# Creating an Early Childhood System

Adapted from Karen Ponder, February 9, 2010 presentation to the Arizona Early Childhood Task Force

**An organized, inter-related network of elements, programs and services for all children.**

# Purpose of System Planning in Arizona

To get measureable results for Arizona's young children and their families

# Why is a System Important?

•Affecting school readiness requires comprehensive approaches and involvement from all sectors:  health, mental health, family support, early care and education, parents, higher education, faith communities, business, the media and many others

# Why is a System Important?

- To maximize resources including multiple funding streams with their own regulations and requirements
- To improve the performance of multiple systems impacting young children and their families

# Why is a System Important?

- There are individual variations in the circumstances and needs of children and their families
- There is duplication of services and a lack of coordination and many children are not being served

# Why is a System Important?

- There are inefficiencies in service delivery and varied quality in programs
- Current services are both market based and government financed and both public and private issues must be addressed

# Why is a System Important?

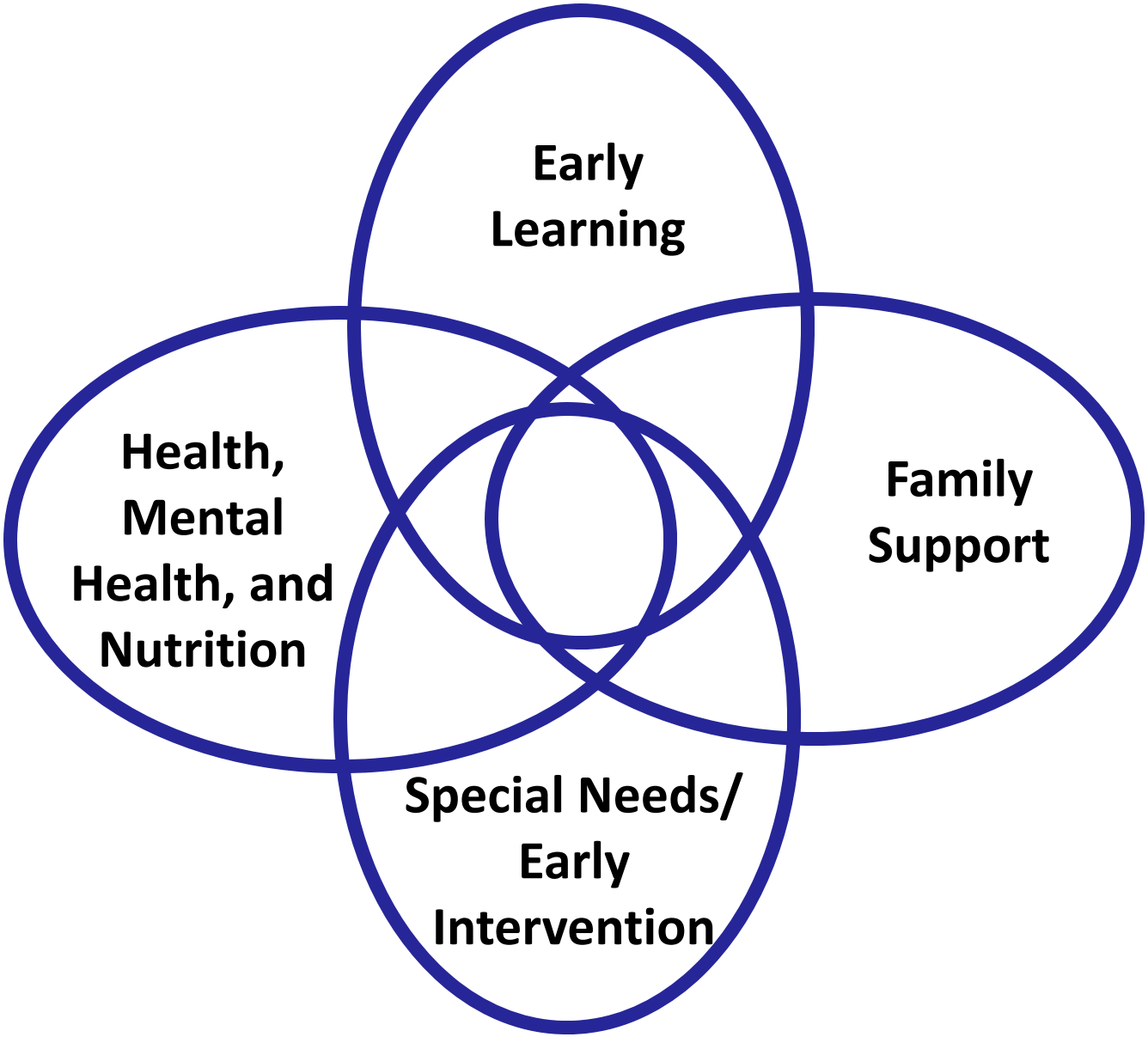
- To reduce turf issues through a shared vision and agreed-upon goals and objectives
- Helps to secure needed policy changes and improvements
- Better communication among partners

# Characteristics of an Effective System

- Comprehensive
- Accessible for children and families
- Scalable
- Outcome focused
- Accountable

# Components to Consider Early Childhood Goal Areas

- Early Care and Education
- Family Support and Education
- Health, Mental Health and Nutrition
- Special Needs and Early Intervention


Early Learning
Health, Mental Health, and Nutrition
Family Support
Special Needs/ Early Intervention

# System Areas to Consider

- Context—successfully building a political context that leads to resources
- Components—establish effective programs and services
- Connections—create better linkages between components
- Infrastructure—create supports that enable continuous improvement
- Scope and Scale—the system can produce broad impacts for system beneficiaries

# System Areas to Consider

| Changing the political environment that surrounds the system and affects its success | Establishing high-performing and quality programs and services | Creating strong and effective linkage across the system | Developing the supports the system needs to function effectively and with quality | Ensuring the system is comprehensive and works for all children |
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| • Policy changes that expand or enhance programs<br>• Funding streams that are more flexible across programs<br>• Public engagement or mobilization<br>• New advocates or champions<br>• New knowledge and perspectives | • Expanded program reach or coverage<br>• Improved program quality<br>• Increased operational efficiency<br>• New programs or services | • Coordinated eligibility assessments and applications<br>• Referrals occurring from one program to another<br>• Joint planning across system components<br>• Shared data systems for tracking individuals | • Consistent standards of quality across the system<br>• Education and training to ensure an appropriately skilled systems workforce<br>• Technical assistance to support systems development<br>• Defined roles and mechanisms for accountability | • Availability of programs and services throughout a geographic region<br>• A comprehensive array of programs and services for system beneficiaries<br>• Long-term financial security to maintain the system over time<br>• Shifts in system ownership, meaning that a broad array of people involved in the system, especially those on the frontlines, assume responsibility for maintaining the system |

# Virginia's Plan for Smart Beginnings

## Goals

### Governance and Financing:
All sectors will be engaged in creating & sustaining collaborative structures to ensure an effective early childhood system.

### Parent Support and Education
All families of children prenatal to five will have the information & support they need to promote their child's optimal development & school readiness.

### Early Care and Education
All families will have access to high quality early care and education.

### Health
All families of children prenatal to age five will have access to a full range of prevention & treatment services to ensure their children are healthy.

### Public Engagement
All Virginians will recognize the importance of early childhood and act to support policies and investments promoting a Smart Beginning for all children.

## Objectives

**Governance and Financing**

A) Establish & sustain a structure within the executive branch to effectively coordinate the planning, financing, delivery and evaluation of early childhood programs.

B) Create and sustain a statewide public-private entity to consistently guide early childhood initiatives and provide resources, technical assistance, and accountability to local coalitions.

C) Increase the capacity of local partnerships working to coordinate, improve, & expand delivery of early childhood programs & services.

D) Increase public-private investments and braid funding streams for maximum impact.

E) Ensure accountability with program standards & measurement mechanisms to track identified outcome indicators.

F) Promote a high quality workforce providing services for young children and families.

**Parent Support and Education**

A) Increase access for all families to quality information and supportive services.

B) Increase the quality of parenting support programs.

**Early Care and Education**

A) Improve the quality of early care and education programs.

B) Expand availability and access to high quality early care and education programs.

**Health**

A) Foster public and private sector initiatives to improve the affordability of health services.

B) Increase access to health services through expansion, increased coordination, and effective practices and policies.

**Public Engagement**

A) Persuade the public and key leaders and decision makers of the importance of early childhood and the benefits of early childhood initiatives (i.e., Make the Case).

B) Increase participation and engagement of leaders to support state and local early childhood initiatives.

C) Promote collective action to alter key early childhood systems and policies at local and state levels, in both public and private entities.

D) Regularly inform the public and all stakeholders of progress on Virginia's Plan for Smart Beginnings.

## Outcomes

*System Outcomes—*

1. Increased and more diverse public private resources are available for the early childhood system
2. A strong workforce of professionals serving children and families sustained by an effective professional development system
3. State budget and policies reflect and support key system goals
4. Increased data linkages & information sharing among partners and agencies
5. Local plans are aligned to state-level priorities & coordinated among programs
6. A strong, effective governance structure at both the state & local levels
7. An effective system of evaluation for program improvement & accountability

*System Outcomes—*

1. Increased capacity of home visiting and parent education programs
2. Increased use of strategies to promote and sustain parental involvement
3. Increased child care and health professional awareness of family support best practices
4. Increased inter-agency coordination and improved distribution mechanisms for parent information about state and local services
5. Increased uniformity of agency and provider messages to parents

*Child/Family Outcomes—*

1. Increased family awareness of available services and supports
2. Increased number of eligible families enrolled in evidence based or evidence informed home visitation programs
3. Increased number of parents enrolled in evidenced based parent education and support programs
4. Increased family participation in early childhood programs through parent leadership opportunities

*System Outcomes—*

1. Increased quality of early care and education programs
2. Increased coordination of funding and service delivery among ECE programs and between ECE programs and public schools
3. Early care and education programs have increased and more sustainable funding sources, including increases in subsidy reimbursement rates to support quality
4. Increased use of appropriate, consistent, and comprehensive assessments by public and private ECE programs

*Child/Family Outcomes—*

1. Increased number of children enrolled in the Virginia Preschool Initiative, Head Start and Early Head Start, and high quality early care and education programs
2. Increased number of children scoring in the appropriate development range or meeting the appropriate benchmark on the PALS preK and PALS K
3. Increased number of children with special needs receiving consistent ECE services and supports
4. Increased number of 3rd grade students passing standards of learning assessments
5. Decreased retention rates for children in grades K-3

*System Outcomes—*

1. Increased resources available for Early Intervention services (mental health, mental retardation, and developmental delay)
2. Increased access to quality healthcare (physical, behavioral, dental) for at-risk populations
3. Increased use of a medical & dental home

*Child/Family Outcomes—*

1. Increased number of children enrolled in public (Medicaid and FAMIS) and private insurance
2. Increased number of pregnant women receiving prenatal care within first 13 weeks
3. Increased number of EPSDT screenings and services provided
4. Increased number of 0-1 and 0-3 year olds in Early Intervention programs
5. Increased number of children receiving mental health services paid for by public & private insurance

*System Outcomes—*

1. Strong, organized community networks for advocacy and building public will
2. Consistent and effective advocacy messages for various audiences
3. A strong, growing, and mobilized pool of early childhood champions in all sectors
4. Increased awareness of the importance of early childhood development and its role in improving Virginia's economy and quality of life
5. Stakeholder commitment to a unified policy agenda

SMART BEGINNINGS
Ready for School. Ready for Life.

# Arizona's Early Childhood System

| If We: | We Create: | Resulting In: | Achieving: |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Develop and fund high quality services for children and families that are necessary but not yet available** | Coordinated, high-quality service system for young children | Early Learning<br>All children have access to high quality, culturally responsive early care & education. | All Arizona's children are ready to succeed in school and in life. |
| **Strengthen already existing high quality services for children** | | Family Support/Literacy<br>All families have the information, services & supports they need to help children achieve their fullest potential. | |
| **Partner to build a system of early childhood services and information for families** | | Early Childhood Professional Development<br>All child care/education & health professionals are well prepared, highly skilled and compensated commensurate with their education & experience. | |
| | | Health<br>All children have access to high quality preventive & continuous health care to promote physical, mental, oral and nutritional health. | |
| **Lead through the synergy of statewide and local strategic planning** | Leadership capacity and infrastructure to create and sustain the high-quality service system | Early Childhood System<br>The early childhood system is high quality, child & family centered, coordinated, integrated & comprehensive. | |
| **Harness data and technology to build infrastructure and support data-based decision making and accountability** | | | |
| **Shift the brand and awareness of early childhood in Arizona** | | Public Awareness<br>All Arizonans understand the importance of the early years & recognize the influence of early childhood development, health & education on Arizona's economy & quality of life and, as a result, substantially support early childhood development, health, and education both politically and financially. | |

# Developing a Model Early Childhood System

**SYSTEM VISION: All Arizona children by the time they are 5 years old have a solid foundation for success in school and in life because we have worked together to create a family-centered, comprehensive, collaborative and high-quality early childhood system that addresses the child's development, health and early education.**

**Educators**
- Early care and education
- K–12

**Higher Education**
- Colleges
- Universities
- Researchers

**Public Agencies/ Elected Officials**
- Local
- State
- Federal
- Tribal

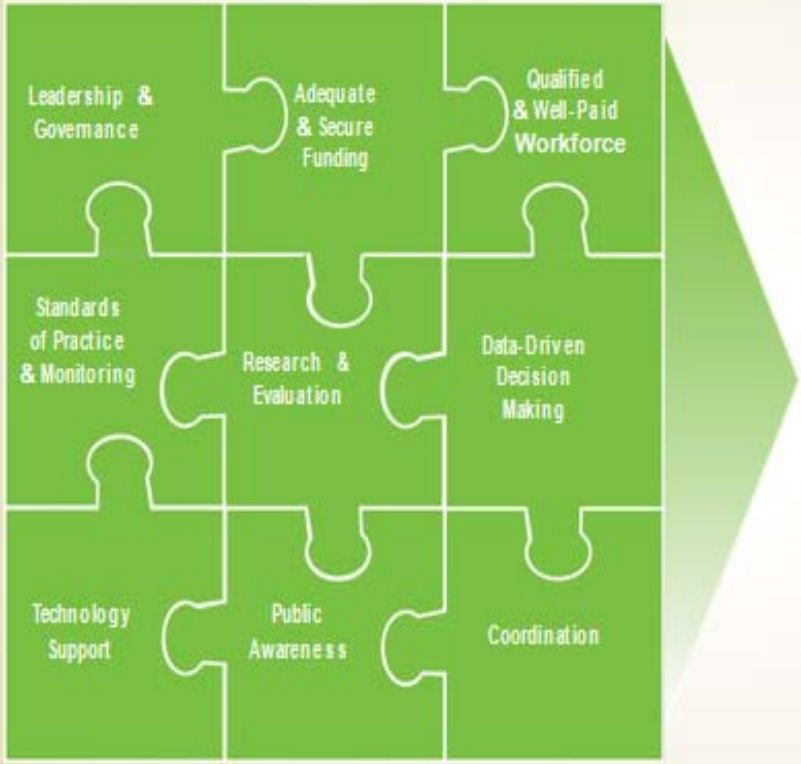
**Health and Support**
- Health providers
- Health systems
- Family-support organizations

**Community/Philanthropic**
- Nonprofits
- Advocacy organizations
- Philanthropies
- Business

**Young Children & Families**

# Key System Elements and System Outcomes

Having all elements in place will help accelerate positive outcomes.




- Access to high-quality, culturally responsive early care and education
- Access to high-quality preventive and continuous health care
- Information, services and support for families
- Well-prepared, highly skilled and appropriately compensated professionals
- Coordinated, integrated and comprehensive system
- Public understanding and support

# 10 School Readiness Indicators

1. #/% children demonstrating school readiness at kindergarten entry in the development domains of social-emotional, language and literacy, cognitive, and motor and physical
2. #/% of children enrolled in an early care and education program with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars
3. #/% of children with special needs enrolled in an inclusive early care and education program with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars
4. #/% of families that spend no more than 10% of the regional median family income on quality care and education with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars
5. % of children with newly identified developmental delays during the kindergarten year
6. # of children entering kindergarten exiting preschool special education to regular education
7. #/% of children ages 2-4 at a healthy weight (Body Mass Index-BMI)
8. #/% of children receiving at least six well child visits within the first 15 months of life
9. #/% of children age 5 with untreated tooth decay
10. % of families who report they are competent and confident about their ability to support their child's safety, health and well being

# Roles of the System Partners

- Leader—convening and facilitating
- Partner—co-convene and facilitate or participant
- Participant

# Lessons Learned

- An open, visible process is needed
- A diverse group of thinkers is important
- Choose strategic areas of focus for an actionable agenda
- Need to consider breadth and depth of system
- Need to determine if components are equally weighted or some areas emphasized?

# Lessons Learned

- Strategic decisions are required: Slicing the pie doesn’t work because of too many needs and not enough money
- Draw from knowledge base that already exists