

# One Voice Texas

## A Collaborative for Health & Human Services



### Early Childhood Education: Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) Funding

Position Statement Approved by One Voice Texas: December 13, 2012

#### Issue/Concern:

Numerous studies have shown the effectiveness and long-term benefits of early intervention services for children under the age of three. At a time when eligibility is being tightened, more and more young children with unidentified disabilities and developmental delays enter school with learning and health issues that put them far behind their peers.

#### Specific Policy Recommendation(s):

- Support current funding and restore funding cuts from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislature for ECI to meet the needs of all Texas children with disabilities and/or developmental delays. Growth trends indicate increasing numbers of children who will qualify for ECI services. Effective and efficient, the ECI system enables parents and caregivers to learn skills and strategies that promote optimum childhood outcomes, frequently diminishing the need for special education classes or more intensive services.
- Restore eligibility criteria in place prior to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislature and oppose proposals to further narrow eligibility criteria and/or restrict services. The 14% reduction in ECI funding resulted in the narrowing of eligibility criteria and approximately 4,000 fewer children being served every month. In addition, children currently benefiting from the ECI system receive an average of only two (2) hours of service per month, rather than the recommended minimum of four (4) hours per month.

**How Will This Impact State Funding? What Can Be Accomplished?** Investments in quality early education reduce health and human services costs for all Texans. Whenever a family cannot access an early education program or must accept a low quality program, that family is at greater risk of needing a wide range of social services and that child is likely to enter kindergarten developmentally behind by up to two years. Harvard University Center for the Developing Child estimates that **for every \$1 invested in early childhood programs, \$4-\$9 are returned.** The 2006 study by the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University showed that **every \$1 invested in quality pre-k yields \$3.50 back to Texas.** In addition, The Special Education Expenditures Project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, reports the total expenditure to educate the average school aged child with a disability is an estimated 1.90 times that spent to educate the student with no special needs. It is critical we invest in education for children of all ages, but the most significant and lasting results begin in infancy, not in kindergarten.

#### Supporting Facts/Research Resources:

1. 25 percent of children under the age of five are at risk for developmental, behavioral or social delays. (*The National Survey of Children's Health 2007, page 17*)
2. 17 percent of all children have a developmental delay or behavioral disability. In addition, many children have delays in language or other areas. But, fewer than half of children with problems are identified before starting school. (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*)
3. 700 new neural connections in a child's brain are created per second in the earlier years of life. (*Harvard University for the Developing Child*)

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