

Early Learning Matters

The Key to a Thriving Community

High-quality, Affordable Early Care and Education

Each Indiana community is unique in its needs and opportunities, but one common thread across the state, in every community, is the importance of affordable, high-quality early care and education.

The first five years of a child's life are foundational in their development. Research shows that investments in early care and education result in fewer investments later in the areas of K-12 remediation, health care, criminal justice costs and more. Accessible and affordable high-quality early care and education creates a two-generational economic impact, allowing parents to participate in the workforce and provide for their families while engaging and educating the next generation workforce.

Early care and education is a community-wide issue. Investments in early childhood education create sustainable, thriving communities. By bringing community leaders, organizations and businesses to the table, communities can create scalable, sustainable solutions that benefit them for years to come.

Importance of the Early Years

In the first five years of life, children's brains grow faster than they ever will again.¹

Between birth and age 3, children's brains make 1 million new neural connections per second.¹

Economic Impact

Indiana's economy loses \$2.2 billion dollars each year due to lack of infant and toddler care.²

41% of parents of infants and toddlers report having to turn down a new job offer due to child care problems.²

Return on Investment

For every \$1 invested in comprehensive birth-to-five early learning services, \$13 is returned to communities.³

Few Options

Four out of 10 Hoosier children likely needing care cannot be served through existing capacity.⁴

Less than half of child care seats statewide are high quality.⁴

¹Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center (2021). Supporting Early Brain Development: Building the Brain.

²ReadyNation (2023, January). \$122 Billion: The Growing, Annual Cost of the Infant-Toddler Child Care Crisis.

³García, Jorge Luis, James J. Heckman, Duncan Ermini Leaf, and María José Prados. "The Life-cycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program." (2016)

⁴Early Learning Indiana (2024, January). Closing the Gap: An Assessment of Indiana's Early Learning Opportunities 2023 Update.

Contact Us: Chances And Services for Youth

Phone: 812-232-3952, select option 2

Across Indiana, families, businesses and local leaders can find the supports they need with the Child Care Resource and Referral Network.



Child Care
Resource and
Referral Network

Focusing on Indiana:



Actions to Consider

Community leaders and organizations can come together to advocate for affordable and accessible high-quality early care and education. Consider the following:

- Engage local stakeholders and leaders. Include individuals from early learning providers, elected offices, K-12 education, higher education, healthcare, families, businesses, economic development organizations and others invested in early learning.
- Create scalable strategies, modeling what other communities have done.
- Engage employers and encourage them to support their employees' child care needs.
- Create an early childhood coalition (ask your Child Care Resource and Referral agency for tips and strategies).
- Plan an event on early childhood education and economic growth.

Community Success

Early Learning Shelby County started in 2018 as a traditional grassroots group of community stakeholders from a variety of sectors including pediatricians, health care professionals, parents, early intervention developmental preschool specialists, elementary teachers, city and county officials, economic development officials and more. Through their efforts, a new center is opening in 2024 to serve children and families.



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My goal by 2027-28 is to have all four corners of the county covered so that your family has a choice and a chance of getting child care.

Allison Coburn, executive director, Early Learning Shelby County

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