

Early Education Community Action Tips

How Can You Invest in Our Economic Future?

This information is adapted from “The Seven Lessons of Early Childhood Public Engagement” prepared by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Families and Work Institute and the Jumpstart Tulsa website: www.jumpstarttulsa.com/what-you-can-do.htm.

Architects, Developers and the Building Trades (Contractors, Carpenters, Electricians, Painters, Plumbers, etc.)

- Volunteer to repair or renovate early childhood playgrounds and facilities.
- Design and build low-cost early care and education and family center facilities.
- Encourage clients in public spaces to include rooms for parent classes and meetings, areas for mothers to nurse their infants and early care and education facilities in workplaces, parks, housing and commercial developments, and other public places.
- Include instruction about early childhood facility design and construction in architecture schools and building trades training and apprenticeship programs.

Businesses and Other Employers

- Inform employees about the importance of the first years of life and provide parenting information in a variety of ways like bulletin boards, in-house newsletters or in paycheck envelopes. Offer employees access to online parenting information and resources at work.
- Learn about best practices in the work / family arena. Review policies and practices to consider how to become more supportive to families, and whenever possible, offer flexible work schedules and telecommuting options.
- Conduct surveys or focus groups to learn about employee needs
- Underwrite some employee child care costs
- Sponsor community parenting seminars or family support groups at the workplace. Invite local speakers to offer parenting seminars at work sites.
- Share expertise (such as accounting skills, management training, public relations, etc.) with early care and education programs and volunteer to serve on their boards.
- Provide in-kind support, such as copying, faxing, mailing or printing to local early childhood health, education and care, and family support programs.
- Communicate concern about the importance of the early years to policymakers.
- Work with other community partners to expand and improve health services, early care and education, and family support / parent education programs for families with young children.

Civic, Community and Professional Organizations

- Host or co-sponsor community forums on early childhood topics, such as early childhood brain development, parenting programs that work, improving the quality of child care, or expanding access to health care.
- Help local service providers design services that are culturally sensitive to the linguistic needs and preferences of the community. Help providers recognize and eliminate obstacles that may prevent segments of the community from using their services.
- Organize volunteers to build or refurbish playgrounds or improve child care facilities.
- Celebrate and honor community leaders and organizations making a difference for young children and their families.

Faith Communities

- Sponsor or donate space for parenting, family support, health care, and early care and education programs.
- Adopt a local early childhood program, offering financial support and other resources, the use of facilities, and / or volunteers from your congregation.
- Mobilize retired and senior congregation members to volunteer in hospitals, early care and education programs, at libraries and at family centers.
- Establish or become an active participant in a community interfaith council of child and family ministries that focus on the needs of parents.

Government (at all levels)

- Increase investments in young children and their families. Look for opportunities to link early care investment with other economic and business development in the community.
- Create incentives, in the public and private sectors, to expand and improve services to families with young children.
- Require collaboration and coordination among agencies that administer early childhood programs and services.
- Convene a group of business leaders to investigate creative financing for early childhood programs and services.
- Institute appropriate mechanisms to assure the safety and healthy development of young children in early childhood programs, and provide technical assistance to those who need to improve quality.
- Provide low- or no-interest loans to early childhood programs that have plans to improve quality or undertake facility construction and renovation.
- Establish tax advantages for family-friendly businesses.

Local Government

- Develop legislation, public policies, budgets, taxes, economic development and strategic plans, and financing mechanisms that assist families with young children.
- Use planning and zoning data about children and families to create appropriate regulations and facilities (parks, sidewalks, child care centers, family child care homes, housing, etc.)
- Link economic development and job creation with initiatives that meet the needs of young children and their families.
- Collaborate with community partners to expand and improve services for young children and their families.
- Advocate for young children and their families with county, state, and federal governments.
- Encourage the education of the people who serve young children, through scholarship funds and other strategies.
- Work with county, state, and federal regulators so that municipal regulations on fire, safety, and buildings are the same and/or complementary when applied to facilities for young children.

Hospitals and Health Care Professionals

- Educate families, patients and staff about the importance of the first years of life, early brain development, and the importance of every child having a primary health care provider.
- Provide facilities and materials for prenatal and parenting classes, early care and education programs, and other services that support healthy early childhood development.
- Collaborate with other community partners to expand and improve locally available health, parenting and family support and early care and education programs.
- Inform policymakers and the importance of the first years of life, and support policies that increase and improve health, family support and early care and education programs.
- Volunteer as telephone/ on-site consultant to early childhood programs on health and safety issues.

Law Enforcement

- Inform other community members of the law enforcement community, and the public at large, about the importance of the first years of life and the wisdom of prevention.
- Collaborate with other community partners (such as schools, health care providers, early care programs, and family support/parent education programs) to expand and improve services to families with young children.
- Include information about early child development, as well as child abuse prevention and intervention, in training programs for law enforcement professionals. Train police officers to work collaboratively with other professionals who interact with young children and their families.

Media

- Create and broadcast programs that inform the public about the importance of the early years.
- Report on efforts to expand and improve programs and services that assist families with young children.
- Publicize local resources available to families with young children.
- Report on state and community early childhood champions-individuals, organizations and businesses that are improving programs and services for young children and their families.

Philanthropy

- Provide long-term support for early childhood system development efforts.
- Fund or sponsor community efforts to expand and improve the quality of programs and services available to young children and their families.
- Fund projects that demonstrate or replicate successful early childhood projects.
- Provide low-or no-interest loans for quality improvement by early childhood programs, including facility renovation.
- Inform policymakers about the importance of the first years of life.
- Form funding partnerships to leverage or generate new resources for early childhood programs and services.
- Use funding to support innovative programs to link child care and community and economic development efforts.

Schools

- Inform all school personnel and parents about the importance of the first years of life. Make this information available, to the greatest extent possible, to parents who are not fluent in English.
- Build partnerships with neighborhood early childhood programs and create effective transition programs from early childhood programs to schools.
- Offer voluntary parent education programs, such as Parents as Teachers, HIPPPY and family literacy programs.
- Provide programs that help teen parents finish school and learn parenting skills.
- Collaborate with other community partners to expand/improve services that assist families with young children.
- Include early care and education and family center facilities in new school construction projects and reallocate vacant classrooms for such programs, when available.
- Offer indoor and outdoor space to early childhood program facilities.

Service Providers (Health Care, Family Support, Early Care and Education, Child Welfare, etc.)

- Educate families, staff and the public about the importance of the first years of life. Make an effort to reach those not fluent in English or isolated from the community by geographic, cultural, social, or economic factors.
- Collaborate with other service providers and community partners to expand, coordinate, and improve early childhood programs and services. Share newsletters, sponsor shared staff training or develop new projects together.
- Make facilities safe and inviting for young children and their parents and caregivers.
- Enhance the quality of the early childhood services through staff development, national accreditation, and ongoing evaluation and improvement efforts.
- Participate in community efforts to define and improve the quality of services for young children and their families. Establish or contribute to “one-stop” resource centers to link families with appropriate services.
- Make collaborative efforts to help parents identify and seek early assistance for young children with disabilities.