



For Release

Contacts:

Lisa Klein, Executive Director, Alliance for Early Success
913.642.3490, lklein@earlysuccess.org

Frank Walter, Child Trends
240-223-9302, fwalter@childtrends.org

New Report Offers Research-Based State Policies Aimed at Improving Outcomes for Vulnerable Young Children

Bethesda, Md., October 23, 2013 – A new report released today by the [Alliance for Early Success](#) and [Child Trends](#) offers state policymakers and early childhood advocates a set of policy choices, supported by research findings, to improve the health, well-being, and education of America’s youngest and most vulnerable children.

The free report, “[The Research Base for a Birth through Age Eight State Policy Framework](#),” provides the supporting research for the 38 policy choices in the framework. Each policy area includes a research discussion, synthesis of specific research, and citations. The framework identifies health, family support, and learning as essential for healthy growth and development; and standards, screening and assessment, and accountability as necessary to support good policies. While the policies can benefit all children, one underlying principle of the framework is that limited resources should first be allocated to children most at risk for poor outcomes who can benefit the most.

“We’re in the middle of a great moment in time. There’s a lot of awareness that starting out right and at the earliest time can make the difference between good outcomes now and trying to play catch-up later,” said Lisa Klein, PhD, Executive Director of the Alliance for Early Success. “What isn’t always clear is what to do and how to know if we’re making the right bets. We hope the framework and research report make it easier and give decision-makers confidence about the investments they make.”

“The findings from decades of developmental research are clear that early childhood, from birth through age eight, is a critical period for supporting children’s health, their family relationships, and their opportunities for learning,” said Kathryn Tout, PhD, a co-author of the report and co-program area director of Early Childhood Research at Child Trends. “With targeted supports, positive experiences in early childhood can help put and keep children on a path to success.”

The report addresses some of the risk factors related to health, family support, and learning critical to children’s development and offers policies to address these areas:

Health

- Health in the first eight years of life has significant cumulative and sustained effects on child and adult outcomes.

- Young children who experience toxic stress as a result of significant adversity are at higher risk for serious conditions in adulthood such as obesity and cardiovascular disease.
- Children with poor nutrition and chronic illness are more likely to miss school, and therefore miss out on important social and academic opportunities.
- Policy options to address health risks include timely and ongoing prenatal, pediatric, and oral health care, access to affordable health insurance, community-based programs to target sources of toxic stress, partnerships to coordinate health care services with early learning programs, and expanded participation in federal nutrition and assistance programs.

Family Support

- Families play the most important role in a young child's life.
- A lack of a warm, positive relationship with parents/caregivers increases the risk that children develop major behavioral and emotional problems, including substance abuse, antisocial behavior and juvenile delinquency.
- Policies to support families help them meet their needs and overcome stressors that may impair effective parenting. These programs and services support such areas as, parent engagement, parents' knowledge of child development, improving parenting skills, and job training.

Learning

- The period of birth through age eight is a critical span for the development of physical well-being and motor skills, language and literacy, early math and science skills, social-emotional development, and motivational and regulatory skills.
- Research indicates that low-income children tend to lag behind their more affluent peers on a range of development outcomes, including skills at school entry.
- One-third of all U.S. fourth-graders and half of black and Hispanic fourth-graders nationwide are reading below basic levels.
- Children who have high-quality early care and education experiences tend to have better outcomes across developmental domains than similar children who do not have such experiences.
- Policies to support learning for young children include the provision of access to high-quality early care and education, transition planning from early care, to preschool, to K-12 learning environments, and strengthening the infrastructure and content of professional development for the early childhood/teacher workforce.

This research report is part of a package that includes the [Birth Through Age Eight State Policy Framework](#), Research At-A-Glance summary report, and this comprehensive Research Base for a Birth Through Age Eight State Policy Framework. The Alliance developed the state policy framework with input from more than 150 experts, including early childhood educators, K-12 educators and administrators, advocates, researchers, policymakers, and foundation officers. Child Trends researchers conducted an extensive review of each of the policy options to identify existing evidence, promising practices, and to offer recommendations on implementation.

Alliance for Early Success

The Alliance was established in 2005 as the Birth to Five Policy Alliance with an investment by the Buffett Early Childhood Fund. Eight years later, the newly named Alliance for Early Success is supported by eight investors interested in advocacy and policies to improve the lives of vulnerable young children birth through age eight: the Buffett Early Childhood Fund; the W.K. Kellogg Foundation; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; the George Kaiser Family Foundation; the Irving Harris Foundation; the David and Lucile Packard Foundation; the Heising-Simons Foundation; and an anonymous donor.

Child Trends

Child Trends, based in Bethesda, Md., is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that provides valuable information and insights on the well-being of children and youth. For more than 30 years, policymakers, funders, educators and service providers in the U.S. and around the world have relied on our data and analyses to improve policies and programs serving children and youth. Our work is supported by foundations; federal, state and local government agencies; and by nonprofit organizations.

###