

From: Family and Social Services Administration <fssa@subscriptions.in.gov>
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FSSA News Release

Governor's Early Learning Advisory Committee Releases Initial Report Includes Current State of Early Childhood, Priorities for Coming Year

Indianapolis (June 30, 2015) - Indiana's Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC) has submitted its 2015 report of findings to Governor Mike Pence and the state's Legislative Council.

The Early Learning Advisory Committee was created in legislation passed during the 2013 session, with a mandate to provide a comprehensive progress report by June 30 of each year. ELAC's vision focuses on the achievement of **accessible, affordable, high quality early childhood experiences, particularly for at-risk Hoosier families**. The 2015 ELAC report provides: 1) a snapshot of where Indiana stands on important early childhood parameters; 2) what ELAC workgroups have recently accomplished; and 3) the specific recommendations for action that have surfaced in the process.

The ELAC report quantifies the need for child care by two-thirds of Indiana parents, but estimates only 11% of their children are in high-quality, program-based care. Affordability of high-quality program care is a factor for many low income families, as well. Moreover, the demand for qualified professionals to staff these high-quality programs will outstrip supply over the next 5 years.

"That's why legislative initiatives like the Early Education Matching Grant and On My Way Pre-K are so critically important," said Kevin Bain, CEO of Welborn Baptist Foundation in Evansville and Chairman of ELAC. "These pilots are demonstrating how to serve more at-risk families, and modeling how to prepare 4-year olds for kindergarten and ongoing academic success."

ELAC report recommendations include collecting and utilizing additional baseline data, statewide usage of common terminology definitions, and an enhanced coordination of efforts across departments.

"When Governor Pence appointed members of the ELAC in late September, 2013, his direction to us was to assess the opportunities and challenges Indiana faces in early education, and to recommend approaches to address both," added Bain. "This report captures our best collective efforts to do that – both by ELAC's appointed members, as well as the volunteers that staff ELAC workgroups."

Members of ELAC include:

Alonzo Weems, Eli Lilly
Tammy Veselsky, Traders Point Christian Academy
Melanie Brizzi, Indiana FSSA, Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning
Charlie Geier, Indiana Department of Education (IDOE)
Connie Sherman, St. Mary's Child Center (Special advisor)
John Burnett, Community Education Coalition (Special advisor)

ELAC's ongoing work is informed by the active participation of more than 140 volunteers across the state serving in 7 ELAC workgroups, addressing specific aspects of this work. The volunteers represent higher education, the business community, legislative and executive branch participants, providers, and state employees – all of whom will continue to provide input and expertise into advancing the cause of early childhood education in Indiana.

The complete report can be accessed at: <http://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/4842.htm>

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