

Title: Monterey County's Early Childhood Development Initiative

Early Childhood Development Initiative Overview:

The Monterey County Early Childhood Development Initiative (ECDI) is a collective impact coalition to improve outcomes using six key indicators, policy support, and community action teams.

Problem or Challenge:

Children who are born to families of lower economic and social status show achievement gaps in academic and social skills by the time they are three years old. Without being addressed through the provision of quality early childhood development programs, these gaps persist throughout their life. In Monterey County in 2012, almost one in ten County residents were under the age of five (40,131) and 30% of Monterey County's children under five lived in poverty. In addition, in 2010, 71% of almost 7,000 newborns were born into low-income families in our County.

In March 2012 Nobel Laureate James Heckman came to Monterey County to discuss how investing in early childhood heavily influences health, economic, and social outcomes for individuals and society at large. That event inspired the Monterey County Board of Supervisors to examine the status of early childhood in Monterey County.

Solution:

The Monterey County Children's Council (MCCC), established by the Monterey County Board of Supervisors, launched the Early Childhood Development Initiative in September 2012 to maximize community efforts to improve early childhood development outcomes through effective coordination, capacity building, empowerment and strategic action for children from the prenatal stage through 3rd grade and their families. ECDI used a robust community process to select six key indicators that reflect the most significant needs of young children in Monterey County: maternal education level, entry to prenatal care, licensed childcare, reading to children, social and emotional skills of children, and 3rd grade reading level. ECDI is grounded in the principles of Collective Impact and has established a backbone structure that supports: a common agenda; shared measurement; mutually reinforcing activities; and continuous communication. Efforts are particularly focused in geographic areas of lower socioeconomic status, since studies show concentrated focus in those areas yields the most significant, long term results and offer a greater return on investment and reduced lifetime inequities.

Results:

Increased collaboration throughout the county has aligned efforts as the result of greater awareness of collective impact and early childhood development. Extensive community trainings and education sessions have resulted in five Collaborative Action Teams forming in communities of higher economic need. With technical assistance the teams are identifying mutually reinforcing activities to address the indicator(s) they have prioritized. This innovative and yet replicable approach is resulting in greater alignment of efforts toward common goals. The ECDI backbone also worked with county legislative office staff to add early childhood development outcomes to the county legislative platform since 2013. The ECDI Policy Advocacy Network Advisory Committee, formed in mid-2014, has created broad county-wide support for early childhood development. It has identified three goals: promoting systems change through collaborative planning, legislative advocacy and local policy change; public awareness and education; and empowering individuals and communities to take action by supporting civic engagement opportunities and capacity building for parents and caregivers.

Budget/Costs/Savings:

Recognizing the benefits of investing in early childhood development, the Board of Supervisors has committed \$300,000/year for three years, in-kind staffing, and the County Health Officer to serve as the Initiative Co-Chair. The entire initiative has a budget of \$525k for FY14-15 with additional funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Community Foundation for Monterey County and in-kind support from First 5 Monterey County, United Way, Monterey County Office of Education, California State University Monterey Bay and the Childcare Planning Council.

Every dollar invested in early childhood education produces a 10% per annum return on investment. Greater investment in early childhood education, care, and early childhood development in Monterey County will reduce the large county gap between the need for high quality licensed child care and its availability (currently, only 19% of children and 5% of infants with parents in the workforce have available licensed childcare).

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