

## What is the Early Learning Communities Initiative?

**T**HE EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE is a place-based framework that encourages comprehensive and continuous early childhood services for pregnant women and children from birth to age 8. The overall goal of the Early Learning Communities framework is to provide a visible and coordinated community-wide commitment to young children birth through third grade that produces:

- Children who are healthy, happy, and successful
- Families that are safe, stable, and supportive of children's development
- Schools and early education providers that are high quality
- Communities that are mobilized and coordinated in a way that ensures resources are used efficiently and are leveraged for the greatest possible outcomes for children

Early Learning Communities are defined by a set of community-determined indicators measured at critical periods during early childhood and by four key elements.

### INDICATORS

Communities are encouraged to define and monitor indicators of development and early learning at critical periods during early childhood. At a minimum, the community is encouraged to develop indicators for the community that measure success at key milestones across the early years to ensure:

- Healthy pregnancies and births
- Children who are
  - ✓ Thriving at three
  - ✓ Eager, engaged, and ready at five
  - ✓ Successful in school and well-rounded at eight

### KEY ELEMENTS

Communities are encouraged to develop a coordinated system that includes the following elements:

- **A governance structure** or coordinated system of planning that is composed of representatives from the public and private sector, parents, schools, community-based organizations, child care, Head Start and Early Head Start, home visitation, as well as health, mental health, child welfare, family support, and disability services.
- **A system of data collection** that provides accurate and current information on the status and well-being of pregnant women, young children, and their families and the services available to them.
- **A quality assurance system** that measures the quality of services being delivered to pregnant women, young children, and families and provides information, incentives, and support for continuous improvement.
- **A school system** that is ready for children and has a strong connection to the early learning community both to facilitate a seamless transition to school and to ensure continuity.

The Early Learning Communities Initiatives is designed to encourage dialogue and local action to promote the well-being of young children and their families.