

**The Arizona Early Childhood Institute (AzECI)
Proposed by Arizona University Consortium**

The creation of the Arizona Early Childhood Institute (AzECI) is meant to provide the state of Arizona with a premier early childhood research, development and technical assistance center to serve as a comprehensive resource and information hub for Arizona's families, early childhood service providers, educators, and researchers as well as the early childhood community both nationally and internationally. Using the combined intellectual, experiential and financial resources of the ABOR university early childhood researchers and collaborators, the primary functions of this interdisciplinary Institute will be as follows:

- Conduct and coordinate among the ABOR universities and constituents an independent evaluation of the state's early childhood initiative;
- Create resources for multidisciplinary research, outreach, and technical assistance related to critical issues in early childhood, including knowledge about the development of the state's vulnerable young children such as Native American children and their families;
- Assist the First Things First – Early Childhood Development and Health Board in serving as an additional information hub and clearinghouse for all interested stakeholders across issues of early childhood health, development, and education;
- Foster opportunities within schools and institutions of higher education to create pathways for prospective, early childhood professionals to gain knowledge and experience with young children, thereby maximizing their learning and preparedness for the work place;
- Facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration among the state's educational, governmental and private/non-profit agencies by sponsoring conferences, workshops and other activities designed for information sharing across key issues related to early childhood research and development.

Through a comprehensive research agenda designed to study issues across health, education and service delivery in early childhood, AzECI's overall goal is to provide information at *all* levels of the system, thus ensuring that both the theory and practice of early childhood education and development is such that Arizona's children do, as First Things First has stated, "enter school ready to succeed." Examples of factors to be studied by AzECI include, but are not limited to the following: (a) biological, neurological, and psychological development in early childhood, (b) the impact of differing language environments upon children's socio-emotional, language and academic development, (c) the influence of differences in the initial training and continuing education of early childhood teachers and paraprofessionals upon children's social and academic abilities, (d) the relationship between families' socio-cultural networks, educational environments, and early childhood provider services and networks, and (e) the impact of funding sources, provider's delivery systems and state and federal policy issues upon successful collaboration among early childhood stakeholders in Arizona and in other cities and states.