

The School Readiness Indicators Initiative Research and Best Practice Brief

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The School Readiness Indicators Initiative is a multi-state initiative that uses child well-being indicators to build support for improved school readiness and early school success. Begun in 2001, the focus of the project is to assist participating states in the development of a set of child outcome and systems indicators for children from birth through the fourth-grade reading test, an important red flag for children most at-risk for poor long-term outcomes, such as dropping out of school, teen pregnancy, and juvenile crime.

The initiative has three objectives:

- ◆ **Objective 1:** To create a set of measurable indicators related to and defining school readiness that can be tracked regularly over time at the state and local levels.
- ◆ **Objective 2:** To have states and local governments adopt this indicators-based definition of school readiness, fill in gaps in data availability, track data over time and report findings to their citizens.
- ◆ **Objective 3:** To stimulate policy, program and other actions to improve the ability of all children to read at grade level by the end of the third grade.

Project Management and Funding

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is the lead agency for this national initiative, and funding is provided by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, and the Ford Foundation. Each state in the School Readiness Indicators Initiative received a grant of \$50,000 per year for two years. The funding covered:

- Personnel and benefits at the lead agency
- Consultants/honoraria
- Travel (in-state travel, approximately 5 team members to each of two national meetings/year, and 1-3 team members to each of two residency roundtables/year)
- Meeting expenses
- Supplies
- Direct costs
- Office expenses for the lead agency (telephone, postage, printing, publications)
- Indirect costs not to exceed 10%

Additional in-kind contributions of time and work came from each state team member.

State Participants

Seventeen states are participating. They are Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin. State teams include data and policy staff from multiple agencies (e.g., Education, Health, Human Services, and Governors' Offices), and they work individually and as a group to develop a comprehensive set of measures to monitor school readiness and service system outcomes for children and families.

Project Components

The initiative utilizes a series of national meetings and residency roundtables to facilitate indicator development. National meetings convene state teams to provide peer-to-peer support on indicator development and conceptual issues, data and technology issues, and communications strategies. Residency Roundtables are convened two to four times a year to tackle tough conceptual issues in a focused way. Meetings have included the following:

- ◆ First National Meeting in Newport, Rhode Island 10/22-24/01
- ◆ Residency Roundtable: Indicators of Social and Emotional Development of Young Children in New York, New York 4/10-11/02
- ◆ Second National Meeting in Newport, Rhode Island 5/6-7/02
- ◆ Residency Roundtable: Indicators of Language and Literacy Development of Young Children in Boston, Massachusetts 9/19-20/02
- ◆ Third National Meeting in Providence, Rhode Island 11/13-14/02
- ◆ Residency Roundtable: Indicators of Cognition and Approaches to Learning in Scottsdale, Arizona 3/13-14/03
- ◆ Fourth National Meeting in Kansas City, Missouri 5/13-15/03
- ◆ Residency Roundtable: Birth to Three in Denver, Colorado 10/8-9/03
- ◆ Fifth National Meeting 12/2-4/03

Expert consultants, from the State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network (SECPTAN) with selected skills and experience produce commissioned papers on priority issues, participate at national meetings and roundtables, and on a selective basis, provide on-site consultation to individual states. The final meeting of the initiative will be held spring 2004.

Indicators

The initiative focuses on the development of child, family, and system-level indicators that are relevant, measurable, and easily and powerfully communicated. Some of the categories of indicators identified by the initiative include:

- ◆ Ready Child: Physical Well-Being and Motor Development
- ◆ Ready Child: Social and Emotional Development
- ◆ Ready Child: Language and Literacy Development
- ◆ Ready Child: Cognition and General Knowledge
- ◆ Ready Child: Approaches to Learning
- ◆ Family Environment
- ◆ Community Conditions
- ◆ Ready Schools
- ◆ Effective Services: Health
- ◆ Effective Services: Behavioral Health
- ◆ Effective Services: Early Care and Edu.
- ◆ Effective Services: Child Welfare

For additional information regarding the School Readiness Indicators Initiative, please visit their website at www.GettingReady.org.