

WISCONSIN EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM ASSESSMENT REPORT

**Submitted to the
Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council**

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Summary of Report

This report summarizes a review of 111 reports and documents about Wisconsin's Early Childhood System as way to begin to assess how well the system is promoting well-being among children, families, and communities. The review covered all five components identified by the Early Childhood Advisory Council: *Early Care and Education; Mental Health and Socio-Emotional Development; Parenting Education; Family Support; and Safe and Healthy Families*. The review and analysis suggests the following conclusions about these domains:

- 1) Dental care, lead poisoning, and racial and ethnic health disparities are issues that will have to be addressed by specific programs or policies, rather than by an effort to further expand publicly funded health insurance coverage
- 2) More information about Infant Mental Health programs and local capacity to serve children and families would help us better identify how to build an effective and sustainable infrastructure
- 3) Parenting education is a fragmented system, and it would seem the first logical step is to better evaluate the collaboration and overlap among existing programs, as well as the range and quality of services provided (and unmet community needs) in order to develop efficient and effective programming
- 4) Additional data on all of Wisconsin's children's early education experiences and the quality of care they receive is an important first step in improving early care and education. Next, a plan for systematically engaging and working with providers who provide low or mediocre quality care in order to improve the quality of care will also be important to improving the experience of Wisconsin's children

Far less information is provided in the reviewed reports and documents about system dimensions: *Accountability and Evaluation; Governance; Financing; Professional Development; Quality Standards; Access, Outreach, and Engagement, and Governance*. Nevertheless some observations seem warranted:

- 1) More comprehensive and complete data on multiple levels would be helpful within and across programs, as well as for individual children and families, and communities
- 2) The mix of county, regional, state, and federal structures presents challenges in creating a comprehensive and collaborative early childhood system. At minimum, relevant stakeholders should consider whether the current structure inhibits the development of a coherent and integrated system
- 3) Once a system of programs and services has been constructed, it is of critical importance to be able to ensure the effectiveness and quality of those programs and services. Recommendations that tackle issues of quality standards, technical assistance, professional development, and evaluating both program implementation and outcomes across the entire system will be valuable.