
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: BOYD
FROM: RILEY
SUBJECT: KENTUCKY'S *KIDS NOW* EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE
DATE 8/7/00
CC: FILE

Kentucky determined the need for its early childhood initiative based upon research that 90% of the brain's architectural structure is developed by age 3 and that critical periods of brain development occur in the first three years of life. Kentucky recognized that 1) every child must reach their full potential and grow into adults who are taxpayers, not tax users; 2) the next logical step in the state's education reform efforts was to address early childhood; and, 3) its children deserved better than to rank near the bottom of states in a number of critical areas.

Kentucky Governor Patton created the Governor's Early Childhood Task Force in March 1999 to develop a long-term strategy to enhance the opportunities for Kentucky's children to succeed as citizens and requested a 20-year plan to address this strategy. The task force developed work groups that reviewed children's needs throughout early childhood and held ten community forums across the state to receive public comments. The task force developed its recommendations around desired outcomes in the four following areas, with major initiatives in each area discussed. Total FY 01 allocations for all early childhood initiatives, in addition to those highlighted here, total \$25,275,000.

Assuring Maternal and Child Health

Folic acid campaign (budget allocation of \$2,030,600 in FY 01): An estimated 70% of neural tube defects and other birth defects area preventable through the administration of folic acid in the early prenatal period. Kentucky plans to provide preconceptional and prenatal vitamins, including folic acid, to local health departments for appropriate distribution and to develop a statewide public awareness campaign to increase the use of prenatal multivitamins that include folic acid. Kentucky anticipates program costs of \$4/woman for medication and an additional \$8/woman for education and counseling for approximately 125,000 low income women.

Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (budget allocation of \$1,100,800 in FY 01): All newborns will be screened for hearing loss prior to hospital discharge. Research indicates a strong association of hearing loss and developmental delays (speech,

language, social and cognitive skills). The average cost of \$20 per child for the screening is covered by KCHIP and by Medicaid for eligible populations.

Underinsured Vaccine Coverage (budget allocation of \$2,000,000 in FY 01): This initiative strives to provide children with their first vaccination while still in the newborn nursery at the hospital, with full immunization by age 2. The purchase of vaccines by using federal programs to cover the 17% of Kentucky underinsured who are non-Medicaid and non-KCHIP eligible will increase their access to immunization.

Eye Examinations Prior to School Entry (budget allocation of \$150,000 in FY 01): This initiative will legislate the requirement for all children to submit evidence of an eye examination (not a screening) no later than January 1 of the first year of public school entry. Funds are available for assistance to children who are neither Medicaid nor KCHIP eligible and who do not have sufficient resources to pay for the cost of an eye examination.

Supporting Families

Voluntary Home Visiting Program (budget allocation of \$5,586,700 in FY 01): This initiative will provide voluntary home visitations to first time parents who are at risk. Services focus on supporting the family, family-child interaction, child development and personal responsibility. Each family will be assisted in securing medical provider and will receive preventive health education. Services will be available for the family until the child is two years of age and will be provided by skilled and trained local health department staff. Kentucky anticipates serving 4,000 first time families in Year 1 and 8,000 first time families in Year 2 at a cost of \$1,700/family served.

Enhancing early care and education

Increased Access to Child Care Subsidy (budget allocation of \$3,000,000 in FY 01): By increasing the eligibility from 160% of the federal poverty level to 170%, an estimated 12,000 additional children will be covered for in childcare homes and licensed family daycare homes.

Graduated Quality Rating System (budget allocation of \$1,500,000 in FY 01): Kentucky plans to raise the level of quality by offering subsidy payments that graduate with the program rating and by inciting programs to care for children who are paid for with state subsidy dollars, thereby increasing access to quality care for low-income families.

Scholarship Fund for Childcare Providers (budget allocation of \$1,250,000 in FY 01): Kentucky's Higher Education Assistance Authority will administer this scholarship fund available to those who work in childcare at least 20 hours weekly and to trainers seeking a specialty trainer's credential. The funds assist childcare personnel in moving through a credentialing system that begins at entry level and proceeds through post-secondary education.

Increased licensing personnel (federal funds to be used in FY 01): Kentucky will increase the number of licensing personnel dedicated specifically to childcare, thereby bringing expertise to upgrade childcare quality by having smaller caseloads consisting only of childcare facilities.

Healthy Start in Childcare (budget allocation of \$2,000,000 in FY 01): This initiative will provide personnel to train and educate childcare providers and parents in health, safety, nutrition and the benefits of early intervention.

Local childhood partnerships (budget allocation of \$1,918,000 in FY 01): Agencies and individuals will form local councils to improve the lives of children and families and to ensure that services are comprehensive, collaborative and coordinated within communities.

Establishing the support structure

Early Childhood Development Authority (budget allocation of \$180,000 in FY 01): The authority will merge four existing Councils for efficient coordination of issues related to early childhood. The authority will receive and disburse funds to coordinate the development of programs supported by the funds.

Business Council (budget allocation of \$50,000 in FY 01): Comprised of business and community leaders who have demonstrated an interest in early childhood and families in the workplace, the Council will involve the corporate community and local governments in supporting issues of importance to working families.

Professional Development Council (budget allocation of \$157,000 in FY 01): This council will work with existing entities to create a seamless system of education and training for early childhood providers, beginning with an entry-level credential and proceeding through a Master's degree.