



STATE AND COMMUNITY POLICY ROUNDUP:
PROGRESS ON INFANT-TODDLER ISSUES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES
DECEMBER 2007

The ZERO TO THREE Policy Network works to keep members abreast of new and exciting infant-toddler legislation and initiatives happening across the country. This article summarizes state and community policy activities featured in The Baby Monitor from July through December 2007, and provides highlights of the progress by some states and communities featured in the July 2007 State and Community Policy Roundup.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATE POLICY UPDATES

Indiana Takes Local Quality Rating System Statewide ..... 2
Louisiana Passes School Readiness Tax Credit Package ..... 2
Maine Weaves Together Components for an Infant Toddler System ..... 3
Michigan Takes Innovative Approach to Early Learning Guidelines ..... 4
Mississippi Public/Private Partnership Helps Programs Increase Quality ..... 4
New York Gives Home-Based Child Care Providers the Right to Unionize ..... 5
Pennsylvania Launches Office of Child Development and Early Learning..... 6
Texas Passes Child Welfare Reforms and Expands Nurse Home Visiting Program..... 6
Vermont Works toward a Coordinated System for Young Children ..... 7
Wisconsin Advocates Push for Budget to Support Young Children ..... 7

COMMUNITY POLICY UPDATES

Community-Based Brain Zone Project Brings Early Childhood Awareness to New Parents and Caregivers (Cabell, Wayne, and Mason Counties, WV; Lawrence County, OH; and Boyd County, KY) ..... 8
Hillsborough County, Florida Collaborates to Build Early Childhood Systems..... 9

## STATE POLICY UPDATES

### INDIANA

#### **Indiana Takes Local Quality Rating System Statewide**

The administration of Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels announced plans earlier this year to create a statewide quality rating system for child care. The Indiana Family and Social Services Administration and the state's Bureau of Child Care are working to implement a quality rating system that is based on the local Paths to QUALITY system. This decision comes after the state legislature's 2006 increase in child care funding for low-income families, indicating that the state is focusing on the quality of care available, in addition to accessibility. The statewide [Paths to QUALITY](#) system will be launched on January 2, 2008.

To develop their plan for a statewide quality rating system, the state convened a meeting of stakeholders and examined the models which already existed right in their own backyard. Following an in-depth investigation, they decided to expand the local model, Paths to QUALITY. Paths to QUALITY was created by the Child Care and Early Education Partnership, a group of local organizations that advocate for quality child care, and is currently being implemented by the [Early Childhood Alliance](#) in six northeastern counties. The four-tiered voluntary rating system aims not only to ensure that parents can make informed decisions about their child's care, but also to provide professional development incentives and opportunity for child care programs. The rating system includes an innovative one-on-one mentoring program for providers working toward increasing their quality of care.

The statewide Paths to QUALITY is receiving \$32 million per year from public and private sources, including federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds. The quality rating system is administered by the Indiana Bureau of Child Care, and training for participating programs is provided through the Indiana Association of Child Care Resource and Referral. The state has recently developed a two-year marketing plan to increase awareness of the quality rating system. During the first year, the campaign will aim to increase provider participation and in the second year, will inform parents and communities about the importance of quality care and assessment. The state also recently contracted with Purdue University to evaluate the success of the rating system throughout the next four years.

### LOUISIANA

#### **Louisiana Passes School Readiness Tax Credit Package**

This past summer, the Louisiana state legislature approved an innovative school readiness tax credit bill to assist families and child care providers with the costs associated with higher quality care for the state's young children. The bill, which closely ties the tax credits to the state's child care Quality Rating System, was signed into law by Governor Kathleen Blanco on July 10<sup>th</sup>. Then in September, the Department of Revenue passed a rule to define the administration of the school readiness tax credits.

The comprehensive tax package supports and increases quality child care through tax credits to parents, businesses, providers, and child care professionals. Each of the four tax credits is refundable, which means the credit can be greater than an individual's tax liability and may be received as a payment even if an individual does not owe any taxes.<sup>1</sup>

The **tax credit to parents** is available to families with a child under the age of six who is enrolled in child care. It is based upon the quality rating of the child care center that the child attends. The credit for one child ranges from \$263 for a two star child care center, to \$1,050 for a five star center. A family may receive a maximum of \$2,100 for two or more children enrolled in care. The **tax credit to business** is available to employers that support quality care in three ways: by constructing, renovating or expanding a

<sup>1</sup> The tax credit to parents is refundable for families earning less than \$25,000.

facility; making payments to an eligible child care center; or by subsidizing child care for their employees. This credit is also tied the quality rating of the child care center, and cannot exceed \$5,000 per year.

Additionally, the tax package helps child care providers offset the costs of improving their services, such as higher wages for trained staff. The **tax credit to providers** is designed to increase access to quality care for low income children. This credit is based on the quality rating of a provider's center and on the number of children served by the center that are in Louisiana's child care subsidy program. The credit ranges from \$750 per eligible child at a two star center to \$1,500 per eligible child at a five star center. Finally, the **tax credit to child care professionals** is available to child care directors and staff based on increased levels of education attainment to help address the issue of retaining quality staff. This credit ranges from \$1,500 to \$3,000, depending on the level of qualifications met.

The tax credit legislation was enacted largely due to a strong joint advocacy effort led by BrightStart, the state's Early Childhood Comprehensive System grant initiative, along with the [Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families](#) and the [Tulane Institute of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health](#). In all, a large and diverse group of more than 24 children's organizations, foundations, government watchdog entities, and lobbyists worked together to move the bill towards passage. Recently, the Tulane Institute of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health began developing marketing materials on the usage of the tax credits that will be available at trainings and on their website.

## MAINE

### **Maine Weaves Together Components for an Infant Toddler System**

The Infant Toddler Initiative Team in Maine is a unique collaboration designed to improve the services and supports available to Maine's youngest children and their families. The team, created in 2003 through a grant from the [National Infant & Toddler Child Care Initiative](#), includes diverse representation from the state's early care and education field (e.g., the University of Maine at Farmington, Maine Community College, non-profit partners, and government agencies). This year, the Infant Toddler Initiative Team has worked to implement the components of a quality early care and education system for Maine, including Infant Toddler Guidelines, a quality rating system that includes infants and toddlers, and an infant toddler credential. The team has also worked to raise public awareness about the needs of infants and toddlers through an annual awareness day in Augusta.

Earlier this year, the Infant Toddler Team published and disseminated [Maine's Infant Toddler Guidelines](#), which provide a research-based framework for new parents, early childhood professionals, and policymakers to better understand development and early learning for children birth through age three. The guidelines also offer suggestions about optimal environments for infants and toddlers and interactions that promote healthy development and learning. To support the implementation of the guidelines throughout the state, the Infant Toddler Team developed a 30-hour training curriculum. Using this curriculum, the Early Childhood Division of Maine's Department of Health and Human Services conducted a "train the trainers" event, and early childhood professionals began to be trained on the guidelines this fall. Additionally, the Infant Toddler guidelines have been fully integrated into the state's new quality rating system that includes infants and toddlers. The new system was piloted in five counties during spring 2007, and providers began to sign-up to participate through an online pilot during the summer.

The Infant Toddler Initiative Team is also working on the implementation of an infant toddler credential for Maine's early childhood professionals. The credential will have three tiers, with the first tier based on the infant and toddler trainings that are already being offered throughout the state. The Infant Toddler Team recently worked with the Maine Infant Mental Health Association to offer an "Introduction to Infant Mental" course, required for the tier I credential, through the state's Resource Development

Centers. By January 2008, providers will be able to earn the tier I credential through the professional development registry at *Maine Roads to Quality*, the state's early care and education career development system. The Infant Toddler Initiative Team is also working with Maine Community College to implement the tier II credential, which will be awarded to providers with an Associate's Degree who take an additional four college courses related to infant toddler care and education. Finally, the tier III credential will be available for providers who have already earned a bachelor's degree in a related field and pursue more advanced professional development.

## **MICHIGAN**

### **Michigan Takes Innovative Approach to Early Learning Guidelines**

Based on New Zealand's work in early childhood curriculum and theory, *Te Whariki* (literally "woven mat"), earlier this year the Michigan State Board of Education approved innovative early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers. In the early childhood context, *Te Whariki* refers to the interwoven principles and strands that together form the "wahriki" or framework for each child's development and learning.

Using this framework to spur new thinking, Michigan's early childhood community began talking about weaving and braiding: that development is not linear but is interwoven, and that early developments contribute to later accomplishments. The result is a document with early learning standards and quality program standards for infants and toddlers that align with the state's pre-kindergarten standards (see [www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/ECSQ-IT\\_Final\\_180649\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/ECSQ-IT_Final_180649_7.pdf)).

The early development and learning goals are organized around five strands: Well-Being, Belonging, Exploration, Communication, and Contribution. The document is not intended as another checklist of developmental milestones, but as a positive framework in which to view potential development and learning outcomes of infants and toddlers. The expectation is that the strands will guide practice so that caregivers become more responsive and intentional in their everyday work with infants and toddlers.

Early care and education have continued to be a priority in Michigan throughout the year. On November 13<sup>th</sup>, Governor Jennifer Granholm held the first annual, "Michigan Early Childhood Challenge" summit to develop the state's first consensus agenda for early childhood. The summit is the result of a grant from the National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center), which selected Michigan as one of ten states to receive a \$10,000 grant to support a Governors' Summit on Early Childhood. The grants are intended to help governors advance a school readiness agenda for children ages birth to five in their state. Additionally, the Michigan state legislature showed its support for early care and education by recently passing a budget bill with increased funds for early childhood, including an increase of \$375,000 for the 0-3 Secondary Prevention program, and an increase of \$750,000 for the Early Childhood Investment Corporation, a statewide public-private corporation focused on building a comprehensive system of services and supports for Michigan's young children and their families.

## **MISSISSIPPI**

### **Mississippi Public/Private Partnership Helps Programs Increase Quality**

In July 2007, the [Mississippi State University Early Childhood Institute](#) was awarded a grant from Mississippi Power to improve the quality of center-based care for young children in the company's service areas that were affected by Hurricane Katrina. The private investment is being used to support a new initiative, the [Mississippi Power Early Learning Program](#), which offers technical assistance to licensed child care centers to help them improve quality in preparation for the state's new quality rating system, the [Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System](#). The initiative is funded with \$450,000 over three years, and in the first year will provide services to a maximum of 20 child care centers in Harrison, Hancock, and Jackson counties on the Mississippi coast.

The Mississippi Power Early Learning Program builds on MSU Early Childhood Institute's extensive assistance to early childhood programs affected by Hurricane Katrina that began in 2005. The initiative includes individual technical assistance to participating child care centers, as well as professional development workshops conducted with the Mississippi Gulf Coast Child Care Resource and Referral Agency on topics such as age-appropriate learning activities, curriculum development, socio-emotional development, and early learning guidelines. In the fall of 2007, the initiative conducted two professional development workshops for child care centers on the Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System, and they have planned additional workshops for January on the management of infant/toddler classrooms. In addition to individual technical assistance and the professional development workshops, the initiative also provides five public awareness programs for interested families and providers at civic meetings in communities with participating centers.

The initiative's work to improve the quality of care will help participating child care centers earn high quality ratings in the new Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System. The quality rating system is linked to the state's child care subsidies, and includes five components of quality improvement: program administration, professional qualifications of staff, child learning environment, family involvement, and program evaluation. The quality rating system is currently being piloted in twenty nine counties throughout the state and is in its second year.

## **NEW YORK**

### **New York Gives Home-Based Child Care Providers the Right to Unionize**

Freshman Governor Eliot Spitzer signed an historical executive order on May 8, 2007 that gives an estimated 60,000 home-based child care providers the right to unionize. The executive order allows all licensed and registered family child care providers to organize, as well as family, friend, and neighbor care providers serving families whose children are receiving child care subsidies. New York is the eighth state in the country to give this right to home-based providers, joining Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, New Jersey, Oregon, Washington and Wisconsin.

More recently, more than 8,000 child care providers in New York City voted to form a union represented by the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) in October. The successful vote means that UFT has won the right to unionize more than 28,000 home-based child care providers in the city, and will soon begin negotiations on their behalf. The drive to unionize these providers in New York has been ongoing for the past two years, largely pushed by groups such as UFT, the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA), and the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN). CSEA, which organizes many state employees, has been working to organize home-based providers in multiple counties statewide, while UFT and ACORN worked to organize subsidized child care providers in New York City. (See NWLC's report, *"Getting organized: Unionizing home-based child care providers."*) Additionally, the state legislature passed legislation in the spring of 2006 that allowed home-based providers to organize and collectively bargain with the state. This bill was vetoed by former governor George Pataki on the basis that providers would be considered state employees and therefore afforded the same benefits. The executive order signed by Governor Spitzer clearly outlines that these providers are not considered public employees, but will be able to organize and negotiate with the state.

Based on the experiences of other states, the new unionization in New York creates the opportunity for home-based child care providers to negotiate for higher pay, health benefits and increased professional development opportunities, which may increase the number of providers who remain in the child care field. These implications will consequently impact the children and families being served.

For more information on the unionization of home-based child care providers across the country, visit the National Women's Law Center ([www.nwlc.org](http://www.nwlc.org)) and read their report, *"Getting organized: Unionizing home-based child care providers."*

## **PENNSYLVANIA**

### **Pennsylvania Launches Office of Child Development and Early Learning**

Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell announced the creation of the [Office of Child Development and Early Learning](#) (OCDEL) earlier this year. This office brings programs involved with early learning and child development, previously located in the departments of Education and Public Welfare, together in one office. Programs include Head Start, pre-kindergarten programs, early intervention (Part C programs and preschool early intervention programs), child care, family support, and similar programs.

This innovative Office of Child Development and Early Learning is represented on the organizational charts of both the Department of Education and the Department of Public Welfare. The structure encourages collaboration and creates a consistent system of services for Pennsylvania's children and families. In particular, shared governance enhances service coordination and eases the challenges faced by families seeking access to multiple services. This strategy recognizes that families seek the support of a wide range of government agencies in raising young children and preparing them for school.

OCDEL and Pennsylvania's young children fared well in the state budget for 2007-2008. After an effective advocacy effort by early childhood professionals, law enforcement, business and school leaders, and more, the budget significantly invests in children under five. Components that affect infants, toddlers and their families include a \$9 million increase for Keystone STARS, Pennsylvania's child care quality initiative, a \$74 million increase for the subsidized child care program, Child Care Works, and a significant increase in funds for early intervention for young children with disabilities.

OCDEL has recently worked to provide services to better meet the needs of the state's infants and toddlers. As part of an effort to use a common developmental screening tool for infants and toddlers, OCDEL introduced the Ages and Stages screening tool in all of its programs serving infants and toddlers and is working with the child welfare program for implementation of Ages and Stages within the child welfare system as well. The Ages & Stages project will provide practitioners with the tools that they need to implement best practices around conducting screening, discussing results with families, and making appropriate referrals.

Additionally, this December OCDEL will host an Infant-Toddler Symposium to highlight the progress Pennsylvania is making in meeting the social and emotional well-being of infants and toddlers through its multi-disciplinary initiatives. The goal of the Infant-Toddler Symposium is to foster relationships and build connections as Pennsylvania builds its policy leadership agenda for infants and toddlers. Secretary of the PA Department of Public Welfare Estelle Richman will serve as the facilitator of the event. Participants and presenters include prominent, national researchers in pediatrics, psychology, and family studies, leaders in state infant-toddler policy making, and Pennsylvania's leadership in the various agencies and offices that serve the youngest citizens.

## **TEXAS**

### **Texas Passes Child Welfare Reforms and Expands Nurse Home Visiting Program**

The 80<sup>th</sup> Texas legislature demonstrated a strong commitment to improving child welfare in the state during the 2007 session by passing multiple reform bills and authorizing a substantial increase of funds for Child Protective Services and Early Childhood Intervention Services. Among the measures that will impact infants and toddlers are an increase in funds to support state compliance with federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) laws, which will allow 15% more children under the age of three in the child welfare system to be screened for developmental delays, and a \$7.9 million bill to expand the Nurse-Family Partnership home visiting program. The home visiting bill, cosponsored by state Senator Florence Shapiro (R-8) and Representative Jerry Madden (R-67), will bring prevention services to low-

income, first-time parents throughout the state. Governor Ricky Perry signed the bill into law on June 15<sup>th</sup> and it is effective as of September 1<sup>st</sup>.

The [Nurse-Family Partnership](#), a nurse-home visitation program that improves the health, well-being and self-sufficiency of low-income, first-time parents and their children, is currently being implemented in 22 states and has been piloted in Texas by the Greater Dallas YWCA. With the passage of the new legislation, Nurse-Family Partnership programs will be implemented in 11 new sites across the state, serving at least 2,000 families. Programs are expected to begin serving families by summer 2008.

The new programs will begin working with participating mothers by the 28<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy and will continue through the child's second year. Both public and private agencies will be eligible to apply to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to be selected as one of the sites through a competitive grant process. HHSC, in consultation with the Nurse-Family Partnership National Service Office, will issue a Request for Proposals this fall. Both HHSC and Nurse-Family Partnership are actively conducting outreach to communities throughout Texas to prepare them for the grant opportunity.

## **VERMONT**

### **Vermont Works toward a Coordinated System for Young Children**

Vermont's [Building Bright Futures](#) Initiative is working to ensure that the state's children are healthy and successful by building a system of coordinated and integrated services and funding for children birth to age six. Established through an Executive Order by Governor Jim Douglas in June 2006, *Building Bright Futures* is governed by a State Council consisting of 19 members from the public and private sectors. The State Council is charged with creating a comprehensive system of early childhood care, health and education, and advising state administrators and the Governor on early childhood policy. In recent months, the State Council made great strides by establishing 12 Regional Councils to develop regional plans to address early childhood program and funding coordination and integration. Additionally, in September the State Council approved a primary school readiness indicator, with supporting indicators based on five domains of early childhood development, social-emotional development; approaches to learning; communication; cognitive development; and health and physical well-being. These indicators will guide the development of regional plans to ensure that all children are ready for school when they enter kindergarten.

Based on the Early Childhood Councils that existed in the 12 regions throughout Vermont, the new *Building Bright Futures* Regional Councils are working at the community level to implement the State Council's vision of a coordinated and integrated early childhood system. The Councils, each led by a Regional Director, consist of members from both the public and private sectors, such as service providers, employers and parents. The Regional Councils will guide a planning process resulting in regional action steps as well as recommendations of action to the State Council regarding policy and funding barriers to effective program and funding coordination and integration. The regional plans will serve as a basis for a state plan to establish a coordinated and integrated early childhood system by addressing policy and funding issues.

## **WISCONSIN**

### **Wisconsin Advocates Push for Budget to Support Young Children**

After months of intense advocacy efforts by state early care and education advocates, the Wisconsin state legislature passed its final budget bill for 2007-2009 on October 23, 2007, including many provisions that will affect the state's infants, toddlers and their families. The budget increases funding for Wisconsin Shares, the state's child care subsidy program, and also provides for the expansion of the state children's health insurance program, BadgerCare Plus, to serve more children and pregnant women. The budget was signed into law by Governor Jim Doyle on October 26<sup>th</sup>.

Wisconsin Shares, which serves approximately 17,000 children under the age of three, enjoyed a substantial success in the state's final budget, with a \$69 million increase for the child care subsidy program over the 2007-2009 biennium. At the outset of the state budget process, Governor Doyle proposed to minimally increase funding for Wisconsin Shares by \$4 million, reduce family income eligibility levels, reduce payments to providers, and increase co-payments for families. However, during the budget deliberations, the legislature, with strong support from the state Senate and the Governor, eventually agreed to the \$69 million increase, avoiding the need to create waiting lists, reduce eligibility levels, or reduce provider payments. The successes are due in part to advocacy efforts by the [Wisconsin Early Learning Coalition](#), a statewide coalition consisting of twelve organizations dedicated to making quality early care and education a priority in Wisconsin. Earlier this year, the coalition launched a statewide campaign, *Ready, Set, Grow: Early Learning Matters*, to push for full funding of the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program, and improve the quality of early care and education in the state. Their advocacy efforts included hundreds of calls and e-mails to the Governor and legislators, a mail campaign through which over 1800 postcards were sent from parents and providers, art projects on early learning from local programs that were delivered to key legislators, and testimony by 26 advocates at public hearings on the budget. In addition to the substantial increase for Wisconsin Shares, the budget also included an increase of \$400,000 for child care scholarships that can be used to support Wisconsin's infant-toddler credential.

The final budget also included Governor Doyle's plan for expanding Wisconsin's children's health insurance program, BadgerCare Plus. Starting in February 2008, BadgerCare Plus will extend coverage to *all* children who are citizens, with subsidies for those in families below 300 percent of the federal poverty level. Additionally, the budget extends health coverage to pregnant women between 185 and 300 percent of the federal poverty level, allowing more women to receive the prenatal care that is essential to the healthy birth and development of their babies.

For more information on Wisconsin's 2007-2009 budget, visit the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families at [http://www.wccf.org/2007-09\\_statebudgetessentials.php](http://www.wccf.org/2007-09_statebudgetessentials.php).

## COMMUNITY POLICY UPDATES

### **CABELL, WAYNE, AND MASON COUNTIES, WEST VIRGINIA; LAWRENCE COUNTY, OHIO; AND BOYD COUNTY, KENTUCKY**

#### **Community-Based Brain Zone Project Brings Early Childhood Awareness to New Parents and Caregivers**

Communities in West Virginia, Ohio and Kentucky are preparing new parents and caregivers for the early years by providing them with information through the innovative "[Brain Under Construction Zone<sup>SM</sup>](#)" project. Using the [12 Messages for Raising a Healthy Child](#) created by the United Way of the River Cities' Success by Six initiative (West Virginia), the Brain Zone project brings knowledge about healthy early childhood development to families, beginning prenatally.

Families and caregivers can access the Brain Zone messages in numerous ways. In Cabell County, West Virginia, the primary Brain Zone location is the Cabell Huntington Hospital. Parents who pre-register at the hospital for the birth of their baby receive a Brain Zone bag, which contains child development information, an overview of the project, and an article on prenatal brain development. The hospital also has a Brain Zone kiosk outside the Mother/Baby Unit, which creates an easily accessible opportunity for families and visitors to learn about healthy child development. This kiosk focuses on one of the twelve messages each month, displaying in-depth materials and information on community partners and resources. Families delivering a baby are offered the opportunity to meet with a Brain Zone trained volunteer about early brain development and receive portfolios that include detailed information on the

twelve messages for healthy development, the effects of second-hand smoke, fatherhood, building connections with your baby, and more.

The Brain Zone project was implemented in 2005 through funding from the Cabell Wayne Early Childhood Council and the ERASE Barriers to Early Learning initiative, which is a broad-based partnership that focuses on enhancing early childhood services and coordination across agencies. The nineteen child care centers participating in the ERASE initiative have “mini” Brain Zone sites, and disseminate information on the twelve messages of healthy development monthly to families. From 2005 through 2007, over 2,300 families received Brain Zone visits at Cabell Huntington Hospital, and 2,000 children had access to the messages through their child care center.

The Brain Zone project has seen much recent expansion. Starting in the fall of 2007, Brain Zones have been available at participating Head Start and pre-kindergarten centers, as well as kindergartens. In addition to sites in Cabell, Wayne, and Mason Counties in West Virginia, Lawrence County in Ohio, and Boyd County in Kentucky, the Brain Zone project has expanded to the Mid Ohio Valley Region, which covers eight counties in West Virginia. This expansion has been made possible through a collaborative partnership between the local hospitals, United Way, West Virginia Birth to Three, West Virginia Family Resource Network, Regional Network Coordinators, local universities and more.

### **HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FLORIDA**

#### **Hillsborough County, Florida Collaborates to Build Early Childhood Systems**

Partners in Hillsborough County, Florida have come together to coordinate, evaluate and fund the infrastructure and activities of local initiatives that focus on enhancing services and improving outcomes for the county’s young children. Largely through the leadership of Hillsborough County’s Children’s Board, the initiative brings together early childhood partners such as Children’s Future, the Early Childhood Council, and the Healthy Start Coalition to create a coordinated early childhood system in areas such as administrative infrastructure, access to services, screening and assessment, and family support.

Relationships among the partners in Hillsborough’s system-building initiative have developed slowly over time and the agencies currently work together through numerous interagency agreements. The roots of the initiative date back to the 1980s when the county voted to dedicate local property taxes to children’s services in the community and created the [Children’s Board](#) to be the oversight body. Focusing on prevention, early intervention and early childhood services, the Children’s Board serves as a planner and funder of many of the county’s early childhood efforts and has been instrumental in creating the architecture for the county’s coordinated early childhood system. As part of their goal to integrate the county’s early childhood services, the Children’s Board strongly encourages collaboration among the providers they fund. This standard of practice has led to the emergence of [Children’s Future](#), an integrated network of twenty-two service agencies that coordinate to ensure a continuum of care for the county’s children, prenatally through age 8.

The Children’s Board was also instrumental in the formalization of the [Early Childhood Council](#) of Hillsborough County in September 2007. The Early Childhood Council developed simultaneously to the Children’s Board in the 1980s and has historically served as a valued leadership group to early childhood providers in the county. With the support of the Children’s Board, the council recently created an infrastructure to support their own programming to coordinate services among providers and is currently working to formalize partnership agreements with other early childhood partners in the county. One of their innovations has been a community-wide free developmental screening program, which brings together multiple providers, including the Hillsborough County School District, to offer free monthly developmental screenings for children birth through age five. The developmental screening service has been recognized in the state as a best practice for other communities to replicate.

Finally, the Children's Board also works to coordinate with the [Healthy Start Coalition](#) of Hillsborough County, which grew out of state legislation that created local coalitions to reduce infant mortality rates and improve the lives of pregnant women. With partial funding from the Children's Board, the Healthy Start Coalition works with public and private medical professionals, hospitals, schools, charities, and social services agencies to assess family needs and refer them to other community resources and services.

*For more information about the states and communities featured in *The Baby Monitor*, visit <http://www.zerotothree.org/policy> and click on "State Policy Updates" and "Community Policy Updates."*

*The 2007 State and Community Policy Updates were written by Elizabeth DiLauro, Lynn Jones and Florence Nelson of the ZERO TO THREE Policy Center, with contributions from numerous partners in the featured states.*