where policy strategies that impact young children and their families are considered. Include stakeholders from different racial and ethnic groups – especially those most likely to be affected or those you are most interested in reaching – in the development of new policies and programs. Determine who is missing and how they can be engaged.
- Explore how the community can use local discretion in the administration of state and federal resources to best meet the needs of young children and their families, including through the use of waivers and in the alignment of programs that serve overlapping populations.
- Continuously train child care subsidy intake workers, family service workers and other staff who work directly with families on cultural and linguistic responsiveness, strengths-based family goal-setting and on how to work across service systems to meet families' full spectrum of needs.
- Track and examine data on access and quality of services by race, ethnicity and other demographic characteristics to inform equitable policies and resource use.

LEVEL 2

Administrative and policy innovations are implemented across sectors to ensure that the needs of all children and families are met.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

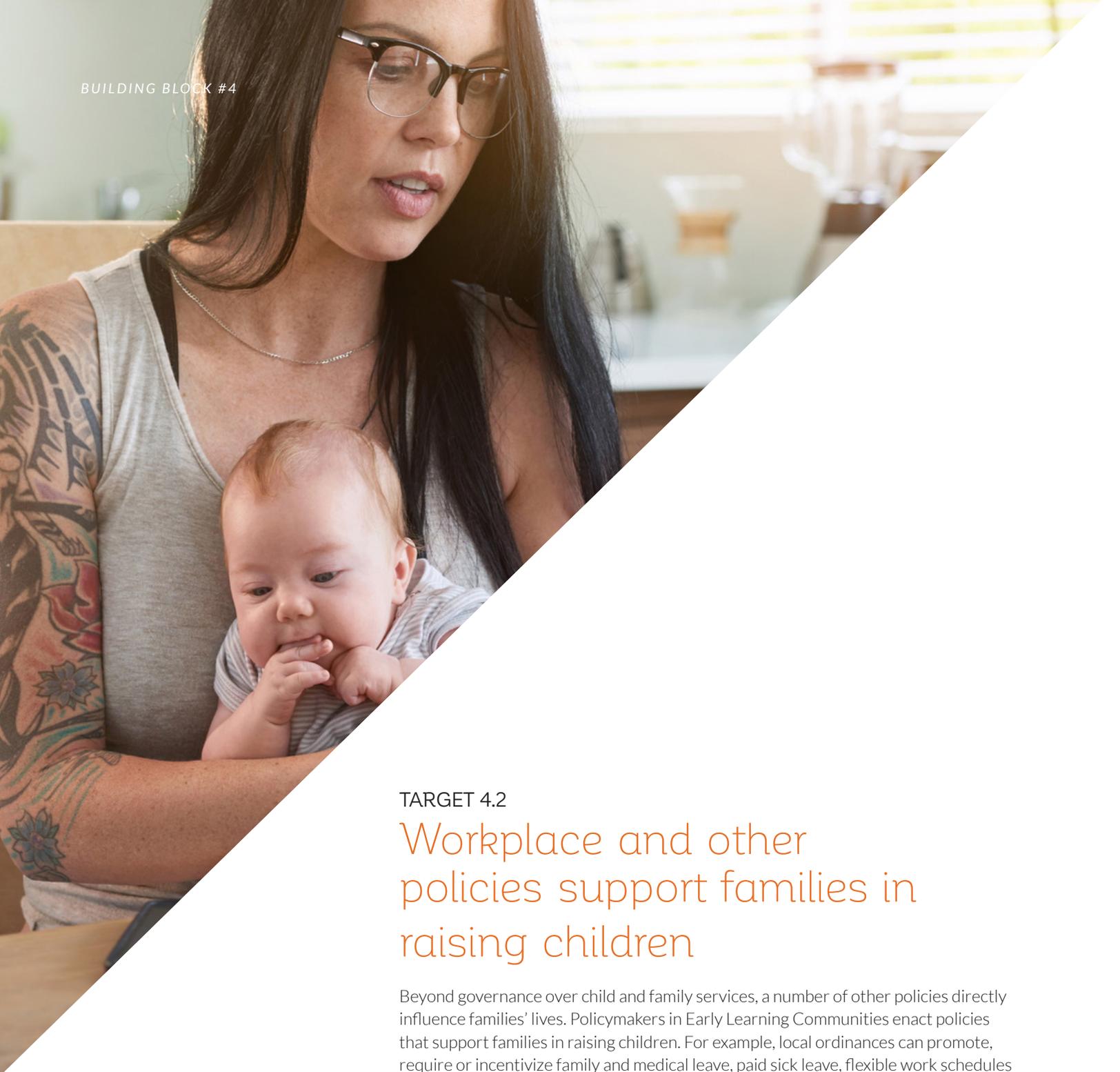
- Implement policy and administrative innovations that improve continuity of access to services. For example, communities may be able to use local funds to cover lapses in child care subsidy eligibility to promote stability for children, working parents and child care providers.
- Implement continuous improvement and feedback loops that include families and service providers to determine what is and isn't working well for children and families.
- Examine local zoning policies to determine their impact on early care and education centers and adjust city zoning practices to support early care and education providers as business owners.
- Establish a linkage and referral system that seamlessly connects families to existing services in the community at the appropriate time. Memoranda of Understanding can be used between agencies and organizations to ensure services are provided seamlessly with a "no wrong door" approach.
- Facilitate cross-sector convenings (including health, education, housing, etc.) to address data sharing issues and promote cross-sector solutions to the challenges families face.

LEVEL 3

Policies are aligned across systems and are responsive to the diverse and changing needs of families.

Some ways you might reach this level include:

- Create a municipal-level office that is charged with promoting the well-being of families with young children, such as an Office of Early Childhood or a Children's Cabinet.
- Coordinate business processes and data collection strategies across service systems to facilitate data sharing.
- Streamline application and eligibility processes through common applications and data sharing, whenever possible. When possible, notification about eligibility for services such as child care subsidies should be offered proactively to eligible families based on cross-system data-sharing rather than requiring eligible families to navigate complicated application processes to determine their eligibility.
- Use cross-sector data analysis to identify areas of need, design policy strategies to address those needs and evaluate outcomes in a system that is aligned and responsive to families.
- Use a racial equity toolkit to assess policies, initiatives and programs. It should help you answer the following questions: "How will this increase or decrease equity? What are the potential unintended consequences? What benefits may result? Do children, families, early educators and providers of color have access, and if not, why?"



TARGET 4.2

Workplace and other policies support families in raising children

Beyond governance over child and family services, a number of other policies directly influence families' lives. Policymakers in Early Learning Communities enact policies that support families in raising children. For example, local ordinances can promote, require or incentivize family and medical leave, paid sick leave, flexible work schedules and other family-friendly employment policies and practices. Leadership and incentives may be particularly necessary to get these benefits extended to workers in low-wage jobs, where the market may not push employers to provide them but where workers need them the most. Local policies can also determine how well families are connected to the services they need and how easily families can navigate those systems. While these policies are often aimed at the entire workforce, or at all health care consumers, for example, parents of young children are an important subset of these groups and the impact on them as parents should be taken into consideration.



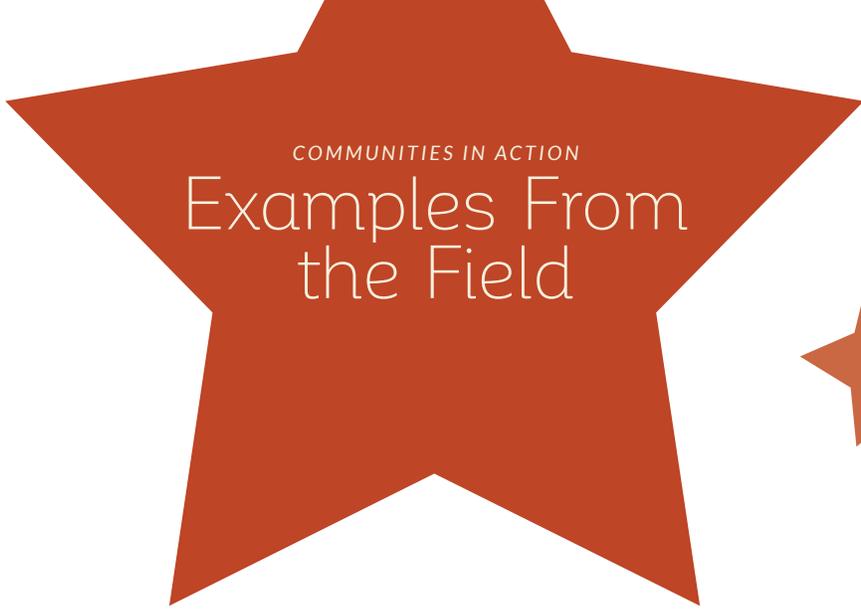


TARGET 4.3

Land use and community development policies are designed with consideration for how they affect young children and families

In an Early Learning Community, attention is paid to how a wide range of decisions will affect families. Similar to the “Health in All Policies” movement, Early Learning Communities pay attention to the effect of all policies on young children and their families. For example, many aspects of community design, such as housing regulations and public transportation systems, can encourage or hinder healthy child development and family well-being. These decisions should not be made without considering the impact on families with young children. Again, family-friendly local administration of state and federal policy can be a marker of an Early Learning Community.





COMMUNITIES IN ACTION
Examples From
the Field

TARGET 1.1

Catalyzing early
childhood work
in Dayton, OH

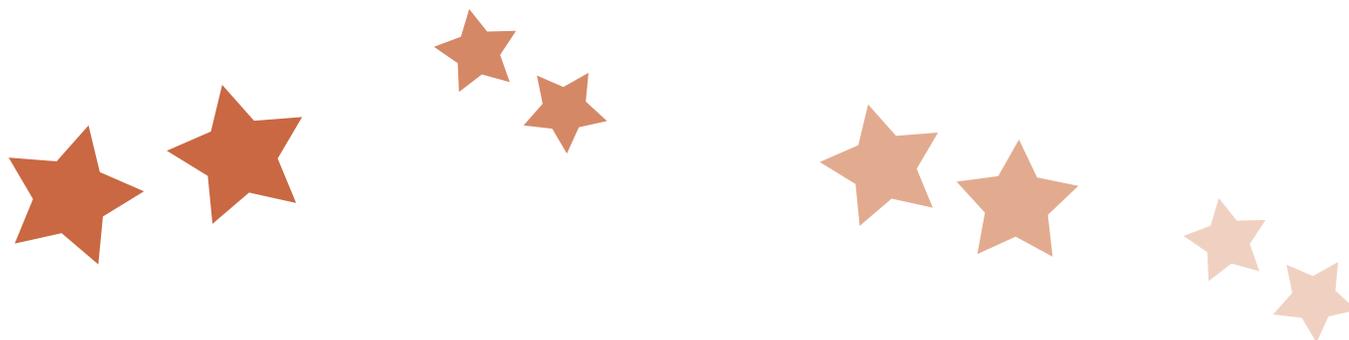
Mayor Nan Whaley established the City of Learners Committee, which is comprised of more than 70 community leaders who have committed to ensure that children in the City of Dayton receive a high-quality education. Over seven weeks, the Committee met with almost 450 people across the city in 11 “Listening Sessions.” These community conversations led to the creation of five priority areas for the committee: 1) ensure that all children attend a high-quality school; 2) ensure high-quality preschool is offered to all children; 3) increase business partnerships with schools; 4) provide mentors to more children; and 5) expand sites for afterschool and summer learning. These “Listening Sessions” captured the rich diversity of Dayton. The City of Learners Committee and the city’s commitment to expanding preschool was the main focus of Mayor Whaley’s 2016 State of the City.

TARGET 1.2

Voters choose
to invest in
children’s services
in Palm Beach

In 2014, 86 percent of voters in Palm Beach County, FL, chose to reauthorize the independent taxing authority of the Children’s Services Council, which develops, funds and evaluates programs and promotes public policies to ensure that Palm Beach County’s children grow up healthy, safe and strong. The overwhelming majority of votes for reauthorization reflected a sense of community pride in valuing and supporting young families. The local newspaper, the Palm Beach Post, backed the reauthorization, telling its readers, “A ‘no’ vote on reauthorization would mean the demise of the council, and an abrupt end to programs that make Palm Beach County a safer, more humane, more compassionate place to raise families.” The reauthorization was also supported by political and civic leaders on both sides of the aisle.





TARGET 1.3

Raising awareness & building public will in Vermont

In the Lamoille Valley region of Northern Vermont, local partners work with the statewide Let's Grow Kids campaign to grow public awareness and public will around action for young children. The partners organize campaigns to sign pledges of support for early childhood issues, staff informational tables at local farmers markets and fairs, train volunteer speakers at Rotary Clubs and Chambers of Commerce and write letters to the editor. Let's Grow Kids and their partners across the state also use local advertising outlets and locally driven social media campaigns to emphasize the importance of the early years, and to rally support for high quality early care for the children of the region.

TARGET 1.4

Parents build connections through advocacy

Oakland Parents Together empowers parents to advocate for their children in the Oakland public schools. As part of their work, they provide Parent Cafés – six-week series of guided conversations among parents about the protective factors that keep their families strong, which grew out of CSSP's Strengthening Families initiative. Through Parent Cafés, parents have the opportunity to build and strengthen relationships with other parents, find common areas of concern and opportunities for collective action and build their confidence in speaking up to advocate for their children and themselves.

TARGET 1.5

Connecting parents to resources & events in Pittsburgh

Kidsburgh is an online resource that serves as not only a calendar of family-friendly events but also a place for advocacy around making Pittsburgh a more child-friendly place to live – or, as the community leaders, child advocates and educators who launched the effort put it, to make the Pittsburgh region “the best place on earth to raise a kid.” Kidsburgh partners with the local public television network and the local tourism promotion agency to publish timely content. It is sponsored by two foundations and has an advisory board representing a variety of organizations serving children, youth and families. They are also in the process of launching an online directory of child-serving organizations.



COMMUNITIES IN ACTION

Examples From the Field



TARGET 2.1

Access to a medical home for all children in nine regions of Michigan

The Community Healthcare Access Program coordinated by HealthNet of West Michigan provides a medical home for children and adults with public or no insurance. It provides supports for doctors and medical practices who increase the numbers of vulnerable children that they add to their caseloads. It also provides transportation and other supports to families. The Michigan Association of United Ways has expanded the model to eight other counties/regions under the name Michigan Children's Health Access Program (MiCHAP), and developed a "Virtual CHAP" service accessible through the 2-1-1 telephone helpline.

TARGET 2.2

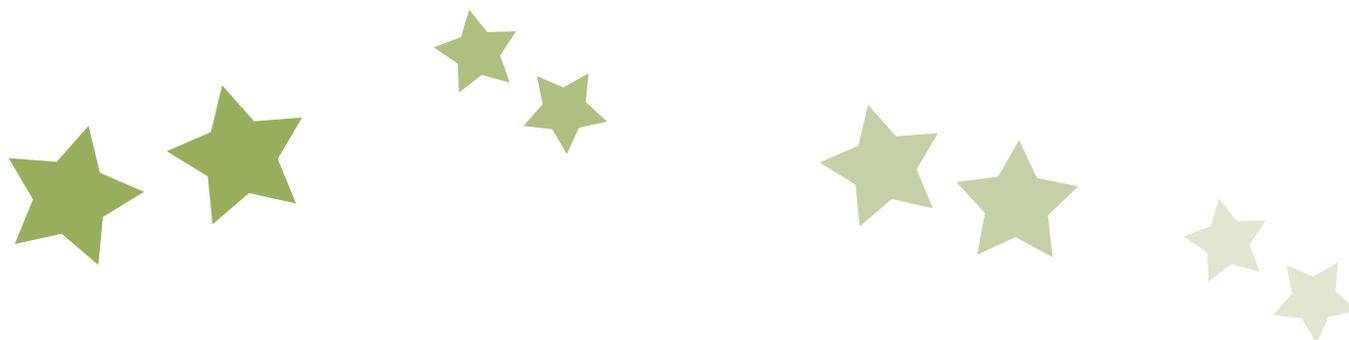
Developmental screening in early care & education settings in Rochester, NY

The City of Rochester contributed funding to a developmental screening initiative that reaches children in places where they already spend their time. The initiative trains local early care and education providers to conduct developmental screenings with accuracy and consistency. In addition, the training includes Tips for Talking with Families, with sample scripts and suggestions on what makes for successful reciprocal conversations, such as starting with the child's strengths, offering information on developmental milestones, discussing why developmental screening is important and having an open format that allows for ongoing questions and support when additional assessments or services are necessary.

TARGET 2.3

Mental health consultants support children with identified needs

Service providers in several Early Childhood-LINC communities – including home visitors, family support providers, early care and education providers and kindergarten teachers – partner with mental health consultants to more effectively serve families whose children have challenging behaviors, including those who have experienced or are at risk for a toxic stress response. For example, a preschool teacher might need support with strategies to manage disruptive behaviors in a child who was recently removed from his home and placed in foster care; or a child whose behavior has significantly regressed during the serious illness of her father. With coaching from a mental health consultant, the teacher can keep the child in the classroom and work with the family (parents, foster parents or other caregivers, as appropriate) on how to support the child and manage challenging behaviors at home.



TARGET 2.4

Family leadership in early care & education programs

The Parent Leadership Pathway is a parent-driven approach to family engagement in early care and education programs supported by Boston Children Thrive. It prioritizes collaborative decision-making between parents and professionals, sharing responsibility for children's learning and valuing each other as partners. This core strategy for improving the well-being of at-risk children provides opportunities and support for increased engagement of parents in leadership and decision-making as part of parent-led projects at the program and neighborhood level. All parents are engaged as partners in their children's programs, with opportunities for greater leadership through helping to plan, implement and evaluate neighborhood activities through the School Readiness Roundtable; stipended peer-to-peer parent outreach roles; and service on the Parent Leadership Exchange. Boston Children Thrive has a particular focus on providing equal access to leadership opportunities for families of color, low-income families, non-English-speaking families and families of children with special needs.

TARGET 2.5

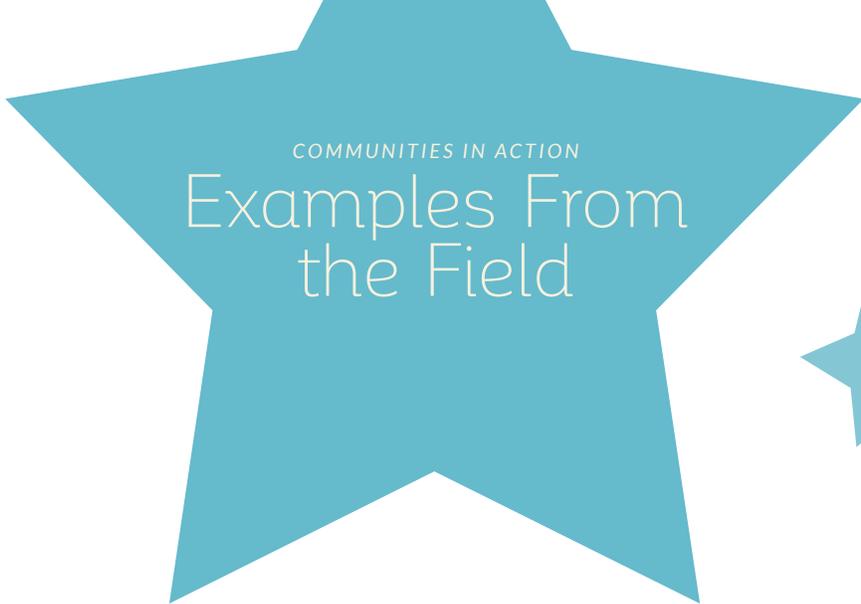
Supporting informal care providers in Denver, CO

In Denver, several partners including the Mayor's Office, Mile High United Way and Making Connections-Denver work together to improve supports for family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care providers. For example, a Play & Learn facilitated playgroup was launched in both English and Spanish for young children from infancy through age five and their caregivers. The city also created a Resource Facilitator Mentor program to help both Spanish and English-speaking early childhood providers improve the quality of care and become licensed. The mentor provides community-based technical assistance, mentoring, social network development, resources and health and safety training to FFN caregivers. Quality improvement funding was used to enhance the mentoring service to be more adaptive to the unique situation of informal caregivers and the cultural and linguistic diversity of the participants. As a result of the program, FFN providers who received coaching were more likely to purchase developmentally appropriate educational materials and curricula, address health and safety needs and improve communication and relationships with families.

TARGET 2.6

Common outcomes across funded programs in Palm Beach County, FL

The Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County, FL (CSCPBC) uses a Pathways approach that identifies a set of four goals for their work, with outcomes and strategies related to each of those goals. The countywide programs they fund report to CSCPBC on indicators and measures related to the Pathways outcomes and goals, which CSCPBC can then aggregate to assess progress toward the goals. In collaboration with program providers, and based on research, CSCPBC has identified measurement tools to use for a specific set of indicators. In other cases, grantees implementing evidence-based programs may use specific tools and measures specified by their program model. In order to assess the collective impact of CSC funded programs, robust internal and external data systems are utilized by both grantor and grantee to monitor progress toward goals, and support accountability. The data-driven Pathways approach allows CSCPBC to assess gaps in service and align programs to ensure that resources are supporting progress toward all of the goals.



TARGET 3.1

Preventing family homelessness in Orange County, CA

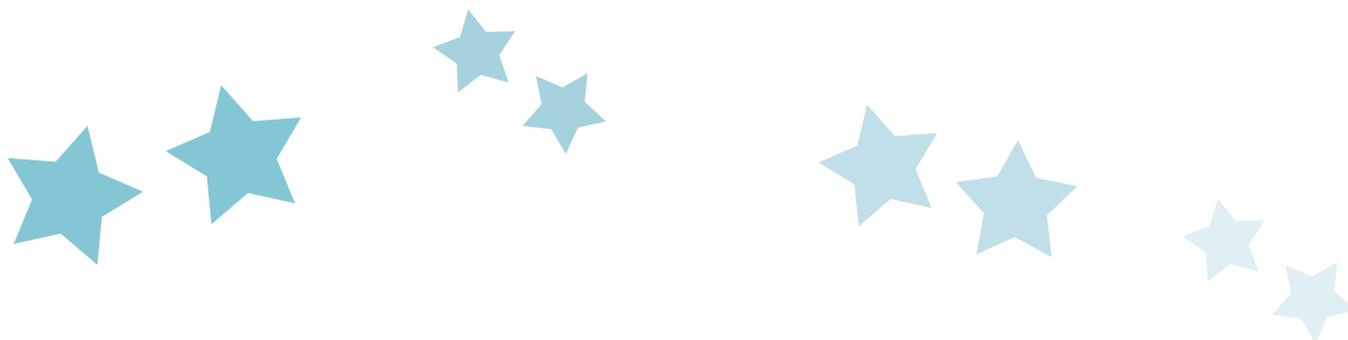
The Children and Families Commission of Orange County, CA, partnered with HomeAid Orange County to develop transitional and emergency shelter facilities for homeless children and their families. Between 2000 and 2015, in addition to adding 500 shelter beds to meet emergency needs, the Commission and HomeAid worked to help the county achieve a 35 percent reduction in the number of children that were unstably housed or at risk of homelessness.

TARGET 3.2

Connecting families in isolated neighborhoods to jobs, child care & transit in Atlantic County, NJ

Through the South Jersey Strengthening Families Initiative, the Pascale Sykes Foundation has dedicated resources to building up public transit options in the largely rural counties they serve. The foundation partnered with the County of Atlantic, the South Jersey Transportation Authority, the Family Service Association, NJ TRANSIT and the Cross County Connection Transportation Management Association to start the English Creek-Tilton Road Community Shuttle, based on community meetings where parents identified transportation as one of their greatest needs. Launched in 2012, the community shuttle runs regularly 14 hours a day, seven days a week to connect a number of apartment complexes, shopping centers, medical centers, office locations and a local shopping mall. Of passengers surveyed after the shuttle services were in operation for one year, 55 percent said they used the shuttle to get to and from work and 45 percent use it to connect to a NJ Transit bus, a service from which many residents were isolated prior to the community shuttle service.



**TARGET 3.2**

College savings accounts for newborns in Oakland, CA

Brilliant Baby is a two-generational approach spearheaded by Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf. Through this program, launched as a pilot in Fall 2016, babies born into poverty in Oakland will have a college savings account of \$500 opened in their names. New parents can also receive parenting support, financial coaching and the opportunity to earn financial awards as they take steps to promote their children's well-being. The goal of Brilliant Baby is to serve all families in need in Oakland within the next decade.

TARGET 3.3

Creating an Early Childhood Hub & building a sense of community in the Castlemont Corridor in Oakland, CA

A group of community organizations, including First 5 Alameda, worked together to create an Early Childhood Hub in a neighborhood facing a number of challenges. The hub, called Room to Bloom, is located at a youth center called Youth UpRising, adjacent to a new charter elementary school. Families with young children have access to a variety of parent and child activities, services and/or programs there at various times throughout the week. Families are also connected to leadership opportunities and additional community resources, including Play & Learn groups, parenting education, Parent Cafés and referrals to community resources such as entitlement programs, mental health and public health services and economic self-sufficiency programs. The services of the Early Childhood Hub are guided by CSSP's Strengthening Families framework of family protective factors.



TARGET 4.1

Cradle to K Cabinet in Minneapolis, MN

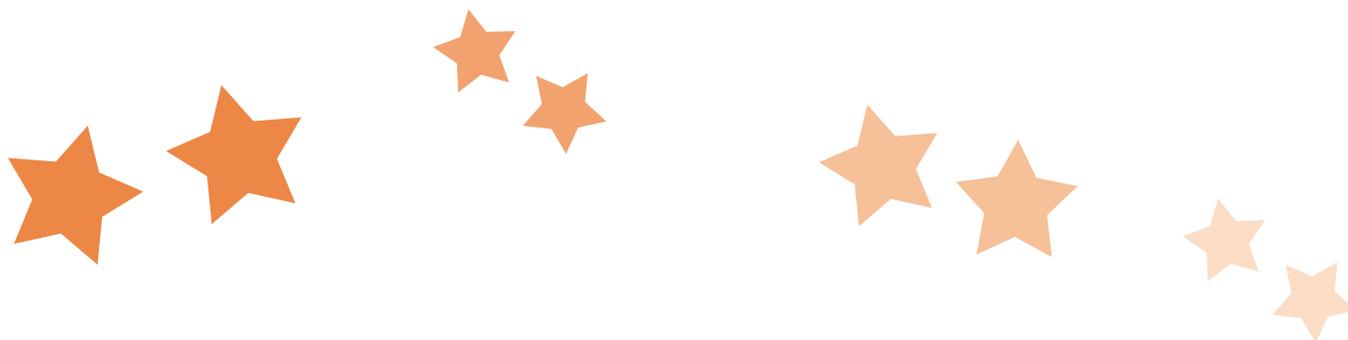
In Minneapolis, former Mayor Betsy Hodges' Cradle to K Cabinet explicitly focused on eliminating race- and place-based disparities. The cabinet focused on early experiences, stable housing and quality early care and education. After a series of meetings and community forums, the Cabinet published the Cradle to K Cabinet Plan to Address Early Childhood Disparities in Minneapolis. The mayor made a point to circle back to the Cradle to K framework when making policy decisions across the city. Whether planning for public housing or working with the sanitation department, the mayor emphasized the importance of considering the implications of decisions on the city's youngest residents.

TARGET 4.1

Master plan for early childhood development in Pasadena, CA

Pasadena, CA released a policy framework for early childhood in 2015 that was developed by the city's human services commission and approved by the city council. This report includes background on early childhood-related policy in Pasadena, local context of the city and an eight-part master plan. Part of the master plan includes creating an independent Office of the Young Child, and hiring a coordinator for early childhood development to implement the master plan in the community.





TARGET 4.2

Family-friendly workplace policies in Kansas City, MO

In Kansas City, MO, Mayor Sly James hosted a screening of the documentary *Raising of America* with the local chamber of commerce, United Way of Greater Kansas City and the local Women's Foundation. This screening launched a discussion and a call to action to promote family-friendly workplace policies in businesses across the city. Prior to the public screening, Mayor James was personally inspired by the film to push for paid parental leave for city employees, and at the event, the city manager announced a new policy to provide city employees with six weeks of paid parental leave.

TARGET 4.3

Child impact statements that shape legislation in Memphis, TN

Memphis and Shelby County, TN used a decision aid designed specifically to put children first in policy planning and decision-making. The web-based application known as SHELBY (Safety, Health, Education and Land Use Decisions on Behalf of Children and Youth) was used for researching, drafting, sharing and publishing/distributing child impact statements. It was used by the governments of Memphis and Shelby County to draft approximately 150 child impact statements from 2009 to 2014 helping elected officials, county administrators, boards and agency staff investigate the connections, or conflicts, between child well-being and the legislation they considered. The application's prompts, examples and information resources helped users identify disparities, plan new initiatives, consider the risks and benefits of proposed actions and develop alternatives throughout the policy planning process.

APPENDIX A

ACTION GUIDE

At-A-Glance

This high-level summary of the Early Learning Community Action Guide is an easy way to share the building blocks, targets and levels with current or potential partners, to inform your strategic planning or to remind people of the big picture. It can also be a handy way for you and other stakeholders to visually track your current status and areas of focus.



BUILDING BLOCK #1

Community Leadership, Commitment & Public Will to Make Early Childhood a Priority

1.1 Local leaders work together across systems with a focus on early childhood

LEVEL 1 ■

A group of stakeholders committed to early childhood meets regularly to identify areas of overlap and possible areas of future work.

LEVEL 2 ■■

A group of community members and representatives from a wide variety of organizations and institutions are jointly working toward a shared vision and common goals.

LEVEL 3 ■■■

A broad group of stakeholders with dedicated leadership and community input works together to promote the healthy development of young children.

1.2 The community invests in young children and families

LEVEL 1 ■

The community uses its available resources, including existing funding streams, to effectively support families and promote healthy development.

LEVEL 2 ■■

Community and early childhood partners work together to identify points of intersection to use existing funds and resources creatively as well as to find new funding sources.

LEVEL 3 ■■■

The community's support for early childhood is formalized, and support for the families who need it most (including families with low incomes, families of color, immigrant and refugee families and families with LGBTQ members) is prioritized.

1.3 Community members support and understand the importance of early childhood health, learning, and well-being

LEVEL 1 ■

Information about developmental science, early health and learning and parenting is disseminated to the community with messages that are accessible and relevant to members of different cultural groups.

LEVEL 2 ■■

Families and the entire community are engaged in a conversation about the importance of early childhood well-being and what families need and want to succeed. This should go beyond one-sided messaging.

LEVEL 3 ■■■

Everywhere families go, they receive culturally relevant messages about early childhood health, learning and well-being.

1.4 A rich network of informal supports is available for all families

LEVEL 1 ■

Community leaders understand who does and who does not have access to informal supports and what the barriers are to building those informal supports in the community.

LEVEL 2 ■■

The community is rich with opportunities for families to make connections.

LEVEL 3 ■■■

Mechanisms are in place for all parents and families, especially families who are often more isolated, to make connections with each other. Every neighborhood has safe places for people to make connections.

1.5 Community resources for children and families are well known, accessible and easy to use

LEVEL 1 ■

An up-to-date directory is available and accessible for all families to find services and for service providers to refer families to additional services and resources.

LEVEL 2 ■■

Non-traditional partners are aware of and use the directory to make referrals. Barriers that prevent families from accessing care are addressed.

LEVEL 3 ■■■

A “no wrong door” approach is used by public service and community organization staff to connect families with appropriate services even if the service isn’t available directly through their agency or organization.



BUILDING BLOCK #2

Quality Services that Work for All Young Children and their Families

2.1 Families have access to high-quality, basic services that proactively promote and support health, learning and family strengths

LEVEL 1

City or county leadership have a comprehensive overview of the quality of services available throughout the community and whose needs are not being met.

LEVEL 2

Leaders, residents and service providers work together to increase access to high-quality services for underserved families.

LEVEL 3

Quality services are available throughout the community and easily accessible to residents of historically underserved neighborhoods.

2.2 All children receive routine screening, identification, referral and linkage for risks and needs

LEVEL 1

Providers are trained in administering screenings and know where to refer families when concerns are identified. Populations that aren't receiving screenings are identified and efforts are made to reach them more effectively.

LEVEL 2

Residents have access to screening and referral services throughout the community.

LEVEL 3

A centralized point of intake is available for referrals and follow-up.

2.3 Children and families at risk and those with identified needs have timely access to more intensive services

LEVEL 1

Early intervention and prevention services are available in multiple settings throughout the community.

LEVEL 2

Support is available for families to advocate for themselves as they navigate through systems.

LEVEL 3

Families experience a seamless system of supports in response to identified needs.

2.4 Families and parents are actively engaged as partners

LEVEL 1

All child and family service providers receive training and support to help them approach parents as partners

LEVEL 2

Parent leadership is integrated into every sector of the early childhood system.

LEVEL 3

Parent leadership and resident engagement are the established norm throughout the community, including for government and government-funded activities.

2.5 Supports are in place for service providers

LEVEL 1

Professional development and workforce supports are provided across sectors to improve quality and reduce turnover.

LEVEL 2

A variety of opportunities are available for providers to get support to improve their practice, meet quality standards and advance their careers.

LEVEL 3

Attention is paid to issues related to the early childhood workforce, including diversity, fair compensation and career pathways.

2.6 Leaders use data to drive change

LEVEL 1

Leaders within and across child- and family-serving systems have agreed on shared language and committed to common outcomes for children and families.

LEVEL 2

Agencies and programs share data with each other to advance their work toward shared outcomes.

LEVEL 3

Data is used to inform quality improvement efforts across sectors to meet identified needs and reach shared goals.

3 BUILDING BLOCK #3 Neighborhoods Where Families Can Thrive

3.1 The built environment promotes safety and allows families to access basic services in their neighborhoods and beyond

LEVEL 1 ■

Plans are in place to address neighborhood issues, including safety concerns identified by families as well as access to basic services throughout the community.

LEVEL 2 ■■

Proposals and policies are designed in a way that address gaps and concerns identified by residents, with a focus on residents' priorities and desired outcomes.

LEVEL 3 ■■■

Regardless of neighborhood, families have access to basic services and feel safe in the community, and residents are regularly consulted by policymakers to ensure their needs and priorities continue to be met.

3.2 Economic and employment opportunities are available to all

LEVEL 1 ■

There is an understanding of how public and private investments are currently allocated across the community.

LEVEL 2 ■■

Investments, training and education are targeted to underserved areas, and policies are designed to improve economic mobility and ensure that families are able to meet their basic needs.

LEVEL 3 ■■■

Residents have access to opportunities for economic mobility and stability, regardless of neighborhood.

3.3 Residents feel a sense of belonging and hope within neighborhoods and connection to the broader community

LEVEL 1 ■

Community members are supported to make changes in their own neighborhoods to address identified needs.

LEVEL 2 ■■

Leadership incorporates and is responsive to voices of community residents.

LEVEL 3 ■■■

Leaders and policymakers provide support for community-led organizing, prioritizing resident-led change.

BUILDING BLOCK #4 Policies that Support and Are Responsive to Families

4.1 Policies that govern child and family services are equitable and responsive to families

LEVEL 1 ■

Local leaders take families' needs and experiences into account in their administration of federal and state policy.

LEVEL 2 ■■

Administrative and policy innovations are implemented across sectors to ensure that the needs of all children and families are met.

LEVEL 3 ■■■

Policies are aligned across systems and are responsive to the diverse and changing needs of families.

4.2 Workplace and other policies support families in raising children

LEVEL 1 ■

Employers are informed about their responsibilities and understand family-friendly policies. Existing rights and legal protections are publicized and well known to both workers and employers.

LEVEL 2 ■■

Public systems have adopted policies that ensure access to family-friendly work environments.

LEVEL 3 ■■■

Employers are supported and incentivized to enact family-friendly employment policies, and strong enforcement of local policies ensures working families are protected.

4.3 Land use and community development policies are designed with consideration for how they affect young children and families

LEVEL 1 ■

There is an understanding that land use and development affect children and families, including a recognition that such policies have resulted in underinvestment in some neighborhoods.

LEVEL 2 ■■

Cross-sector efforts ensure the needs of young children and their families are met in every aspect of community design, including housing, transportation, health and dental care and other important systems that serve families.

LEVEL 3 ■■■

A formalized process is in place to take into account the impact on children and families of all land use and community development policies.

APPENDIX B

ACTION GUIDE

Progress Rating Tool

Use the Progress Rating Tool to assess where your community is on its journey to becoming an Early Learning Community and reaching each of the targets. For each level, assess your community's progress on a scale of 1-5:

- 1 indicates you are just getting started, which may mean that completing this Progress Rating Tool is your very first step.
- 3 indicates that you are making progress and have taken action to achieve the target.
- 5 means you are well on your way, which may even mean that you feel you have achieved this level.

Support your assessment by checking off which actions your community has already taken at this level. If you have taken an action that isn't listed, write it in. Then, select or write in action steps you can take to reach new levels, noting your plans in the column to the right. You can use the "notes" sections throughout the Progress Rating Tool to go into more detail on your current status. You can pull those "planned action steps" into your Action Plan in Appendix C.

As you complete the Progress Rating Tool, keep in mind the key considerations of this work: attention to equity, family partnerships and a focus on results.

- Are your efforts benefiting ALL children and families? Are some families, neighborhoods or population groups left out, underserved or disconnected from the rest of the community? Does your leadership group consistently check in on closing gaps in opportunity, access and outcomes? Are the voices of a diverse group of community members helping to inform the work?
- Are parents and families engaged as partners and leaders in improving their own communities? From service providers through the leadership of your early childhood system, are families seen as valuable partners and agents for change?
- Are the leaders of this work keeping an eye on the North Star, "All Children Thrive," and assessing whether your efforts are improving outcomes? Are you consulting the data on a regular basis and adjusting your efforts when needed?

1

BUILDING BLOCK #1

Community Leadership, Commitment and Public Will to Make Early Childhood a Priority

HOW HAS YOUR COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATED PROGRESS TOWARD THIS LEVEL?
WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU INTEND TO TAKE TO REACH THIS LEVEL?

TARGET	LEVEL AND PROGRESS	✓ COMPLETED	ADD TO ACTION PLAN
<p>1.1 Local leaders work together across systems with a focus on early childhood.</p>	<p>LEVEL 1 A group of stakeholders committed to early childhood meets regularly to identify areas of overlap and possible areas of future work.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┴-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Hold multiple listening sessions across the city or county, using community liaisons to recruit broad participation, to learn what the community wants for children and what their aspirations are for their community. Foster a culture of trust, respect and inclusion to ensure you receive authentic feedback. All members of the community must feel free to share their own opinions, experiences and ideas and feel recognized and accepted for who they are. <input type="checkbox"/> Activate an existing group of stakeholders or host a community-wide early learning summit to identify partners who would be willing to serve. The local United Way may be able to help identify potential partners. Parents of young children and early care and education providers from the community should be included in this group. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider who is not at the table and ensure that representation is equitable and inclusive. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish regular and open lines of communication between a core group of stakeholders and top community leaders, such as the mayor or county executive. <input type="checkbox"/> Have each provider and community organization identify how they influence families' lives and identify overlaps and gaps. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	<p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>LEVEL 2 A group of community members and representatives from a wide variety of organizations and institutions are jointly working toward a shared vision and common goals.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┴-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> After extensive outreach and multiple conversations with a diverse set of community members, develop a shared vision and shared goals among a core group of stakeholders committed to moving the work forward. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify a few discrete areas to focus joint action. Create working groups or subcommittees around these areas. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish regular and open lines of communication between a core group of stakeholders and top community leaders, such as the mayor or county executive. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate how different partners' organizational and programmatic strategies and goals intersect. Consider aligning plans across the community to work on shared goals. For example, align the city plan with the school district's plan or the community development plan. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	<p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>LEVEL 3 A broad group of stakeholders with dedicated leadership and community input works together to promote the healthy development of young children.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┴-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Formalize the administration of this group of stakeholders with a coordinator at an existing non-profit – or create an office of early learning or young children at the city or county level. Identify funding for the sustainability of this position or office. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that the partnership is diverse and representative of the community. It should include regular and routine input from families and sectors beyond early childhood that impact families such as transportation and workforce. Representation should be equitable and inclusive of folks from different backgrounds, neighborhoods, socioeconomic statuses, races and ethnicities. <input type="checkbox"/> Sign commitment letters or memoranda of understanding to formalize the partnership and demonstrate each organization or individual's staff, financial and in-kind commitments. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	<p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>



BUILDING BLOCK #1

Community Leadership, Commitment and Public Will to Make Early Childhood a Priority

HOW HAS YOUR COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATED PROGRESS TOWARD THIS LEVEL?
WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU INTEND TO TAKE TO REACH THIS LEVEL?

TARGET	LEVEL AND PROGRESS	✓ COMPLETED	ADD TO ACTION PLAN
<p>1.3 Community members support and understand the importance of early childhood health, learning and well-being</p>	<p>LEVEL 1 Information about developmental science, early health and learning and parenting is disseminated to the community with messages that are accessible and relevant to members of different cultural groups.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Post information about child development and available services in all city and county buildings and cultural and community centers. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that elected officials and other high level city and county staff understand and talk about the importance of early childhood in speaking engagements both with community members and with other stakeholders such as business leaders and agency heads. Pass a resolution in local government demonstrating community support for early childhood. <input type="checkbox"/> Host story times in libraries and recreation centers in languages spoken in the community for different age groups with developmentally appropriate books and activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Align messaging across agencies and groups to reduce confusion and conflicting messages. <input type="checkbox"/> Assess how families are acquiring and viewing information. Optimize online materials for viewing on smartphones. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
	<p>LEVEL 2 Families and the entire community are engaged in a conversation about the importance of early childhood well-being and what families need and want to succeed. This should go beyond one-sided messaging.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Host co-created community events, such as a parent night at public housing complexes or a public recreation center, with a focus on child and family well-being. Consider including a “parents and caregivers only” portion where they might learn about brain development and family portions where caregivers can try out activities with their children that promote development and well-being. Working with families to co-create these events will make them more successful. Tip: Providing food and child care goes a long way in allowing families to participate. <input type="checkbox"/> Host “film nights” with documentaries and films related to early childhood to spark conversation. <input type="checkbox"/> Host ongoing trainings for providers from a variety of fields to help them learn about child development, new strategies for encouraging healthy development and how to engage with parents and families, including recognizing parents’ expertise about their own children, families and communities. <input type="checkbox"/> Invite faith-based communities to consider what they can do to support families in promoting healthy child development, including hosting the types of events described here. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
	<p>LEVEL 3 Everywhere families go, they receive culturally relevant messages about early childhood health, learning and well-being.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Promote brain-building moments throughout the community with multi-platform tools such as Vroom and Talk Read Sing. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider who you can partner with to disseminate your message (such as local public radio and television stations) and how and when you already touch families with young children (when they pay bills, at the library, in public housing, at local medical clinics). Encourage businesses to think about how they can post materials in their offices both for employees and customers. For instance, grocery stores can post brain development information or activities on their shopping carts. <input type="checkbox"/> Partner with parent leaders to develop an advocacy campaign that shows the importance of investing in early childhood and how the investment benefits everyone in the community. <input type="checkbox"/> Reach out to “unusual suspects” or groups that have influence such as seniors, the business community or civic organizations. <input type="checkbox"/> Use a “Children in All Policies” or “Children First” approach to promote awareness of how all policies affect children and to endorse the commitment the community has made to children and their well-being. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	



BUILDING BLOCK #1

Community Leadership, Commitment and Public Will to Make Early Childhood a Priority

HOW HAS YOUR COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATED PROGRESS TOWARD THIS LEVEL?
WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU INTEND TO TAKE TO REACH THIS LEVEL?

TARGET	LEVEL AND PROGRESS	✓ COMPLETED	ADD TO ACTION PLAN
<p>1.4 A rich network of informal supports is available for all families</p>	<p>LEVEL 1 Community leaders understand who does and who does not have access to informal supports and what the barriers are to building those informal supports in the community.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct a needs assessment and landscape analysis at the neighborhood and district level. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask community and cultural organizations with strong ties to the community for their insight into opportunities, gaps and barriers for families to build their social connections. <input type="checkbox"/> Invite parents and caregivers to give their input on needs and opportunities to reduce social isolation through surveys, focus groups or going to door to door. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a community map of safe places where families can and do gather. <input type="checkbox"/> If there are places where families could gather but don't – such as an unused playground in a neighborhood park – engage residents to find out what is keeping them from going there and what could be done to get families to start using that space. <input type="checkbox"/> Other 	
	<p>LEVEL 2 The community is rich with opportunities for families to make connections.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ask residents what kind of opportunities they would like to see to build social connections, and engage them in co-creating those opportunities. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a space for residents to come together to create solutions that will work. <input type="checkbox"/> Use a "snowball" approach where each parent who participates agrees to bring at least one more parent to the next meeting or event. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide community "mini-grants" for neighborhood groups or community-based organizations to carry out community engagement efforts. <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate connections and information sharing by organizing local groups on social media platforms, online tools or group-messaging programs. <input type="checkbox"/> Other 	
	<p>LEVEL 3 Mechanisms are in place for all parents and families, especially families who are often more isolated, to make connections with each other. Every neighborhood has safe places for people to make connections.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create groups for new parents to come together for support in the early months and beyond. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish dad groups to engage fathers in the early development of their children and form connections with other dads in their community. <input type="checkbox"/> Convene parent advisory groups made up of parents and caregivers from different neighborhoods, races and ethnicities. These are the groups that should determine what activities are carried out in their neighborhoods to best engage more isolated parents. <input type="checkbox"/> Support community-based groups to host a series of Parent Cafes or Community Cafes, with residents facilitating the conversation. Parents engaged in planning and facilitating cafes are the best ambassadors to recruit isolated families to join in. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish Family Resource Centers to provide opportunities for parents and caregivers to come together. Consider co-locating such centers with other services including early care and education. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	

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BUILDING BLOCK #1

Community Leadership, Commitment and Public Will to Make Early Childhood a Priority

HOW HAS YOUR COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATED PROGRESS TOWARD THIS LEVEL?
WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU INTEND TO TAKE TO REACH THIS LEVEL?

TARGET	LEVEL AND PROGRESS	✓ COMPLETED	ADD TO ACTION PLAN
<p>1.5 Community resources for children and families are well known, accessible and easy to use</p>	<p>LEVEL 1 An up-to-date directory is available and accessible for all families to find services and for service providers to refer families to additional services and resources.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>[----- -----]</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create online and hard copy versions of the directory and ensure that they are updated at least once a year by giving listed organizations and providers an opportunity to edit their contact information and services offered. <input type="checkbox"/> Visit early care and education centers to show providers and families how to use the directory. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage the local information and referral providers to invest in an easy-to-use mobile interface for their online service directory. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
	<p>LEVEL 2 Non-traditional partners are aware of and use the directory to make referrals. Barriers that prevent families from accessing care are addressed.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>[----- -----]</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Host trainings for partners such as health care providers, clergy members and business owners on how to use the directory and make referrals. <input type="checkbox"/> Address practices and policies that stigmatize families who seek support. Ask families about sources of stigma and their experiences with different service providers. Incorporate a way for parents and caregivers to rate and/or review the services and resources listed in the directory. <input type="checkbox"/> Hold listening sessions to learn root causes of the barriers to accessing needed services. <input type="checkbox"/> Assess language needs among families in the community. Make language services available to families whose primary language is not English, and translate marketing and application materials. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
	<p>LEVEL 3 A “no wrong door” approach is used by public service and community organization staff to connect families with appropriate services even if the service isn’t available directly through their agency or organization.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>[----- -----]</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Promote implementation of this approach by training support staff who interact with families, such as bus drivers and front desk staff. <input type="checkbox"/> When possible, streamline application processes for services, using just one application for the different services a family might need. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage parents and other family members to become ambassadors in spreading the word about these services, compensating them for their time and expertise. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider co-locating several social services into one location where families can access the resources they need to be successful. This one-stop shop can promote efficiency, leverage resources and support families. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	

2 BUILDING BLOCK #2

Quality Services that Work for All Young Children and their Families

HOW HAS YOUR COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATED PROGRESS TOWARD THIS LEVEL?
WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU INTEND TO TAKE TO REACH THIS LEVEL?

TARGET	LEVEL AND PROGRESS	✓ COMPLETED	ADD TO ACTION PLAN
<p>2.1 Families have access to high-quality, basic services that proactively promote and support health, learning and family strengths</p>	<p>LEVEL 2 Leaders, residents and service providers work together to increase access to high-quality services for underserved families.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 1 2 3 4 5 </p> <p style="text-align: center;"> Just getting started Making progress Well on our way </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Establish incentives for service providers (e.g., early care and education, mental health providers or anything else identified in gap analyses) to locate in areas of greater need or to better reach marginalized families, including supporting existing service providers to expand into additional neighborhoods or expand hours of operation to meet families' needs. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a cross-sector collaboration of providers in early care and education, health, social services and basic services in areas of most need, so providers may determine standards of quality and align services. Provide incentives or support for deeper collaboration, including cross-referral (with tracking for completion), data sharing and tracking of shared output and outcome measures. <input type="checkbox"/> Reach out to informal (family, friend and neighbor) child care providers to find out what support they need to provide the highest quality care, and help interested providers move toward licensing. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage co-location of programs and services to expand the range of services available in underserved neighborhoods. <input type="checkbox"/> Promote the importance of "medical homes" for young children, both by educating parents about the benefits of finding a consistent provider for their children, and by supporting health care providers to provide comprehensive services for the children and families they serve. <input type="checkbox"/> Implement a unified application and/or waitlist for early care and education programs so that parents only have to complete one application and get the first available spot that meets their needs. <input type="checkbox"/> Support early care and education providers in providing professional development to staff. Host citywide trainings for teachers and joint trainings for pre-k and kindergarten teachers. Consider how trainings can be accessible to in-home providers and centers without staff to cover classrooms during the day. <input type="checkbox"/> Implement high-quality preschool in a way that reaches underserved families and addresses gaps in school readiness. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
	<p>LEVEL 3 Quality services are available throughout the community and easily accessible to residents of historically underserved neighborhoods.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 1 2 3 4 5 </p> <p style="text-align: center;"> Just getting started Making progress Well on our way </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Invest in the development of an easily accessible service hub, anchored around a public entity such as a library with low-cost rental space available for other services such as a health clinic, child care center, legal aid office or family resource center. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop transportation solutions to help community residents access services located outside of their own neighborhoods. For example, consider using online messaging programs to help small cohorts of families develop plans for ridesharing to early learning centers or libraries. <input type="checkbox"/> Implement full service community schools in underserved neighborhoods, including family support and early childhood services. <input type="checkbox"/> Measure parent and caregiver satisfaction with various programs or agencies. Improving "customer satisfaction" is an important step toward assessing and improving both access and quality. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	

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BUILDING BLOCK #2
 Quality Services that Work for
 All Young Children and their Families

HOW HAS YOUR COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATED PROGRESS TOWARD THIS LEVEL?
 WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU INTEND TO TAKE TO REACH THIS LEVEL?

TARGET	LEVEL AND PROGRESS	✓ COMPLETED	ADD TO ACTION PLAN
<p>2.2 All children receive routine screening, identification, referral and linkage for risks and needs</p>	<p>LEVEL 1 Providers are trained in administering screenings and know where to refer families when concerns are identified. Populations that aren't receiving screenings are identified and efforts are made to reach them more effectively.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Survey providers to find out how many, how regularly and where developmental screenings are being conducted to determine which children in the community are less likely to be screened. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that health care professionals, child care providers and home visitors have access to screening tools and are trained on how to administer them and communicate the results to parents and caregivers in a culturally responsive manner. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a directory of community resources, accessible to anyone who is administering screenings, to help guide referrals when needed. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify and engage Child Find and early intervention agencies to assess current services and provide outreach to families. <input type="checkbox"/> Assess whether stigma is a barrier for some families to accept or seek out screening, and work to reduce that stigma by communicating that screening is for everyone, that screening results will only be used to refer a child or family for additional support and that early intervention can reduce the need for other services later on. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	<p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>LEVEL 2 Residents have access to screening and referral services throughout the community.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Hire and train community liaisons to bring screenings to families who do not participate in formal child care or home visiting programs. <input type="checkbox"/> Make a variety of culturally responsive screening tools available for parents and informal care providers (family, friend and neighbor care providers) to check out from the library along with instructions for use and a directory of community resources for following up on identified concerns. <input type="checkbox"/> Educate parents about the importance of developmental screening (and their availability for children covered by Medicaid) and encourage them to seek it out through their pediatrician or other provider. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	<p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>LEVEL 3 A centralized point of intake is available for referrals and follow-up.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implement a citywide, countywide or regional phone number or website for referrals for use by providers, parents or anyone administering developmental screenings. <input type="checkbox"/> Track the number and types of referrals coming from different population groups and neighborhoods within the community, and use that data to focus services and/or outreach on populations identified as underserved. Track the proportion of referrals completed and the length of time to completion. <input type="checkbox"/> Have a cross-sector early childhood collaborative group monitor results for quality improvement of services and review of community needs. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	<p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>

2 BUILDING BLOCK #2

Quality Services that Work for All Young Children and their Families

HOW HAS YOUR COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATED PROGRESS TOWARD THIS LEVEL?
WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU INTEND TO TAKE TO REACH THIS LEVEL?

TARGET	LEVEL AND PROGRESS	✓ COMPLETED	ADD TO ACTION PLAN
<p>2.3 Children and families at risk and those with identified needs have timely access to more intensive services</p>	<p>LEVEL 1 Early intervention and prevention services are available in multiple settings throughout the community.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Assess the extent to which families are currently able to access early intervention services. Are those services available to everyone who needs them? Are families of color able to access services equally? Are services provided in a way that meets families' needs? Are efforts underway to reduce the stigma of accessing services? Partner with local IDEA Part C early intervention agencies, which should have access to these types of data. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage collaboration between early intervention providers and child care providers so that children of working parents can receive therapeutic interventions and other needed services in the setting where they spend their days, when appropriate. <input type="checkbox"/> Hold listening sessions or meet one-on-one with system-involved families, or those identified as in need of services, to find out what they want for their families and what supports they need to achieve their goals. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
	<p>LEVEL 2 Support is available for families to advocate for themselves as they navigate through systems.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that community navigators (or promotoras) are available to conduct outreach, organize activities in select communities and assist families in accessing needed services – in paid positions if possible. <input type="checkbox"/> Hire parent mentors who have past involvement with the child welfare system to help parents with open cases navigate the system, understand the changes they need to make and access resources. <input type="checkbox"/> Translate communication materials into all languages spoken in the community and have interpreters available during events. To broaden your reach, consider using digital outreach as well. <input type="checkbox"/> Braid funding streams and services together to meet identified needs of the whole family, not just the child. For example, make it possible for a family support specialist at a family resource center to serve as a resource and referral specialist to help families find quality child care rather than handing them off to another entity for that support. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
	<p>LEVEL 3 Families experience a seamless system of supports in response to identified needs.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Fund providers to use Family Team Meetings or other family-centric approaches bringing family members, service providers and other key support people in the family's life together to work and plan how best to meet a family's needs. <input type="checkbox"/> Empower caseworkers from any system to serve as an advocate and central point of contact for families, including accessing services from other systems and/or for other family members once a relationship is established. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a protocol for warm handoffs from one system to another, for example from a caseworker to a home visitor, so that a trusted provider helps a family access additional services or transition to the next appropriate service when a case is closed <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	

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BUILDING BLOCK #2
Quality Services that Work for
All Young Children and their Families

HOW HAS YOUR COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATED PROGRESS TOWARD THIS LEVEL?
WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU INTEND TO TAKE TO REACH THIS LEVEL?

TARGET	LEVEL AND PROGRESS	✓ COMPLETED	ADD TO ACTION PLAN
<p>2.4 Families and parents are actively engaged as partners</p>	<p>LEVEL 1 All child and family service providers receive training and support to help them approach parents as partners.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>----- -----</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Give service providers from multiple systems access to training on empathy, effective family engagement methods and/or parent leadership, including content on implicit bias and other potential barriers to family engagement. <input type="checkbox"/> Employ the providers in your community who specialize in working with parents – such as parenting educators – to train and coach child-oriented providers. <input type="checkbox"/> When providing training on parent and family engagement, invite parents as co-trainers to model effective partnership, share their personal stories and demonstrate why approaching parents as partners makes a difference. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	<p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>LEVEL 2 Parent leadership is integrated into every sector of the early childhood system.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>----- -----</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Partner with existing parent leadership groups in your community, either to provide consultation on your processes or to recruit participants for a new advisory group. Check whether there are active parent groups connected to mutual support programs such as Circle of Parents or Parents Anonymous, affiliated with Head Start, schools or places of worship or formed around particular issues such as children with special health care needs. <input type="checkbox"/> Work with community-based organizations to host Parent Café or Community Café series to engage parents in meaningful conversations about their strengths and needs, and the needs and assets of their community. <input type="checkbox"/> Convene child- and family-serving professionals and leaders across sectors to discuss parent engagement strategies and learn from each other. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide coaching for leadership skill development and opportunities for parents to take action in their own lives and in partnership with other community members. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	<p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>LEVEL 3 Parent leadership and resident engagement are the established norm throughout the community, including for government and government-funded activities.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>----- -----</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create seats for parents and residents on city or county committees on issues related to early childhood, health care, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Require parent representation on decision-making bodies funded through city or county offices, such as the boards of family-serving non-profits. <input type="checkbox"/> Bring parents together with leaders of neighborhood associations, non-profits and the school system to identify challenges and then take on local projects to help improve the community. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	<p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>

2 BUILDING BLOCK #2

Quality Services that Work for All Young Children and their Families

HOW HAS YOUR COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATED PROGRESS TOWARD THIS LEVEL?
WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU INTEND TO TAKE TO REACH THIS LEVEL?

TARGET	LEVEL AND PROGRESS	✓ COMPLETED	ADD TO ACTION PLAN
<p>2.6 Leaders use data to drive change</p>	<p>LEVEL 1 Leaders within and across child- and family-serving systems have agreed on shared language and committed to common outcomes for children and families.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐ Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Explore potential frameworks to capture the outcomes all relevant systems can embrace and connect their work to, and adopt the language of that framework across systems. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify what data is available, whether it is of high quality (including whether it is disaggregated by race, income and other relevant demographic characteristics) and what major gaps in data exist. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a data agenda outlining the data you would like to have and who you would need to work with to obtain it. <input type="checkbox"/> Determine what data can be used to track progress and evaluate community needs, including data from non-early childhood focused sources, such as the US Census, the health system or criminal justice. <input type="checkbox"/> Engage parents and other community residents in the process of arriving at shared language and common outcomes, and enlist their help in determining how to communicate that information to the community. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
	<p>LEVEL 2 Agencies and programs share data with each other to advance their work toward shared outcomes.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐ Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a template for Memoranda of Understanding to articulate data sharing agreements among agencies and across systems. <input type="checkbox"/> Compile data from across systems and programs to identify disparate outcomes among particular neighborhoods, racial groups, income levels or other population groups, and adjust strategies accordingly. <input type="checkbox"/> Formalize the adoption of a shared outcomes framework by having programs and agencies publicly sign on to it and identify how their work helps children and families meet the identified goals. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider adopting a universal intake form for child- and family-serving programs and services to facilitate cross-referral and sharing of data and tracking of shared outcomes along with outputs. <input type="checkbox"/> Share outcomes and data with the community in an accessible, easy-to-understand format. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
	<p>LEVEL 3 Data is used to inform quality improvement efforts across sectors to meet identified needs and reach shared goals.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐ Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implement a unique identifier, assigned to each child and used across systems to facilitate data sharing and tracking. <input type="checkbox"/> Plan and carry out quality improvement efforts across systems with a focus on a particular outcome or indicator, including a focus on closing disparities among demographic groups. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a shared database for child and family service providers to contribute to and access, facilitating better cross-system coordination when families are involved with multiple systems. <input type="checkbox"/> Engage community residents in analyzing and interpreting data and developing strategies to reach shared goals. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	

3 BUILDING BLOCK #3

Neighborhoods Where Families Can Thrive

HOW HAS YOUR COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATED PROGRESS TOWARD THIS LEVEL?
WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU INTEND TO TAKE TO REACH THIS LEVEL?

TARGET	LEVEL AND PROGRESS	✓ COMPLETED	ADD TO ACTION PLAN
<p>3.2 Economic and employment opportunities are available to all</p>	<p>LEVEL 1 There is an understanding of how public and private investments are currently allocated across the community.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>----- -----</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use asset mapping to identify neighborhoods where economic investment is needed and areas of concentrated disadvantage (i.e., food deserts, areas of concentrated unemployment, areas with high levels of unbanked households, areas with reduced access to affordable high-quality early care and education). <input type="checkbox"/> Assess the availability and quality of workforce development resources, and analyze how workforce development policies and programs can be adapted to better suit the local job market and better prepare residents (particularly parents and caregivers) to succeed. <input type="checkbox"/> Collect and analyze data on participation in income support programs within neighborhoods, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, and explore local options to increase participation. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
	<p>LEVEL 2 Investments, training and education are targeted to underserved areas, and policies are designed to improve economic mobility and ensure that families are able to meet their basic needs.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>----- -----</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Direct public investment toward underinvested neighborhoods to improve access to education and job training, and improve availability of stable jobs with living wages for local families. <input type="checkbox"/> Work directly with residents to determine what barriers they face to employment and economic mobility, and design solutions accordingly. <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce barriers to employment for parents and caregivers by improving access to high-quality, affordable child care and strengthening public transportation systems. <input type="checkbox"/> Partner with workforce development agencies, businesses and education and training institutions to develop career pathways for high needs jobs in the region, including retraining for people who are currently unemployed and underemployed. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
	<p>LEVEL 3 Residents have access to opportunities for economic mobility and stability, regardless of neighborhood.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>----- -----</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Apply a two-generation approach to workforce development programs by aligning workforce development policies with policies governing child care subsidies to remove barriers for caregivers seeking further education or training. <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt a living wage that allows families to provide for their children, and index it to inflation to reduce income inequality. <input type="checkbox"/> Incentivize private investment in underinvested communities through tax incentives and subsidies to businesses that will provide needed services, stable employment and critical benefits like paid family, medical and sick leave to local families. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	

3 BUILDING BLOCK #3

Neighborhoods Where Families Can Thrive

HOW HAS YOUR COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATED PROGRESS TOWARD THIS LEVEL?
WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU INTEND TO TAKE TO REACH THIS LEVEL?

TARGET	LEVEL AND PROGRESS	✓ COMPLETED	ADD TO ACTION PLAN
<p>3.3 Residents feel a sense of belonging and hope within their neighborhoods and connection to the broader community</p>	<p>LEVEL 1 Community members are supported to make changes in their own neighborhoods to address identified needs.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Offer parent listening sessions or summits at a variety of accessible public spaces frequented by families, including libraries, schools and health centers, to engage families with each other and the community around topics of interest, while also informing providers and policymakers about families' needs and concerns. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop strong relationships with community groups that can help connect residents to local elected leaders. <input type="checkbox"/> Openly share information that will allow residents to be more engaged in the decision-making process, including data on how children are faring in the community and information on upcoming proposals. <input type="checkbox"/> Connect with city departments and local historical groups to learn about the history of neighborhoods and then provide opportunities to advocate for positive change. <input type="checkbox"/> Offer "mini-grants" for neighborhood groups to make improvements in their communities. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	<p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>LEVEL 2 Leadership incorporates and is responsive to voices of community residents.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create compensated decision-making roles for residents (and particularly parents and caregivers) and offer peer-mentoring opportunities to cultivate community leadership and encourage under-represented groups to participate in governance. <input type="checkbox"/> Partner with local community groups, community colleges and others who can provide training, peer support and tools to support and build the skills of parent leaders and activists within the community. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that the voices and feedback of parent and community leaders are incorporated from the earliest stages of decision-making processes, allowing residents to collectively take action to improve their neighborhood with the support of city leadership. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	<p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>LEVEL 3 Leaders and policymakers provide support for community-led organizing, prioritizing resident-led change.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide funding and support for neighborhood councils that allow residents to meet regularly, discuss concerns, propose solutions and take action. <input type="checkbox"/> Implement participatory budget processes that are resident-led, and allow community members' priorities to drive the allocation of discretionary funds in a city's budget. <input type="checkbox"/> Formalize parent and resident participation in decision-making by requiring city departments to have strategies in place to incorporate parent and caregiver voice around children's issues and other areas of concern. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	<p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>

4 BUILDING BLOCK #4

Policies that Support and Are Responsive to Families

HOW HAS YOUR COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATED PROGRESS TOWARD THIS LEVEL?
WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU INTEND TO TAKE TO REACH THIS LEVEL?

TARGET	LEVEL AND PROGRESS	✓ COMPLETED	ADD TO ACTION PLAN
<p>4.1 Policies that govern child and family services are equitable and responsive to families</p>	<p>LEVEL 1 Local leaders take families' needs and experiences into account in their administration of federal and state policy.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use tools like surveys and community listening sessions, to learn about families' needs in your community and their experiences accessing child and family services, including child care supports. Multiple formats to gather feedback and information should be used to reach a diversity of families. <input type="checkbox"/> Fully integrate parents and caregivers and child-serving providers into all relevant committees, task forces and workgroups where policy strategies that impact young children and their families are considered. Include stakeholders from different racial and ethnic groups - especially those most likely to be affected or those you are most interested in reaching - in the development of new policies and programs. Determine who is missing and how they can be engaged. <input type="checkbox"/> Explore how the community can use local discretion in the administration of state and federal resources to best meet the needs of young children and their families, including through the use of waivers and in the alignment of programs that serve overlapping populations. <input type="checkbox"/> Continuously train child care subsidy intake workers, family service workers and other staff who work directly with families on cultural and linguistic responsiveness, strengths-based family goal-setting and on how to work across service systems to meet families' full spectrum of needs. <input type="checkbox"/> Track and examine data on access and quality of services by race, ethnicity and other demographic characteristics to inform equitable policies and resource use. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
	<p>LEVEL 2 Administrative and policy innovations are implemented across sectors to ensure that the needs of all children and families are met.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implement policy and administrative innovations that improve continuity of access to services. For example, communities may be able to use local funds to cover lapses in child care subsidy eligibility to promote stability for children, working parents and child care providers. <input type="checkbox"/> Implement continuous improvement and feedback loops that include families and service providers to determine what is and isn't working well for children and families. <input type="checkbox"/> Examine local zoning policies to determine their impact on early care and education centers and adjust city zoning practices to support early care and education providers as business owners. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a linkage and referral system that seamlessly connects families to existing services in the community at the appropriate time. Memoranda of Understanding can be used between agencies and organizations to ensure services are provided seamlessly with a "no wrong door" approach. <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate cross-sector convenings (including health, education, housing, etc.) to address data sharing issues and promote cross-sector solutions to the challenges families face. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	

4 BUILDING BLOCK #4

Policies that Support and Are Responsive to Families

HOW HAS YOUR COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATED PROGRESS TOWARD THIS LEVEL?
WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU INTEND TO TAKE TO REACH THIS LEVEL?

TARGET	LEVEL AND PROGRESS	✓ COMPLETED	ADD TO ACTION PLAN
<p>4.2 Workplace and other policies support families in raising children</p>	<p>LEVEL 1 Employers are informed about their responsibilities and understand family-friendly policies. Existing rights and legal protections are publicized and well known to both workers and employers.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Assess who in the community currently offers and benefits from family-friendly employment policies (including paid family and medical leave, fair scheduling practices and access to lactation facilities) and who doesn't. <input type="checkbox"/> Highlight the successes of businesses in the community that are family-friendly employers. <input type="checkbox"/> Widely disseminate information about current rights and legal protections, including for pregnant workers and shift workers, throughout the community, in workplaces and in public spaces. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure working families have access to legal supports and advice to address any infringements upon their rights. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>LEVEL 2 Public systems have adopted policies that ensure access to family-friendly work environments.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure municipal and county governing bodies serve as a positive example by adhering to best practices in workplace policies, including by offering paid family and medical leave to all employees. <input type="checkbox"/> Work with the business community to implement family-friendly workplace policies that improve workplace environments for all workers, particularly those who are least likely to have access to paid leave or other protections. <input type="checkbox"/> Prioritize family-friendly employers when awarding local contracts, rewarding employers that have policies and procedures in place to support their employees' family-related needs. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>LEVEL 3 Employers are supported and incentivized to enact family-friendly employment policies, and strong enforcement of local policies ensures working families are protected.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implement local ordinances that support family-friendly workplaces, such as requiring employers to use fair scheduling practices, offer paid family and medical leave, comprehensive health insurance coverage and pay living wages to employees in the community. <input type="checkbox"/> Use tax breaks and subsidies to encourage businesses to adopt family-friendly policies. <input type="checkbox"/> Incentivize employers to report on how many families ultimately use family-friendly policies and benefits in order to identify any obstacles to utilizing these policies and benefits by race, ethnicity, gender, income or other characteristics. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

4 BUILDING BLOCK #4

Policies that Support and Are Responsive to Families

HOW HAS YOUR COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATED PROGRESS TOWARD THIS LEVEL?
WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU INTEND TO TAKE TO REACH THIS LEVEL?

TARGET	LEVEL AND PROGRESS	✓ COMPLETED	ADD TO ACTION PLAN
<p>4.3 Land use and community development policies are designed with consideration for how they affect young children and families</p>	<p>LEVEL 1 There is an understanding that land use and development affect children and families, including a recognition that such policies have resulted in underinvestment in some neighborhoods.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Examine how public investments in community development projects are currently allocated across the community, whether residents' priorities are addressed by those investments and how land use policies impact different neighborhoods. <input type="checkbox"/> Use surveys, listening sessions at public spaces frequented by families and other tools to learn about families' needs and desires for the community and obstacles they face to accessing safe, affordable housing, public transportation, nutritious and affordable foods, health and dental care and other community resources. <input type="checkbox"/> Use asset mapping to better understand how access to community resources, community safety and environmental conditions - like affordable housing, public transportation, food, affordable high-quality early care and education, safe pedestrian corridors, safe and accessible public spaces and health care - varies among neighborhoods leading to conditions where some children and families are disconnected from resources and opportunities that are available to those in other neighborhoods. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider how changes to zoning and building codes can encourage developers to consider the well-being of children and families. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
	<p>LEVEL 2 Cross-sector efforts ensure the needs of young children and their families are met in every aspect of community design, including housing, transportation, food, health and dental care and other important systems that serve families.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create multi-sector coalitions (that include families) that can help inform more effective and equitable policy development and implementation. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider how public spaces and buildings can be used to co-locate services from different systems that serve overlapping populations, and identify existing policies and regulations that pose barriers to co-located services. <input type="checkbox"/> Designate city or county staff with early childhood expertise to advise decision-makers in public and private systems about how their decisions will impact young children and their families. <input type="checkbox"/> Gauge the success of efforts to make policies more supportive and responsive to families by tracking community listening sessions, monitoring the number of proposals that were driven by resident-identified needs or asking residents to assess the degree to which residents' and parents' voices are actively and authentically integrated into policy development and implementation. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
	<p>LEVEL 3 A formalized process is in place to take into account the impact on children and families of all land use and community development policies.</p> <p>---- HAS THE COMMUNITY REACHED THIS LEVEL? ----</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>┌-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┬-----┐</p> <p>Just getting started Making progress Well on our way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Formalize the consistent use of child or family impact statements in all land use and community development policies. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that child impact statements and other formal tools also consider disparate outcomes based on race, ethnicity, immigration status, income and other demographic characteristics. For example, if high-quality affordable child care facilities are concentrated in one area of the city, who is disproportionately harmed? <input type="checkbox"/> Require review of land use and community development plans by city or county staff with early childhood expertise, and include the voice of families in the planning process. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	

APPENDIX C

ACTION PLANNING TEMPLATE

Action Planning Template

Use this action plan template to help you move from completing the Progress Rating Tool to action. The North Star and the desired outcomes should guide the actions you choose. Use the “Getting Started” questions to jumpstart your planning process. It is important for everyone involved in the action planning process to have a shared understanding of the context, the vision for the community, and the current reality. It is also important for stakeholders to think about the commitment they are willing to make toward achieving the vision, goals and outcomes, and understand the commitments others are willing to make.

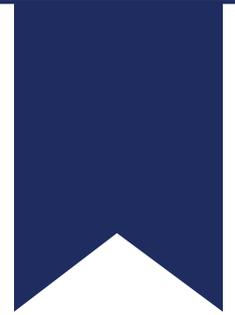
In the table, action planners can identify the targets on which they want to focus and choose actions that will help the community meet those targets. Use the Early Learning Community Action Guide to help you think of actions you might want to take. Your community may create other actions that are unique to your early childhood system.

You can print the blank template and work on as many building blocks and targets as needed.

THE NORTH STAR: All Children Thrive

Desired Outcomes:

- Pregnant women and young children are healthy
- Children are ready to succeed in school
- Children live in safe, stable and nurturing families and communities



GETTING STARTED

The Context

Who is involved in implementing this action plan?

What is the overall goal of your action plan?

When (what is the timeline for implementation)?

How will this action plan help you accomplish your goal?

Your Community's Vision

What does it look like when you achieve your goal? Imagine the day after you've completed all your actions and achieved your goal.

Current Reality

What are the strengths of the team that will lead you to accomplish your goal?

What are the weaknesses of the team that are barriers to your goal?

What are the potential dangers of succeeding?

What are the potential benefits of pursuing these actions?

Commitments

In light of the current reality, what is the group willing to commit to?

Glossary

Asset mapping: A process to identify the strengths and resources of a community. It is used to see where these resources are and begin a conversation about how they can be used, leveraged and/or built upon to address community needs.

Blend and braid: Using funds from different sources to support a service. Blended funds are when two or more separate funding sources are used together to pay for program services. In blending, costs are not necessarily allocated and tracked by individual funding source. Braided funds are when two or more funding sources are coordinated to support the total cost of services. In braiding, providers must keep track of the costs covered by each funding source.

Built environment: The human-made surroundings where people live, work and play and how they travel between destinations: homes, apartment complexes, office buildings, sidewalks, streets, infrastructure, parks, etc.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): A federally-funded program administered by the states that provides assistance to child and adult care entities to provide nutritious foods.

Child care subsidies: A federally funded program that provides assistance to low-income families to pay for child care needs. Eligibility and size of subsidy vary by state.

Child/family impact statement: A tool to determine the impact of a policy on children and families at the policy development stage. The goal is to protect children's interests in policy making and identify any effects early.

Child Find: Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Child Find is the legal requirement that schools find all children who have disabilities. School districts must have a process to identify and evaluate children who may need early intervention or special education services.

Children in All Policies/Children First: An approach to decision making that considers how any one policy or practice change will affect the community's children.

Circle of Parents: A parent support group model where anyone in a parenting role can share ideas, resources, successes and challenges.

Community navigators/promotoras: A community member trained to help individuals navigate the human services and health systems to get the services they need.

Developmental screening: A way to monitor a child's developmental milestones and assess whether a child needs services to support his or her development. A number of tools are available for parents, physicians or other care providers to complete to assess a child's development, such as the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ).

Early care and education: Refers to child care and education of young children including pre-k, preschool, kindergarten and often the early grades of elementary school.

Early childhood system: The network of services and entities that touch children prenatal to age 8 and their families in a given community or state, including early care and education; health and mental health; and family supports.

Early intervention: The system of services that support young children with developmental delays or disabilities and their families.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC): A federal tax benefit for low to moderate-income working people. EITC reduces the amount of tax owed.

Equity in early childhood systems: Every child receives what he or she needs to be developmentally on track and prepare for kindergarten and life. Historically, access to high-quality care, education and other services has been lower in low-income neighborhoods. Equity would ensure that all children, regardless of race, socio-economic level and ability, have access to high-quality providers.

Family resource centers: A neighborhood-based facility where families can access formal and informal support, such as parenting education programs, job training, health and mental health services, child care, literacy and other city or county services.

Family Team Meetings: Planning and decision-making meetings with trained facilitators to determine goals, identify strengths and areas for improvement and find solutions to keep children safe and promote their well-being within a supportive family. Participants in Family Team Meetings may include parents, service providers and members of the family's informal support network, depending on the specific model being used.

Food desert: An area in which it is difficult to find affordable, high-quality fresh food, often occurring in low-income neighborhoods.

Health in All Policies: An approach to decision making that considers how any one policy or practice change will affect the overall health of people in a community.

Home visiting program: Programs that bring trained home visitors to support expectant parents and parents of children 0-5 in their own homes. Services can include providing information on child development, health and well-being as well as supporting and building the capacity of parents. A home visitor may also connect parents to other services and resources available in the community. Program structure varies widely depending on the implementing entity and the program model.

IDEA Part C: A federal grant program, part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), to assist states in implementing statewide early intervention services for infants and toddlers, ages birth through 2, with disabilities and their families.

Infant and early childhood mental health consultation (IECMHC): A consultation by a trained mental health professional with an early childhood teacher/provider focused on an individual child or on entire classroom environments to "infuse activities and interactions that promote healthy social and emotional development, and to prevent, identify, or reduce mental health challenges."

No Wrong Door approach: An approach to providing services that allows a family to approach any agency and receive the programs or services they need. Every entry point is a universal “door” to community services and government programs.

Parent Cafes/Community Cafes: A series of structured small group conversations that bring parents together to discuss issues important to them. The goal is to directly engage parents in building the protective factors needed to prevent maltreatment and promote healthy outcomes for their children.

Parents Anonymous: A family strengthening organization focused on parent leadership and mutual support where parents and caregivers come together to create positive change, improve family functioning and provide emotional support to each other in a safe and caring environment.

Participatory budget process: A process of democratic decision-making in which residents decide how to allocate a portion of the public budget in a city allowing them to identify public spending projects and giving them power to direct how the money is spent.

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS): A system to rate the quality of early care and education providers to educate the public about the relative quality and adherence to safety and program standards by the provider. The ratings are also used to encourage providers to undertake continuous quality improvement of their programs, which can include professional development, trainings and financial incentives to achieve higher levels of quality.

Shared services: Shared services models in the early childhood field are a way for early care and education (ECE) providers to share some of the business functions of an ECE operation, including joint purchasing, staff sharing, centralized administration or coordinating program or capacity building including professional development, sharing tools and systems or continuous improvement processes.

Talk Read Sing: An early literacy campaign with tools and resources to encourage parents and families to talk, read and sing to babies and young children every day.

Trauma-informed policies and practices: An approach to care and services that takes into consideration the wide impact trauma can have on children and families in their care and supports them in their path to recovery.

Two-generation strategies: An approach to providing services that addresses needs of both the child and caregiver. It can include a range of services including family-centered services, child-centered services and adult-centered services. They often work to build the capacity of adults to care for children; provide ways to improve their education, work and economic opportunities; and build the strengths and resilience of families.

Warm handoff: A referral during which one provider introduces the client to another provider in person and in real time. The client can hear the information exchanged between providers. It engages the client in the process, improves communication among all parties and may encourage follow through by all parties.

Workforce registries: State-based systems that are intended to record the educational and training data of early care and education workers, including teachers, administrators, directors, owners, trainers and coaches. They also provide information on available trainings and professional development opportunities for the ECE workforce and offer a way for providers and teachers to keep track of their qualifications and credentials.

Vroom: A set of tools and resources to provide families with messages and tips to use everyday moments to improve cognitive, social and emotional development of young children.



EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITY
ACTION GUIDE

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