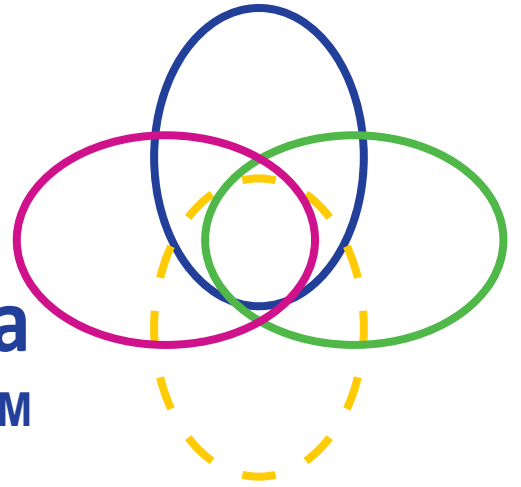




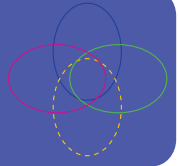
# A POLICY FRAMEWORK for an Early Childhood Iowa PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM



A framework to empower early childhood professionals to improve the quality of services provided to young children and their families

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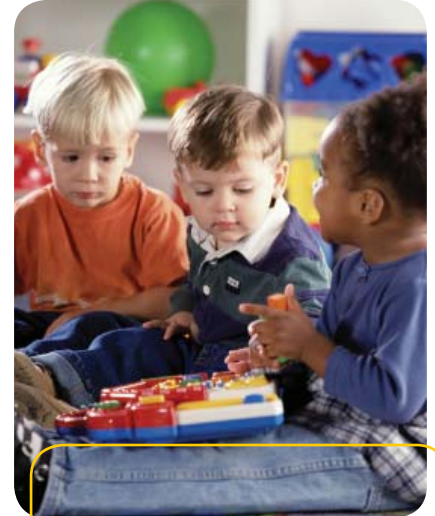
Iowa's Early Childhood Professional Development System is fragmented, duplicative and lacks essential resources. This framework addresses these weaknesses by focusing on policies that connect professional development activities to support effective implementation of a coordinated system.

**Iowa's Early Childhood Professional Development System will be a system of integrated supports for early childhood professionals that empower them to improve the quality of services provided to young children and their families.** This framework highlights the principles and policy areas that will build and sustain an integrated, comprehensive system uniting the early childhood sectors<sup>1</sup> of early learning, family support, special needs/early intervention and health, mental health and nutrition – and addresses the needs of children ages 0 to 5 and their families. This framework is addressed to policy makers, stakeholders and early childhood professionals.

**Early childhood professionals need preparation, ongoing development and support to ensure that Iowa's youngest children and their families have quality early childhood experiences.** In turn, Iowa's professional development system needs the support of public policies to offer this essential development.

As defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children's *Workforce Designs* initiative, the principles and policy areas look beyond the status quo; they intentionally promote building and supporting an efficient cross-sector system that decreases duplication and increases accountability and sustainability.<sup>2</sup> **The integrated policies are aimed at the development and retention of a qualified, stable and well-compensated early childhood workforce.**<sup>3</sup> Research points to the knowledge and skills of an early childhood workforce as the cornerstone of high quality early childhood programs.<sup>4</sup>

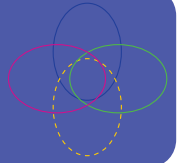
This policy framework provides a roadmap to create a comprehensive professional development system; addressing professional standards, career pathways, articulation, leadership, evaluation and financing by its delineation of results and performance measures.



Professional development is facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are designed to support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions, as well as the application of this knowledge in practice.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix for definition of Iowa's four early childhood sectors. <sup>2</sup> Policy concepts, direct excerpts, and graphics throughout are used by permission of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), LeMoine, S. (2008). *Workforce Designs: A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems*. Washington, DC: NAEYC. <sup>3</sup> Iowa's Early Childhood workforce is defined as those individuals in direct service roles (working directly with young children and their families) and in non-direct service roles (working on behalf of children and their families in training, resource and other administrative roles). <sup>4</sup> Shonkoff & Phillips 2000.

# PRINCIPLES FOR POLICYMAKING



The following four principles make it possible for Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) to build and support a comprehensive, integrated professional development system. The principles are aimed at the development and retention of a sustained early childhood workforce.

## **Integration**

Through the existing structure of ECI, an integrated professional development system that crosses the early childhood sectors will be developed. Policies will be created to promote the building and support of an efficient cross-sector system that decreases duplication of efforts and increases sustainability. Policies will be embedded into the early childhood system with appropriate rules, regulations and statutes with leadership across state agencies. Policies will also be embedded in other cross-sector activities that touch the workforce. For example, policies may be embedded in or have linkages to state partners and state initiatives.

ECI supports consistent practice and integration of professional development policies and regulations across state agencies.

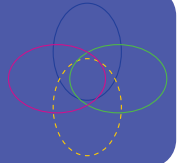
## **Quality Assurance**

Through ECI, mechanisms and processes will be in place to ensure accountability for Iowa's investment in quality professional development that produces positive outcomes. In addition to fiscal accountability, there will be accountability to the early childhood workforce and young children and their families. Quality assurance processes, including ongoing evaluations at the individual, program, and system level, will be built into systems.

ECI programs will be expected to show evaluation results indicating positive outcomes for children and will be monitored for fiscal responsibility.

### **Policy-Making Principles**





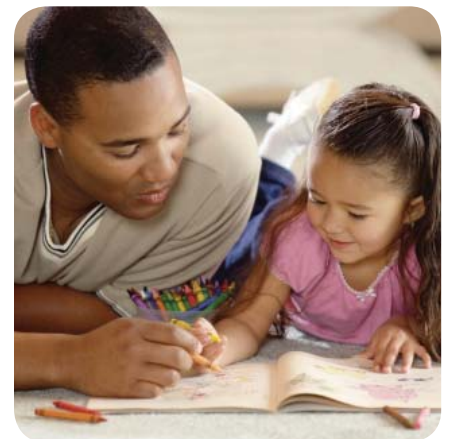
## ***Diversity, Inclusion and Access***

**Diversity** in Iowa is multidimensional. One part of diversity is the human aspect reflecting the varied demographics of Iowa’s children, families and practitioners along the dimensions of age, gender, race, ethnicity, language, ability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and first and second language development. ECI has created a Diversity Taskforce to serve in an advisory role for the early childhood system and will address diversity gaps.

ECI supports policies that advance the recruitment, development and retention of a diverse workforce.

The goal of Iowa’s integrated professional development system is to encourage diversity but minimize discrepancies in individual and sector access to resources and opportunities, providing equal access to the early childhood workforce. **Access** is the how of addressing diversity and inclusion. It includes offering a variety of mechanisms for both background information on Iowa’s professional development system and related activities. The early childhood workforce should have access to equitable, high quality professional development.

Attention to **diversity**, **inclusion** and **access** issues—like those of integration and quality assurance—is a crucial part of Iowa’s professional development policies. Iowa will create policies that support the recruitment, development and retention of a workforce that includes professionals who reflect the diversity of the children and families served and that is also prepared to work with children and families of diverse cultures and abilities.

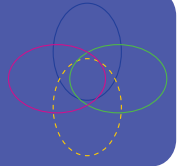


## ***Compensation Parity***

Compensation parity means that compensation is equal or equivalent to other similar fields and the status of the work and individual’s education, experience and responsibilities are recognized and rewarded appropriately. Setting standards for what the early childhood workforce should know and can do must go hand-in-hand with compensation parity, or the field will be unable to compete not only with other sectors but also with other industries in which workers have comparable credentials but are better compensated.

ECI supports compensation parity for the early childhood workforce.

## SIX ESSENTIAL POLICY AREAS



Iowa's Early Childhood Professional Development System requires supportive policies to ensure its goals are attainable and successful. The following six essential policy areas make it possible to build and support a comprehensive professional development system. To be effective, each of these policies must be integrated, attending to the early childhood sectors, include quality assurance mechanisms, support diversity, and provide sufficient and sustainable funding. **This framework provides the current status of each early childhood sector in Iowa and defines opportunities and next steps for advancing Iowa's Early Childhood Professional Development System.**

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### **POLICY AREA 1: Professional Standards**

**Professional standards guide the content of professional preparation and continuing education** including qualifications across roles and settings. Professional standards in some cases are determined by program standards. Iowa's early childhood professions require staff to demonstrate their preparedness to successfully fulfill their job duties and to keep their knowledge and skills up to date. Iowa policies will specify qualifications that address levels and content of education as well as ongoing development.

#### **Early Learning**

##### **In Iowa's Current System**

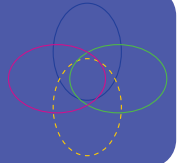
The roles and professional positions in the Early Learning sector are vast and extend among many different types of settings. Iowa's early childhood professionals include those working directly with young children and families as well as those working to support the provision of early childhood services to young children and their families. These early childhood professional roles require different types and levels of competencies<sup>5</sup> but share a common core centered in early childhood education. Current Iowa competencies need ongoing review and revision to ensure implementation of ever changing best practices. These revised competencies will form the basis for career pathways and early childhood training and coursework.

#### **Next Steps**

- Develop, implement and revise competencies and levels utilizing nationally and/or state recognized professional preparation standards.
- Link professional development to competencies and outcomes.
- Incorporate competencies into teacher licensure, endorsements and regulatory requirements.
- Explore creating a credentialing system.

<sup>5</sup> Core competencies are defined as a demonstration of observable skills based on dispositions and knowledge

# SIX ESSENTIAL POLICY AREAS



## Special Needs/ Early Intervention

### In Iowa's Current System

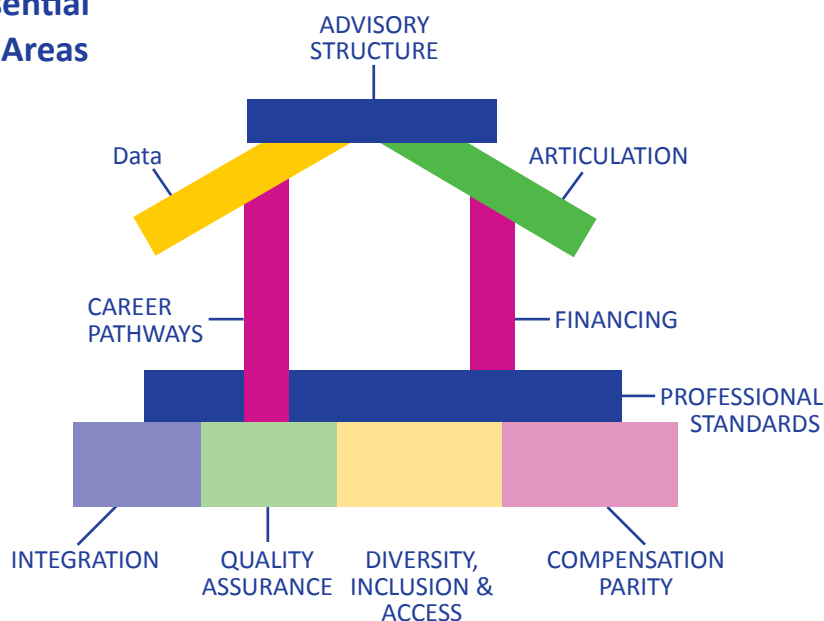
Iowa's early childhood professionals include those working directly with young children with disabilities and their families as well as those working to support the provision of early intervention services. Current Iowa standards need ongoing review and revision to ensure implementation of ever changing best practices. The revised competencies will form the basis for career pathway and early intervention training and course work.

### Next Steps

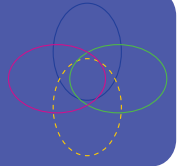
- Identify, develop, implement and revise competencies and levels utilizing nationally and/or state recognized professional preparation standards.
- Offer professional development addressing special needs/ early intervention across programs and roles.



## Six Essential Policy Areas



# SIX ESSENTIAL POLICY AREAS



## Family Support

### In Iowa's Current System

Family Support direct service provider and Family Support Supervisor are the two primary professional positions in the Family Support sector. The direct service providers have different job titles depending upon the organization and the program model; these include Parent Educator, Family Development Specialist and Family Advocate. Over 90% of family support staff have a B.A. degree. Major courses of study include education (secondary, elementary and early childhood), health (Registered Nurse), and social work (social work, human services, psychology, sociology, and human development).

The University of Iowa and Iowa State University offer a certification in Family Development. The classes provided last approximately eight days over several months. This type of course assists in providing a baseline of common knowledge to persons entering the family support workforce. The course assists in filling any gaps that may exist in pre-service course work. Relatively few program models, except for Family Development and Self Sufficiency (FaDSS), mandate successful completion of the certification program.

The University of Iowa also offers a comprehensive certification program for Family Support Supervisors that is approximately the same duration as the Family Development Specialist certification course. Currently, no program model mandates completion of the supervisor certification.

The Iowa Family Support Standards<sup>6</sup> contain professional standards for both direct service providers and supervisors. The standards were expanded to create best practice guidelines for Family Support Professional Development.

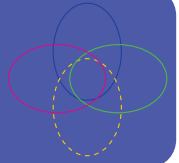
### Next Steps

- Implement the Family Support Best Practice Guidelines for Professional Development<sup>7</sup>.
- Develop additional best practice recommendations for training content and providers.
- Explore requiring family support certification for direct service providers and supervisors.

The Iowa Family Support Standards contain professional standards for both direct service care providers and supervisors. The standards were expanded to create best practice guidelines for Family Support Professional Development.

<sup>6</sup> Iowa Family Support Standards: [www.empowerment.state.ia.us/files/family\\_support/iowaFamilySupportStandards7-09.pdf](http://www.empowerment.state.ia.us/files/family_support/iowaFamilySupportStandards7-09.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Iowa Family Support Best Practice Guidelines for Professional Development: [www.empowerment.state.ia.us/files/family\\_support/iowa%20FamilySupportPBbestpracticesrecommendationsfinal.pdf](http://www.empowerment.state.ia.us/files/family_support/iowa%20FamilySupportPBbestpracticesrecommendationsfinal.pdf)



## Health, Mental Health & Nutrition

### In Iowa's Current System

There are a variety of early childhood health professional roles that require different types and levels of knowledge and skills but share a common purpose centered in early childhood well-being. Iowa's health professionals include those working directly with young children and families as well as those working to support the provision of early childhood services to young children and their families. National and state standards are in place but additional standards are needed to assure health professionals are well-educated, receive ongoing professional development and possess the ability to implement evidence-based practices. There is a need for an early childhood certification because of the lack of early childhood-specific curriculum/training for health professionals.

### Next Steps

- Design and implement an early childhood certification to enhance the knowledge of all the health disciplines that impact children.
- Determine an authoritative body to issue the certification.
- Implement a mental health certification to provide services for children ages 0 to 5.
- Develop a set of core competencies to address health, mental health and nutrition.

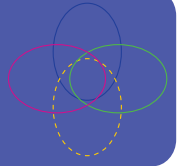


There is a need for an early childhood certification because of the lack of early childhood-specific curriculum/training for health professionals.

## INTEGRATED PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS GOAL:

As each early childhood sector determines professional standards, some common core competencies may surface. Policies may need to be developed that ensure cross-sector coordination to better align the precise nature of the competencies themselves and any professional development activities.

# SIX ESSENTIAL POLICY AREAS



## **POLICY AREA 2: Career Pathways**

**Career pathways support the continuous professional development progress of individuals** through clearly defined and easily recognizable pathways. Early childhood professionals need to be able to plan and sequence the achievement of increased qualifications, understand the professional possibilities resulting from such acquisitions, and be appropriately compensated. Policies will recognize and support individuals who change roles within the field and will be linked to appropriate compensation.

### **Early Learning**

#### **In Iowa's Current System**

There are a variety of career pathways depending on individual roles in the Early Learning sector. For example, Iowa's child care system has a pathway that emphasizes community-based training over formal education, while some preschool programs require a pathway to teacher licensure with an early childhood endorsement. There are often unclear connections between the two pathways. Some of the existing pathways in the Early Learning sector are not rigorous and relevant enough to impact quality. The lack of standardized professional development leads to an undervalued workforce for some roles in this sector. The Early Learning sector needs pathways for professionals that provide supportive services and program administration. Iowa's professional development system should define clear bridges between these pathways.

#### **Next Steps**

- Design career pathway policies aligned with job opportunities that reward investments in professional advancement with compensation.
- Include continuing education and mentoring support as part of all career pathways.
- Design and implement a comprehensive and progressive early childhood credentialing system for all roles within the early learning sector.

### **Special Needs/ Early Intervention**

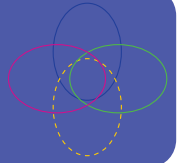
#### **In Iowa's Current System**

There are no consistent pathways that can be defined by both education and experience. Some roles within the Special Needs/Early Intervention sector have specific career educational requirements currently in place.

#### **Next Steps**

- Identify professional roles, competencies and career pathways that are already available and identify gaps.
- Design and implement competencies for various levels of positions to assure appropriate career pathways across sectors.

# SIX ESSENTIAL POLICY AREAS



## Special Needs/ Early Intervention

### Next Steps *continued*

- Design career pathway policies aligned with job opportunities that reward investments in professional advancement with compensation.
- Include mentoring, coaching and continuing education as part of all career pathways.

## Family Support

### In Iowa's Current System

There are a limited number of supervisory job openings which limits direct service staff moving into management positions. Direct service staff can, however, be encouraged to specialize in some aspect of the field. Individual formal preparation may include CEU expectations, such as social work licensure or nursing licensure. Supervisors should support opportunities for direct service staff to participate in leadership and advocacy activities for their growth and development.

### Next Steps

- Implement the curricula for Family Support supervisors.
- Design career pathway policies aligned with job opportunities that reward investments in professional advancement with compensation.
- Engage management to support opportunities for direct service staff to participate in leadership and advocacy activities for their professional growth and development.

## Health, Mental Health & Nutrition

### In Iowa's Current System

There are a variety of health, mental health and nutrition sector identified career pathways.

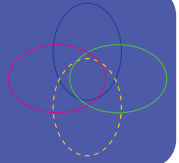
### Next Steps

- Design career pathway policies aligned with job opportunities that reward investments in professional advancement with compensation.



Supervisors should support opportunities for direct service staff to participate in leadership and advocacy activities for their growth and development.

# SIX ESSENTIAL POLICY AREAS



## POLICY AREA 3: Articulation

**Articulation is the transfer of professional development credentials, courses, credits, degrees and student performance-based competencies from one program or institution to another**, ideally without a loss of credits. Developing and implementing policies around articulation assists in creating career pathways and building capacity to meet required professional standards. Iowa colleges and universities need to form articulation agreements that assist early childhood professionals in moving seamlessly through and across undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Grants or specific directions for resource allocations need to be attached to articulation policies; colleges and universities will need fiscal support to change or augment long-standing, institutionalized processes.

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**Early Learning**

and

**Special Needs/  
Early Intervention**

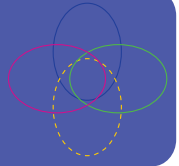
**In Iowa's Current System**

The Early Learning and Special Needs/Early Intervention sectors have similar challenges as articulation agreements are limited statewide. The majority of Iowa community colleges have endorsed the four Child Development Associate (CDA) credential courses that have been selected for statewide consistency. However, two-year early childhood course credit does not typically transfer into the early childhood or special education programs within four-year institutions. Also, professional development trainings offered by community-based training organizations have not yet been developed to meet the criteria for college credit.

### Next Steps

- Adopt and endorse statewide the Iowa Community College Alliance's common core of courses<sup>8</sup> between the community colleges and four-year colleges and universities. Standardize the number of credits that should be articulated for child care workers who have a CDA credential through non-credit methods.
- Develop strategies to promote articulation agreements among community colleges and institutions of higher education, including securing state funding for community college and four-year college/university early childhood programs to become nationally accredited by NAEYC and NCATE, respectively.
- Make mechanisms that transform diverse training and learning experiences into academic credit, such as assessment of experiential learning, readily accessible to early childhood practitioners.

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix for the Iowa Community College Alliance's common core of courses.



## Family Support

### In Iowa's Current System

Because of the high percentage of staff that are hired with a B.A. degree, articulation is less of an issue for the Family Support sector at this time. Articulation could become more of an issue if the federal government expands the Nurse Family Partnership program, which requires the family support direct service provider to be a bachelor's prepared registered nurse (Bachelor of Science in Nursing, B.S.N.). Iowa is currently lacking in the availability of B.S.N.s which would make implementation challenging if not impossible.

### Next Steps

- Explore implementing standards for trainers and curriculum.
- Explore developing a plan to increase the number of bachelor prepared nurses in partnership with the Iowa Department of Public Health.

## Health, Mental Health & Nutrition

### In Iowa's Current System

Articulation issues may vary based upon individual program and institution for the Health, Mental Health and Nutrition sector. Articulation agreements are limited statewide.

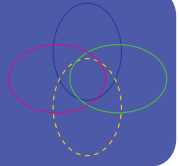
### Next Steps

- Continue to focus on articulation and partnerships.



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## SIX ESSENTIAL POLICY AREAS



### POLICY AREA 4: Advisory Structure

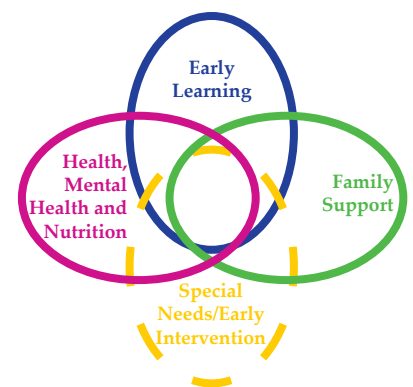
**Advisory Structure is the coordination mechanism for an integrated early childhood professional development system, which is the Early Childhood Iowa Council, codified in Iowa's 2008 legislative session. The ECI Council was established to oversee the development of a comprehensive, integrated early care, health and education system by encouraging collaboration around desired results.**

The Council serves as an alliance of stakeholders for the early care, health, and education systems that affect children ages 0 to 5 and their families. The ECI Council has authority to examine needs and provide policy recommendations for the systems. The ECI structure has a number of component groups serving as working committees, implementing projects and providing expertise in a particular area. The Professional Development (PD) Component Group and its leadership, the Professional Development Steering Committee, are key to the work of implementation of professional development. The PD Steering Committee is the author of this framework. A new structure has been developed as the steering committee implements this framework. Using the four sectors of the early childhood system (early learning, special needs/early intervention, family support, and health, mental health, and nutrition), Iowa is creating four professional development leadership teams, one for each sector. These teams will design, implement and share information about the professional development requirements and opportunities within each sector, creating opportunities for cross-sector integration and collaborations. Two representatives from each leadership team, plus additional at large members, make up the Professional Development Steering Committee. The two co-chairs of this committee also serve as co-chairs for the PD Component Group.

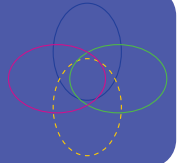
The ECI Council was established to oversee the development of a comprehensive, integrated early care, health and education system by encouraging collaboration around desired results.

### Next Steps

- Support a lead agency to provide infrastructure and funding to coordinate an Early Childhood Professional Development system in Iowa.
- Expand Early Childhood Iowa Council and Professional Development Component Group membership to be more representative from early learning, family support, special needs/early intervention and health, mental health and nutrition sectors including public and private stakeholders.
- Develop mechanisms for improved communication between ECI workgroups and local level programs.
- Support the implementation of the professional development framework.



# SIX ESSENTIAL POLICY AREAS



## ***POLICY AREA 5: Data***

**Data are essential to gauge impacts and systems change**, as well as to inform planning, evaluation, quality assurance and accountability. Data to be collected will assist systems planning, identify needed improvements and assess how the system entities and their delivery are changing to be more effective. Iowa policies will specify the methods and collection of specific data and also require nonduplication of efforts, cross-sector data collection, sharing, and alignment. Policies will require comprehensive workforce studies at regular intervals and ongoing collection of professional development utilization and improvement indicators.

Iowa policies will include specific requirements for disaggregated data by type of setting, demographics, and primary financing source(s). Data about Iowa's workforce and how its professional development system is working assists the advisory structure (Early Childhood Iowa Council) and other administrators to assess how individuals are benefiting and how system entities are changing to improve efficiency.

### ***Early Learning***

#### **In Iowa's Current System**

Individual entities collect some professional development and workforce data. Agencies collect data on the number of early childhood staff who attends the trainings offered.

Community colleges and institutions of higher education collect data on retention in early childhood programs, success at transfer institutions, graduation, placement rates and employer surveys. Quantitative data is collected, but qualitative data, including outcomes on community needs assessment indicators, is needed.

#### **Next Steps**

Collect, analyze and disseminate the following data:

- Early childhood workforce data including compensation, benefits, educational attainment, availability, access and barriers to training, turnover and diversity.
- Outcomes for professional development trainings and educational offerings.

### ***Special Needs/ Early Intervention***

#### **In Iowa's Current System**

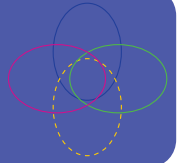
A variety of tracking and monitoring systems exist collecting broad data. State agencies collect basic provider information and results of individual evaluations, strategic plans, self assessments and other observation tools.

#### **Next Steps**

Collect, analyze and disseminate the following data:

- Data needed regarding the workforce that links to outcome-based results for children with special needs.
- Outcomes for professional development trainings and educational offerings.

## SIX ESSENTIAL POLICY AREAS



### Family Support

#### In Iowa's Current System

The Family Support Leadership group has endorsed the data collection of five outcome measures<sup>9</sup> and corresponding performance measures to be collected across all family support programming by the year 2010. Community Empowerment and the HOPES-HFI programs were fully adopted in 2009. This data is currently collected by the Office of Empowerment and the Iowa Department of Public Health. In addition, effective July 2009, the Office of Empowerment began collecting data regarding the availability of quality family support programming in Iowa.

#### Next Steps

Collect, analyze and disseminate the following data:

- Number of Family Support programs in the state.
- Data from parents regarding the types of supports that are the most valuable and if they are receiving the services they need most.

### Health, Mental Health & Nutrition

#### In Iowa's Current System

Currently, there is no systematic collection of workforce data. Individual agencies and professional associations collect quantitative data of representatives from their workforce. Additionally, the professional development needs of the workforce are not known.

#### Next Steps

Collect, analyze and disseminate the following data:

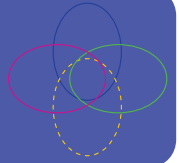
- Demographics, including age, educational level, expertise and retention of the workforce.
- Workforce data including distribution of the workforce vs. the concentration of children.
- Disease prevalence of children in geographic areas vs. the concentration of the workforce.

## INTEGRATED DATA GOAL:

Comprehensive early childhood workforce data will allow ECI to identify the current status of the workforce, examine the quality of early childhood programs, determine baseline measures, and set objectives for the future. The four early childhood sectors will explore developing a comprehensive data system that reduces duplication and disparities in data collection.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix for the five Family Support outcome measures.

# SIX ESSENTIAL POLICY AREAS



## POLICY AREA 6: Financing

**Financing is defined as appropriate funding to operate Iowa's Early Childhood Professional Development System.** The professional development system requires funding for operation and implementation of ECI framework goals. Policies will incorporate specificity so that funds are used to do the needed or newly required work, as presented in this framework, in order to move the system forward. This is especially important in the early childhood field where resources are scarce.

Funds available for professional development activities are built into the annual budget of some local programs, but what is budgeted is not enough to cover actual costs.

### In Iowa's Current System

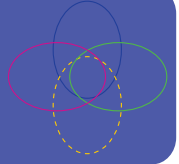
Financing for Iowa's Early Childhood Professional Development System is limited.

Funds available for professional development activities are built into the annual budget of some local programs, but what is budgeted is not enough to cover actual costs. Typically, funding for professional development activities is allocated within a specific sector and training opportunities are not always opened across sectors.

### Next Steps

When financing sources allow, Iowa's financing policies will support the financing of an integrated professional development system through the following actions:

- **Secure ongoing funding for the early childhood workforce** to increase access to education and ongoing professional development.
- **Explore the creation of a virtual training center** to better align professional development opportunities and reduce duplication.
- **Support incentives and compensation parity** for attainment of additional education and development. Other financing mechanisms such as higher reimbursement rates and grants that reflect the cost of quality do not always take into account or sufficiently address the cost of compensation parity.
- **Secure sustainable funding for the ECI professional development system infrastructure**, which may be linked and/or embedded in the Iowa's larger early childhood system. Infrastructure pieces that require financing may include the advisory body, data systems, support to higher education institutions and training systems, quality assurance processes and support for professional development system planning efforts and implementation of this framework.
- **Design and implement marketing and public relations campaigns** to build relationships with public and private organizations.



***Priorities for Iowa's Professional Development System*** - As this framework was being drafted, more than 75 individuals provided input on priorities and the key policies needed to support Iowa's integrated Early Childhood Professional Development System. Participants provided insights through questionnaires and focus groups. **The following five top priorities were identified for advancing Iowa's professional development system:**

1. **Support a lead agency/office and provide infrastructure and funding** to coordinate an Early Childhood Professional Development system in Iowa.
2. **Support adequate compensation** linked to professional development outcomes for practitioners.
3. **Develop and implement pathways, competencies and levels** utilizing nationally or state recognized professional preparation standards.
4. **Link professional development to increased standards, competencies and outcomes.**
5. **Support the implementation of the Iowa Professional Development Model.**

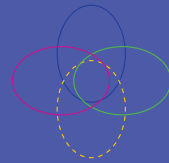
The Professional Development Steering Committee will develop an implementation plan addressing the top priorities, including short and long-term goals for Iowa's professional development system, and integration efforts. Additionally each of the four early childhood sectors will have an individual implementation plan that will identify key players, activities, timelines and resources. Implementation plan activities will be implemented through newly developed early childhood system leadership teams. Leadership teams will report progress and solicit input at Professional Development Steering Committee, PD Component Group and ECI Council meetings.

***Opportunities for Iowa's Professional Development System*** - Opportunities exist for Iowa's Early Childhood Professional Development System that will lead to and sustain an integrated, comprehensive system. There must be greater public understanding of and support for the critical importance of the early years and also for the specialized skills and knowledge needed to work effectively with young children and their families.

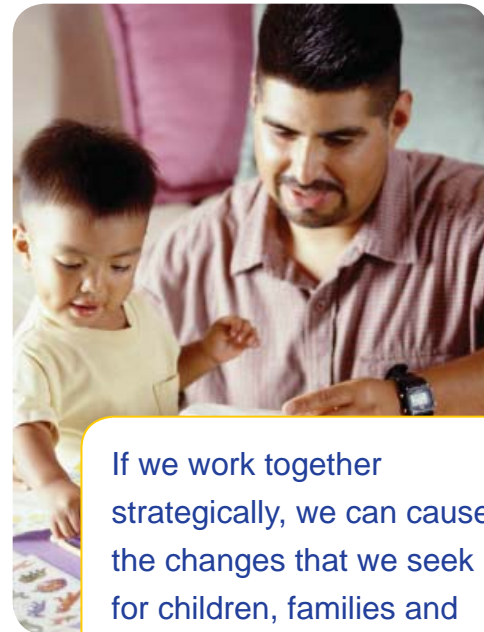
**Opportunities for Iowa's system include:**

- Assimilation of state policies to support an integrated system
- Overarching state policies
- A common definition of outcomes that is applied by all sectors
- Decisions regarding resources that ensure accountability and positive outcomes for children and their families
- A new structure of professional development that supports policies and moves the system forward

Effective integration requires intentionality, which in turn requires organization. If we work independently, without a well-defined vision and capacity to act and react to changing political, social and economic contexts, we will not make the progress that is needed. **If we work together strategically, we can cause changes that we seek for children, families and professionals in the field.**



This framework highlighted four policy-making principles (integration, quality assurance, diversity, inclusion and access, and compensation parity) and six policy areas (professional standards, career pathways, articulation, advisory structure, data, and financing) that will build and sustain an integrated Early Childhood professional development system in Iowa. The principles and policy areas look beyond the status quo to the development and retention of a competent and stable early childhood workforce that address all four sectors. The framework addresses Iowa's Early Childhood Professional Development System weaknesses of fragmentation, duplication and lack of essential resources by focusing on policies that connect professional development activities to support effective implementation of an integrated, coordinated system.



If we work together strategically, we can cause the changes that we seek for children, families and professionals in the field.

**Early childhood professionals need preparation, ongoing development and support to ensure that Iowa's youngest children and their families have quality early childhood experiences.**

In turn, Iowa's professional development system needs the support of public policies to offer this essential development. To build and sustain a competent early childhood workforce, these policies must address the four sectors of the field: early learning, family support, special needs/early intervention and health, mental health and nutrition. The policies should also address all service roles, direct and non-direct, pre-service and in-service, in each sector. Iowa needs competent professionals who know how to do their job but also have an awareness and appreciation for how children are whole individuals and need support from all sectors for their growth and development. The entire system of sectors must work together to ensure that every child, beginning at birth, is healthy and successful.

Research indicates that children who engage in high-quality early childhood programs are more likely to be ready for school and for life.<sup>10</sup> A consistent, skilled, diverse and appropriately compensated early childhood workforce is key to providing such quality services.<sup>11</sup> Iowa will work to build and retain this workforce by planning and implementing a professional developmental system from predominantly fragmented activities and programs.

**Now is a time of opportunity for Iowa to move integrated early childhood system efforts forward.**

<sup>10</sup> Berrueta-Clement et al. 1992; Ramey & Campbell 1999; Reynolds 2000.

<sup>11</sup> Phillips 2008.

## APPENDIX

**Early Childhood Sectors** (Created by the Early Childhood Systems Workgroup, an ad hoc group of over a dozen national organizations and experts, 2006.)

1. **Early Learning** - All children should have access to early care and education opportunities in nurturing environments where they can learn what they need to succeed in school and life.
2. **Special Needs/Early Intervention** - All children with special needs should be identified as early as possible, assessed and receive appropriate services.
3. **Family Support** - All families should have economic and parenting supports to ensure all children have nurturing and stable relationships with caring adults.
4. **Health, Mental Health and Nutrition** - All children need comprehensive health services that address vision, hearing, nutrition, behavioral and oral health as well as medical health needs.

## IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE ALLIANCE'S COMMON CORE OF COURSES

- Introduction to Early Childhood Education
- Child Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Early Childhood Curriculum I
- Early Childhood Curriculum II
- Child Growth and Development
- Infant/Toddler Care and Education
- Early Childhood Guidance
- Early Childhood Field Experience

## FAMILY SUPPORT OUTCOME MEASURES

1. Percent of participating families that improve or maintain healthy family functioning, problem solving and communication
2. Percent of participating families that increase or maintain social supports
3. Percent of participating families that are connected to additional concrete supports
4. Percent of participating families that increase knowledge about child development and parenting
5. Percent of participating families that improve nurturing and attachment between parent(s) and child(ren)

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- Shonkoff, J.P., D.A. Phillips, eds., & the Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. 2000. *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

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This Policy Framework is adapted from the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) *Workforce Designs* initiative, LeMoine, S. (2008). *Workforce Designs: A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems*. Washington, DC: NAEYC. The full report of *Workforce Designs* is available online at [www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi](http://www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi). Additional resources used in development of the Policy Framework are available on the Early Childhood Web site at [www.earlychildhoodiowa.org](http://www.earlychildhoodiowa.org). Iowa's Professional Development System planning work is funded by Iowa Community Empowerment.

