



Arizona Early Childhood Task Force

Arizona Early Childhood Task Force Recommended Priority Roles for First Things First

On August 11, 2010, the Arizona Early Childhood Task Force reviewed the results of the online priorities survey. The Task Force acknowledged the following:

- 1) FTF is an essential agency in Arizona's early childhood system but there are many other critical partners who also have important roles.
- 2) FTF cannot feasibly devote sufficient time and resources at this time to carry out all the roles that are listed in the model system document if the expectation is to make a measurable difference.
- 3) There are some roles that FTF must take on, due to statutory requirements and resources that have already been committed.
- 4) There are some areas in which FTF has already created momentum.
- 5) Some of the roles included in the model system document are of necessity linked—if you take on one, there may be another that must be done to achieve the desired results (e.g., quality and professional development).
- 6) Establishing priorities is challenging, as all of the 20 roles form a complete early childhood system when taken as a whole. The Task Force was assured that the intent of the prioritization work was to focus resources across the state. Regional Councils will still have the opportunity to address their unique needs and build on their existing assets. Furthermore, as progress is made and opportunities present, additional roles may be addressed.

Following is the list of five priorities for action within the next one to three years. These are the roles for which the Task Force recommended FTF establish measurable benchmarks and devote resources in order to achieve results for Arizona's young children and their families. These priorities are services which could be funded at both state and regional levels:

Quality, Access, and Affordability of Regulated Early Care and Education Settings - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for increased availability of and access to high quality, regulated, culturally responsive, and affordable early care and education programs.

Supports and Services for Families - Convene partners, provide leadership, provide funding, and advocate for development, enhancement, and sustainability of a variety of high quality, culturally responsive, and affordable services, supports, and community resources for young children and their families.

Building Public Awareness and Support - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for efforts to increase public awareness of and support for early childhood development, health, and early education among partners, public officials, policy makers, and the public.

Professional Development System - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for the development and enhancement of an early childhood professional development system that addresses availability, accessibility, affordability, quality, and articulation.

Access to Quality Health Care Coverage and Services - Collaborate with partners to increase access to high quality health care services (including oral health and mental health) and affordable health care coverage for young children and their families.

In addition, the Task Force recommended that FTF take a leadership role in three priorities that focus on program and process development at the state level. These are:

Early Childhood System Funding – Secure, coordinate, and advocate for resources required to develop and sustain the early childhood system. [This does not mean that FTF would be the sole funder of the early childhood system, but would take an active role in helping to increase and coordinate available resources.]

Early Care and Education System Development and Implementation - Convene partners and provide leadership in the development and implementation of a comprehensive early care and education system that is aligned both across the spectrum of settings and with the full continuum of the educational system.

Quality Early Care and Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment - Convene partners, provide leadership, and provide funding for the development and implementation of quality standards for early childhood care and education programs and related curricula and assessments. [This is integral to improving the quality of early care and education settings.]