

Eaton County Early Childhood Connections

Year One Evaluation Report

February 1, 2001–June 30, 2002

Prepared for

Eaton Intermediate School District

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Executive Summary¹

KEY FINDINGS

- **Early Childhood Connections (ECC) has conducted an extremely effective public and parent awareness campaign on the importance of the early childhood period and services for parents and young children.** Thirty-one percent of adults responding to a community survey recall hearing or seeing something about early childhood education in the past six months. Results were even more dramatic for parents: 80 percent of parents with children enrolled in ECC who responded to a survey recall the statewide campaign message and 55 percent recall the Eaton County message.
- **ECC has been very successful at outreach and linking with parents of children aged birth to five years.** More than 50 percent of all children five years old or younger in Eaton County are connected to the agency partners delivering early childhood services.²
- **Parents are taking advantage of information kits offered by ECC.** Two-thirds of parents with children enrolled in ECC who reached 18- and 36-month age milestones in the first project year received information kits.
- **A significant proportion of parents who have children enrolled in ECC are aware of community resources.** Over 30 percent of parents report they are familiar with In Touch with Community Resources, a referral line and Web-based information resource.
- **A majority of parents who have children enrolled in ECC report having had their children screened.** Over 60 percent of parents report having had their children screened for health, vision, hearing, or development.
- **Parents using services in the ECC network are well informed about the development of young children.** On average, parents with children enrolled in ECC scored 6.75 out of 9 on a knowledge index of child development.
- **Parent satisfaction with early childhood services in the ECC network is very high.** Over 96 percent of parents rate home visits, parent group meetings, and parent and child play-groups as very or somewhat satisfactory.
- **The number and types of community partners in building a local system of early childhood education and care have been expanded.** Mini-grants have engaged new organizations in early childhood service delivery and a work group has created new partnerships to extend and adapt existing services for families with young children.
- **Cross-cutting findings from surveys and focus groups confirm that, while recall of information is high, continuing efforts to heighten public and parent awareness of the value of early childhood and services for parents and young children must be clear about needed action.** Consistent with the views of focus groups that parents need more information that will lead to action, the parent survey found 24 percent of parents with children enrolled in ECC had been referred to an early childhood service or organization over the last year, demonstrating that parents using early childhood services are often referred for services in the community.

¹ Response to MDE Grant Narrative Report, Section V. A.

² 2000 U.S. Census.

- **The community survey identified a paradox in the public’s attitudes: while people think early childhood education and care is a good investment, they also believe that the investment takes away from K–12 education.** This information will be used in designing the next phase of public awareness activity, along with the local investment picture described in the Eaton County economic analysis of current funding directed to early childhood. That picture presents the economic benefits, including reduced remedial services, that could be realized in Eaton County through a universal, high-quality early childhood education system.

SUMMARY OF MEASURES USED IN YEAR ONE

Increased Community and Parent Awareness

- Community awareness of and attitudes about young children, issues affecting them, and services and programs
- Parent awareness of and attitudes about young children, issues affecting them, and services and programs

Enhancement and Expansion of Early Childhood Services

- Referral sources
- Use of services
- Parent satisfaction with services
- Parent self-assessment of developmental knowledge

Creation of a Community-based Early Childhood System

- Participation of community organizations
- Implementation of a single entry for parents accessing early childhood services
- Implementation of an interagency referral process for early childhood services
- Existence of family-centered and strength-based agency policies and practices

Overview of Early Childhood Connections

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The original proposal for Early Childhood Connections (ECC), as described in the community plan and the year-one ASAP-PIE grant application, called the initiative “Early Childhood Services of Eaton County.” Soon after implementation in June 2001, the title was revised to ECC, which encompasses a broader mission of organizing and assuring universally available services for children from birth to age five and their families. Carrying out this mission requires that several roles be performed, in addition to providing parent education and support services, including:

- Coordinating and linking children and families with agencies and programs providing services aimed at the goals of increasing school readiness and family well-being;
- Strengthening the relationships among agencies and community organizations and enhancing the family-centered approach to services; and
- Instituting a long-term public awareness campaign on the value of such services and the early childhood period of life.

ECC goals are to:

- Increase community and parent awareness of the value of young children, the early childhood period of life, and the importance of environments that nurture child development;
- Expand and enhance early childhood services; and
- Create a community-based early childhood education and care system that provides services in a collaborative manner.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Program activities addressing each goal are summarized as follows:

- To increase community and parent awareness, an extensive, multimedia public awareness campaign has been launched: *Eaton County Values Every Child*. ECC has also included the statewide public awareness campaign message, *Be their Hero from age Zero*, in local campaign and outreach materials to link and reinforce the messages.
- To create a community system of early childhood education and care, the following activities are underway to support and sustain the application of effective practices:
 - Agency partners are collaborating in several areas, including agency directors serving as a PIE Management Team (a subcommittee of the Human Services Collaborative Council) and representatives of agencies and community organizations serving as members of the 0 to 5 Work Group, which is helping to assess progress toward priorities in the community plan and mobilizing new community partners. Agency representatives serve as members of several committees working on key components of system development, i.e., the Referral Team, School Readiness, Professional Development, Mini-Grants, Evaluation and Information Systems, Common Systems,

- Campaign, and Family Enrichment. Each committee works on a key dimension of system development, e.g., the School Readiness and Early School Success Committee disseminates information from brain science research and determines implications for practices with children, families, schools, agency personnel, and the community.
- Mini-grants have been awarded to 12 community entities that are undertaking activities directed at ECC goals, thus extending participation of the broader community in system development and service expansion.
 - To expand and enhance services, the following components are in place:
 - Outreach—each agency partner is developing increased understanding of programs that assist families with young children and how to connect families with those programs; local media are enlisted in notifying families about events, education opportunities, and services; and many forms of promotional material have been prepared and are being distributed, e.g., brochures, refrigerator magnets, calendars, and kites.
 - Home visits—several home visit programs are offered to meet the diverse needs of families: Building Strong Families (delivered by MSU Extension), Healthy Families (delivered by Barry-Eaton District Health Department), Family Empowerment (delivered by Highfields), and the Parent-Young Child Program (delivered by Clinton-Eaton-Ingham Community Mental Health). While not supported by the project's ASAP-PIE funding, four other home visit programs are part of the ECC service network (Early On, Infant Support Services, Maternal Support Services, and the Parent-Infant Program).
 - Parent group meetings and parent-child playgroups—The Hanen Program (delivered by the Eaton Intermediate School District) and Parents As Teachers (PAT, delivered by Capital Area Community Services) are offered. The Eaton ISD also offers multiple classes on topics of interest to families with young children. Siren/Eaton Shelter offers parent education groups and social/peer support, with the American Red Cross doing follow-up for six to nine months after a family has secured housing. In addition, Toddler Time, a weekly group held at each of the individual school districts, is an opportunity for PAT instructors to connect with families while they are waiting for training. Toddler Time includes a story time, a craft or project, finger plays, songs, and snacks, and provides a time for parents to interact.
 - Screening—the Barry-Eaton District Health Department provides health, vision, and hearing screenings; the Denver Developmental Screening Test II and/or the Ages and Stages Questionnaires are conducted by Early On and the Barry-Eaton District Health Department.
 - Community resource network—three strategies are used: (1) In Touch with Community Resources, a Web-based information and referral system for human service workers and community users; (2) a 1-800 number for information and referral; and (3) promotion of the ECC network by the project's community coordinators/developers in local communities.
 - Connections to quality preschools—Capital Area Community Services is working with two Eaton County preschools to expand Head Start programs to underserved areas of the county and to assist in attaining Head Start national performance standards. The Office for Young Children helps families find high-quality preschool and day

care centers, offering a telephone referral service to link families with approved facilities. The project also supports increased services from the Keep Early Education Positive Program (KEEP) to help preschools support children with behavioral needs by providing consultation for families and preschool staff.

ECC is presently staffed by an administrative coordinator, early childhood specialists, four community coordinators/developers, family services assistants, and secretarial/clerical support. The community coordinators/developers promote connections between families and the supports and services within each of the five local school districts, including support of local community councils for issues pertaining to children aged birth to five.

Evaluation Methodology

STRUCTURE FOR EVALUATION AND USE OF FINDINGS

Agency partners participate in the evaluation through the Evaluation and Information Systems Committee of Early Childhood Connections. The Evaluation and Information Systems Committee validates the ECC program logic model and guides development, implementation, and refinement of the evaluation design. Public Sector Consultants provides facilitation, evaluation design, data collection, and analytical support, and prepares findings for use in service and system improvements promoted by the Human Services Collaborative Council's PIE Management Committee. Eaton Intermediate School District provides additional consultation on evaluation and supports communication among the agency partners about evaluation activities.

EVALUATION APPROACH

A program logic model (see Exhibit 1) was established as the basis for evaluating ECC. The model illustrates how key activities connect to the short- and long-term outcomes sought by the initiative. Long-term outcomes include increased school readiness, improved family stability, reduced need for special education, reduced retention in grade, and a more family-friendly environment that will attract residents to Eaton County. Short-term outcomes are grouped within three major goals: community and parent awareness and education; enhancement and expansion of early childhood services; and creation of an early childhood system. Evaluation during the first year of the initiative, June 2001 through June 2002, focused on designing the evaluation and establishing measures of progress toward the three goals:

Increase Community and Parent Education and Awareness

- Parent and community awareness of the value of children is heightened.
- Parent and community understanding of the issues that impact the lives of children is increased.
- The role the community plays in supporting all children is highlighted.
- Community knowledge of available services and supports for families with young children is promoted.

Enhance and Expand Early Childhood Services

- Parents are linked to Early Childhood Connections and are referred to community services and resources.
- A seamless continuum of services is established to help families prepare their children for school success.
- Parent education and support groups are expanded.
- In-home services are expanded.
- Access to periodic developmental screening is increased.
- The ability of preschool providers and parents to support children with behavioral needs is strengthened.
- Families are linked with quality preschools and preschools are helped to meet standards.

Create a Community-based Early Childhood System

- New opportunities are created for community-based organizations to become partners in building a system of early childhood services.
- A single-entry process for parents accessing early childhood services is implemented.
- An interagency referral process for early childhood services exists.
- Family-centered and strength-based agency policies and practices are established and implemented.

PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL

The program logic model is used to guide evaluation, measuring what is happening (key activities), for what purpose (short-term outcomes), and with what result (long-term outcomes).

EXHIBIT 1

Early Childhood Connections Program Logic Model

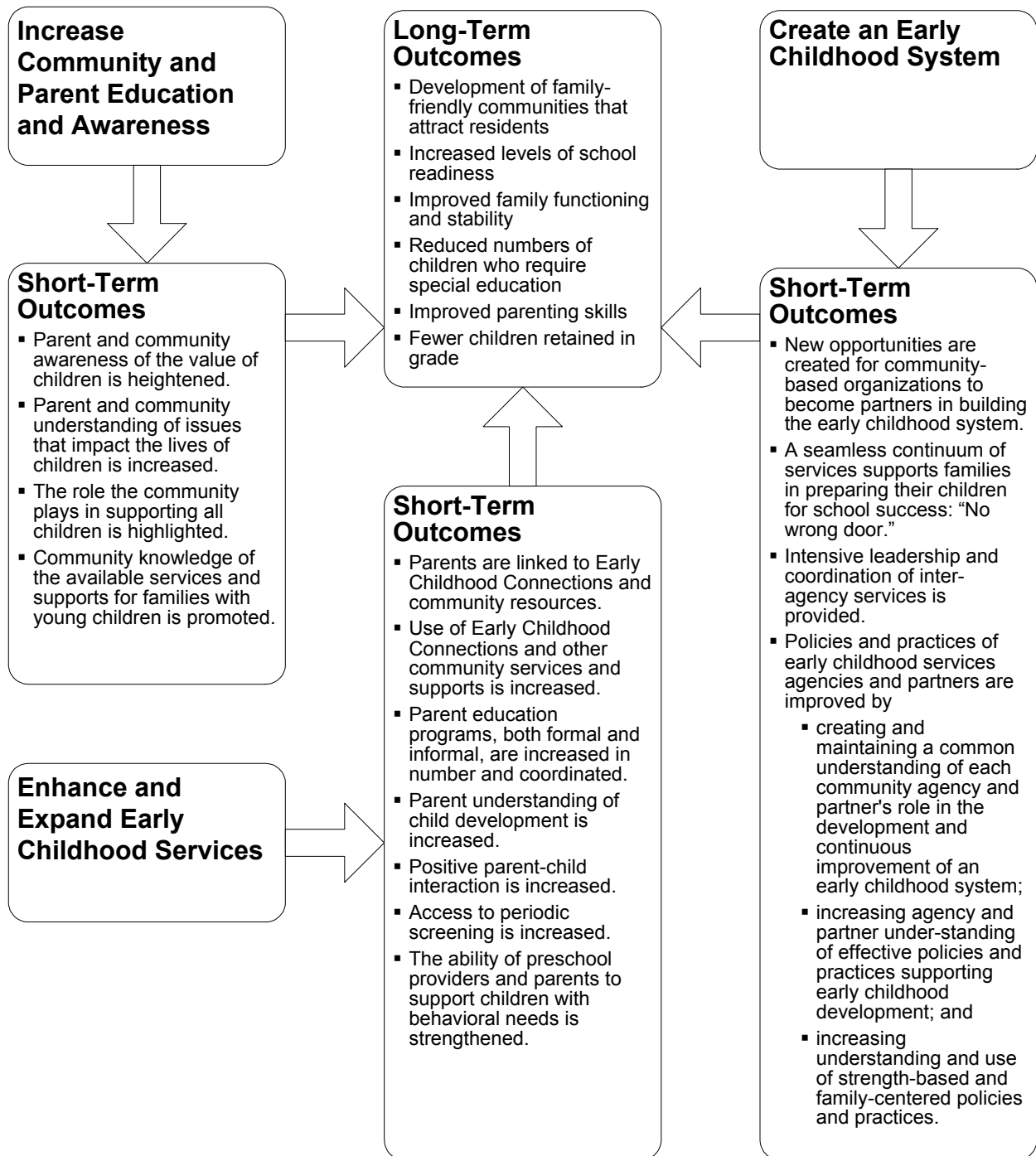
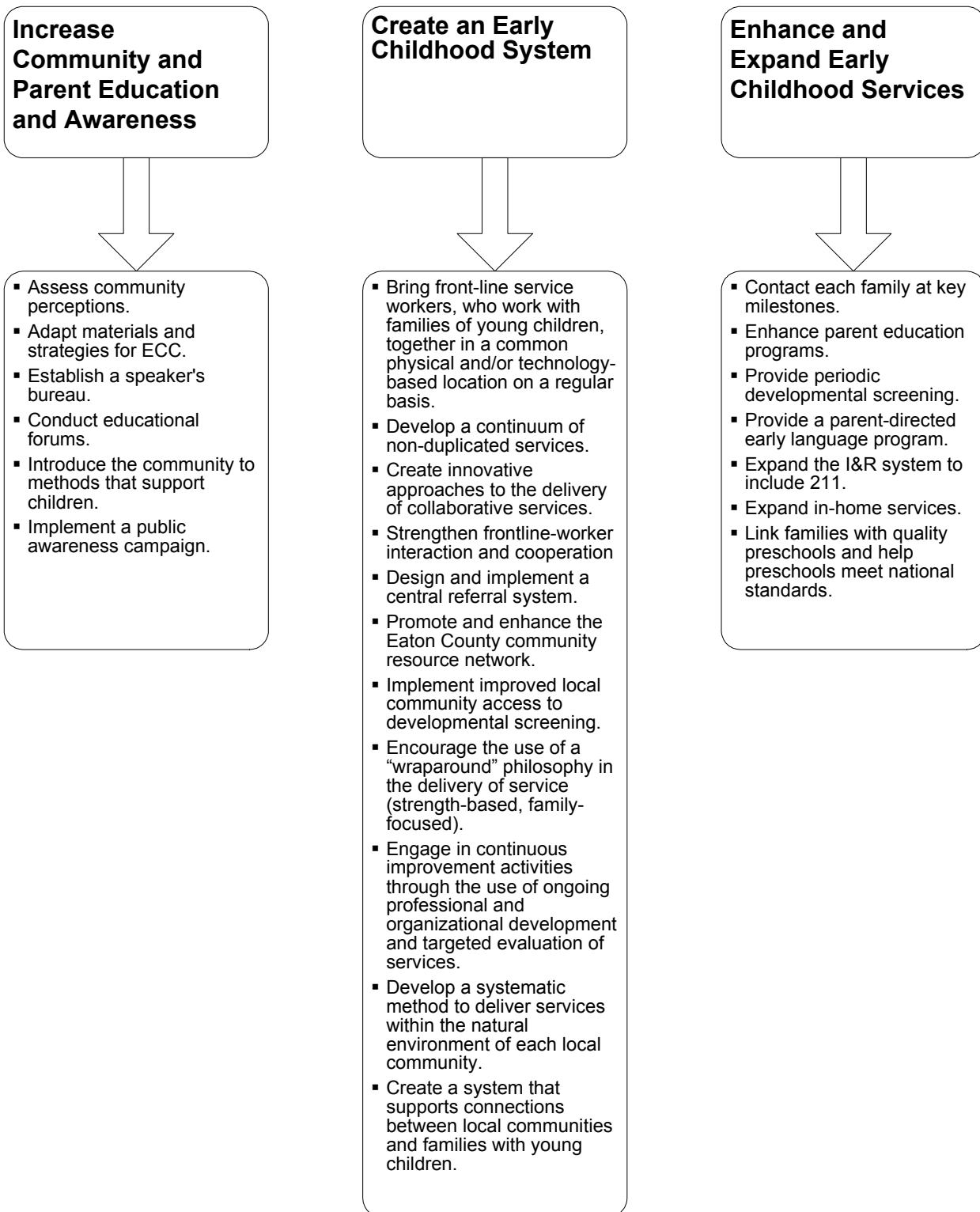


EXHIBIT 1 (cont.)
Early Childhood Connections Logic Model—Key Activities



EVALUATION DESIGN

The evaluation is designed to support performance management, using measures of process to help with implementation monitoring and measures of change to assess progress toward the short-term outcomes. Integration of evaluation and performance management helps make the process and outcome connections clear and takes full advantage of data generated through service delivery and system-building (see Appendix A, Performance Management and Evaluation). During year one, the following evaluation activities occurred:

- Performance standards and measures related to process have been established for activities directed at the short-term outcomes, which are increasing community and parent awareness of the value of early childhood, enhancing and expanding early childhood services, and creating an early childhood system.
- Measures of progress toward the short-term outcomes have been established. Awareness and education indicators have been selected, including heightened community perception of early childhood needs and supports, increased awareness of issues that affect young children, and increases in community-wide support for early childhood services. Service enhancement and expansion indicators include increased
 - contact with families,
 - referrals for community services,
 - regularity and numbers of parent education and playgroups,
 - number of home visits,
 - numbers of periodic developmental screenings, and
 - parent reports of positive interactions with their young children.

System-building indicators include the degree to which a single-entry process is used by all agency partners, increases in the number and speed of referrals, and changes in agency policy and practices toward more family-centered and strength-based services. Parent assessment of their awareness of available services and the usefulness of those services are key measures of system change. The agency partners are jointly selecting additional indicators of community change.

- A shared database for an early childhood education and care system is under discussion. Data fields for services provided through the ASAP-PIE grant were defined for a Web-based, common enrollment form that will include referral source(s), child and family demographics, and contact with ECC. At the end of the first project year, work is underway to implement the common enrollment form. Also, a method for linking service data from participating agencies to a shared database is under consideration. This single database will track data on the level and type of services provided to children and families by partner agencies. This will provide an efficient method for measuring service and system indicators.

Currently, data for ECC may be entered through four different venues.

- Parents requesting to be enrolled may fill out the return postage-paid “yellow card,” which is provided through area businesses, partnering human service agencies, ECC

presentations, and community events. By returning the card, families receive a welcome packet, newsletters, age-appropriate mailings, and an offer of a new-baby visit and a contact record is created in the database.

- Parents and/or agencies may request services (e.g., home visits, parent groups, screenings, and referrals) by submitting an enrollment form to the referral team. The referral team, which meets every Thursday, then matches the family with the most appropriate service for their needs. Family requests for specific referrals are considered the most appropriate service for their needs. The team may also suggest other services for the family to consider.
- Mini-grant recipients have been asked to have families complete a shortened version of the enrollment form (when appropriate). This gives TANF eligibility information in addition to simple demographics for families served under the mini-grants. (This information has been hard to secure. Most mini-grant partners feel more comfortable handing out the “yellow cards” and allowing parents the option of mailing them back.)
- Each quarter, funded agency partners (not mini-grantees) are required to submit a quarterly family information form that summarizes the numbers of participants in screenings, parent groups, playgroups, and home visits for the reporting period. Since agency partners have not completed the development of a common database, it is not possible to identify the families served by agency. A field has been added to help track what programs we have received data from.

The evaluation methodology includes several data collection activities: community and parent surveys, an agency partner survey, focus groups, and drawing information from the ECC database. Evaluation has also supported continuing gap analysis at two levels. First, Eaton County has broadened gap analysis beyond the service-focused community plan developed for the first year ASAP-PIE application to assessment of all public and private investment in early childhood education and care and what it would require to close the investment gap. Only one other county in the state (Kent) has undertaken such an analysis, and it is not a recipient of ASAP-PIE funding. The second level of continuing gap analysis is the focus of the 0 to 5 Work Group, which meets monthly to assess gaps in activities to address priorities established by the community plan and enlists new community partners to fill those gaps.

Findings on Short-Term Outcomes

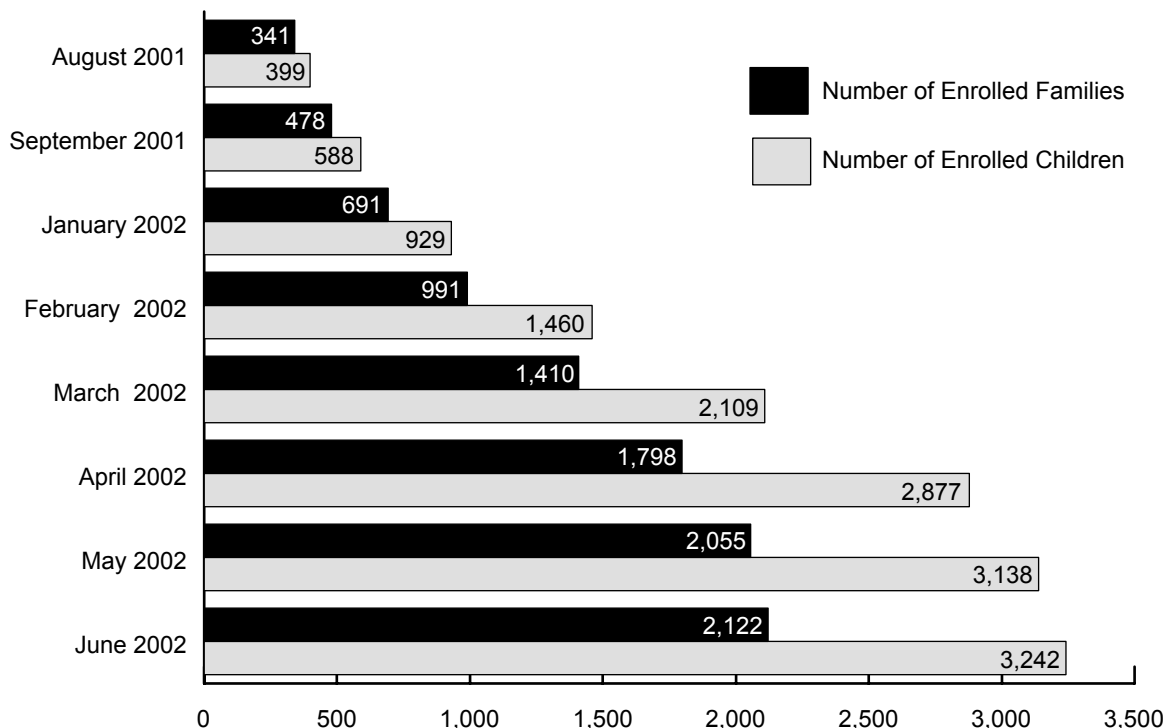
EARLY CHILDHOOD CONNECTIONS ENROLLMENT, DEMOGRAPHICS, AND SERVICES

The following information describes the children enrolled in ECC, the families served, and the services they use. Demographic data on children and adults are also provided. The source of the information is the ECC database. All data are from the period June 1, 2001 to June 30, 2002. Please note that this is considered a preliminary report on the first project period because data on the final quarter (ending June 30, 2002) were not available from agency partners when this report was prepared. A final report based on the complete database for the first project period will be available in the fall of 2002.

Enrollment

Exhibit 2 shows the enrollment pattern of children and families during year one. It demonstrates that ECC has consistently expanded its reach to families and children through the first year. This exhibit presents enrollment totals³ for all families and children in the ECC database.

EXHIBIT 2
“The Numbers Scoreboard,” ECC Enrollment Totals—Year One

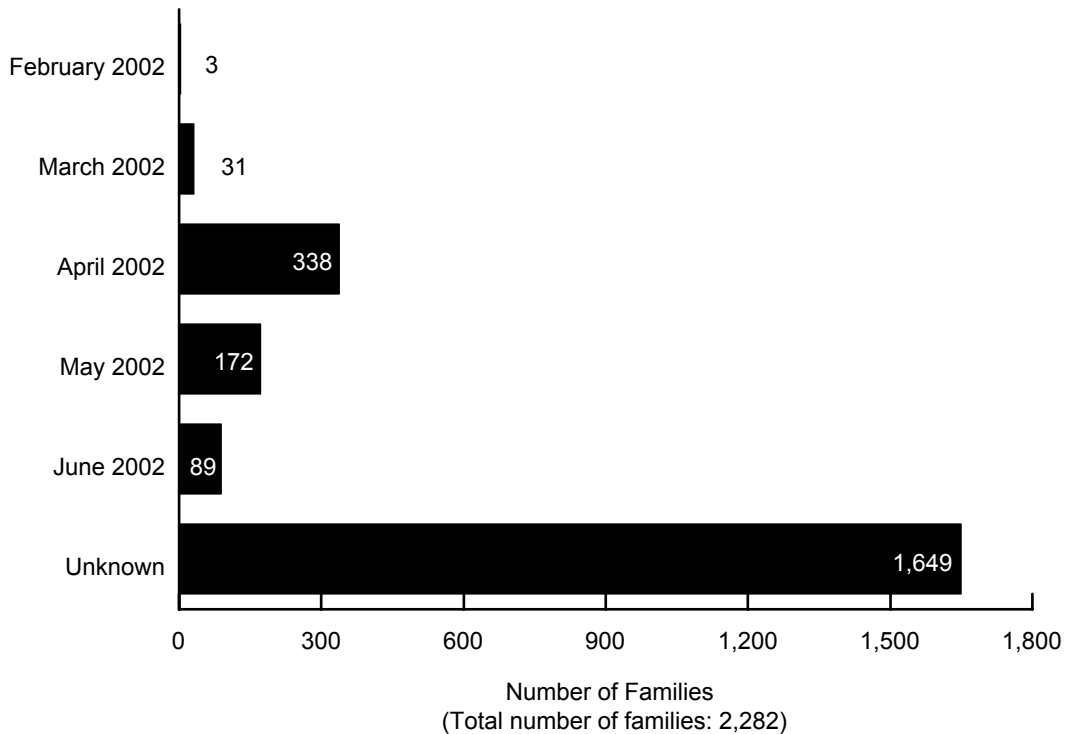


SOURCE: ECC reports based on data from agency partners. The final database for year one includes information about year one entered after June 30, 2002. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

³ In some cases, the totals PSC uses elsewhere in the evaluation report may differ due to incomplete data.

Exhibit 3 presents the number of families who enrolled their children in ECC each month from February through June. The ECC database identifies a family as at least one or more adult who is a parent of the first child entered in the ECC database. Since this information was not tracked in the database until March 2002, the date of entry of a significant number of families into ECC is unknown, which makes analysis of the pattern of enrollments by month difficult to determine.

EXHIBIT 3
Family Date of Entry



SOURCE: ECC Database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

It is reasonable to surmise that specific events had an impact on known enrollments. For example, the April influx of enrollments was likely influenced by Early Childhood Literacy Week in March and the Month of the Young Child in April. There were parent-child literacy events at more than 25 sites in Eaton County in March, and in April there was increased media coverage along with several proclamations by government agencies, faith-based organizations, and others with governing boards or councils. Finally, there were early childhood kite events in April, in which 1,500 kites were given to anyone who would promote a parent-child interaction using the kites.

Families Served

Exhibit 4 shows how many children in each family are listed in the ECC database, not how many *total* children there are in each ECC family (e.g., it wouldn't necessarily count a 10-year-old sister).

EXHIBIT 4
Number of Children per Family

Number of Children per Family	Number of Families	Percentage of Families
1	1,542	68%
2	623	27
3	100	4
4	10	<1
5	5	<1
6	2	<1
TOTAL	2,282	100%

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

A majority of families (68 percent) in the ECC database have one child. Twenty-seven percent have two children.⁴

Services Used

Exhibit 5 shows the number of families and the number of children who participated in services during year one.⁵

EXHIBIT 5
Use of ASAP-PIE Services in Year One

Service Provided	Number of Families Who Have Participated	Number of Children Who Have Participated
Home visits	442	585
Parent educational meeting	133	[Not collected on state report]
Parent/child playgroup	313	416
Vision screening	[Not collected on state report]	225
Hearing screening	[Not collected on state report]	231
Developmental screening	[Not collected on state report]	204
Other screening	[Not collected on state report]	256

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

⁴ Response to MDE Grant Narrative Report, Section I.B.

⁵ Response to MDE Grant Narrative Report, Section I.E.

Demographics

Exhibit 6 shows the age distribution of children served. Age of child is derived from the child's birth date and calculated as of December 2, 2001, which is the enrollment eligibility date.

EXHIBIT 6
Child's Age at Enrollment

Age	Number of Children Served	Percentage of Children Served
Unknown	424	13%
Before birth	282	9
Birth to 11 months	430	14
1 year to 23 months	447	14
2 years to 35 months	417	13
3 years to 47 months	443	14
4 years to 59 months	730	23
TOTAL	3,173	100%

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

Of the children enrolled during year one, those four to five years of age were the largest age cohort, at 23 percent. However, these data are inconclusive due to the large number of unknown birth dates. Confidentiality concerns on the part of agency partners contributed to the large proportion of those without a known birth date (13 percent). Moreover, this information is difficult to obtain from families who are interested in receiving information but are not participating in other services.⁶

Exhibit 7 shows the number of families who were eligible for TANF during year one. Since family record is defined by the child's record in this database, PSC determined TANF eligibility of the family as whether or not the child was eligible during year one. Please note that TANF status is unknown for 86 percent of families listed in the database. Again, this information is difficult to obtain from families who are interested in receiving information but are not using other services.

EXHIBIT 7
TANF Eligibility, by Family

Status	Number of Families	Percentage of Families
Unknown	1,954	86%
Yes (eligible)	322	14
No (not eligible)	6	<1
TOTAL	2,282	100%

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

⁶ Response to MDE Grant Narrative Report, Section I.C.

Exhibit 8 presents the number and percentage of families listed in the database who reside in each local school district in the Eaton Intermediate School District. The highest percentage of families using ECC services reside in the Charlotte School District.

EXHIBIT 8
School District of Residence

School District	Families	Percentage of Families
Eaton Rapids	332	15%
Grand Ledge	577	25
Charlotte	705	31
Maple Valley	156	7
Pottersville	136	6
Unknown	376	16
TOTAL	2,282	100%

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

EVALUATION FINDINGS BY GOAL

The following findings describe baseline information that can be used for ongoing evaluation of the progress of ECC toward the goals of the initiative. The data are derived from the ECC database and a community survey, a survey of parents with children enrolled in ECC, an agency partner survey, and focus groups. Findings are presented for the short-term outcomes under each of the three long-term ECC goals.

Goal One: Increase Community and Parent Education and Awareness

There are four short-term outcomes for community and parent awareness:

- Parent and community awareness of the value of children is heightened.
- Parent and community understanding of issues that impact the lives of children is increased.
- The role the community plays in supporting all children is highlighted.
- Community knowledge of the available services and supports for families with young children is promoted.

Two methods were used to assess progress on the short-term outcomes: a community survey and focus groups. Findings from the focus groups (see Appendix B) are now being used to develop the second phase of local public awareness and education. An economic analysis, not included in this report, was also conducted to generate information for increasing community and stakeholder awareness of the value of early childhood education and care.

The community survey was conducted in May 2002. The survey was intended to establish a baseline near the close of the first year of ECC activities. It was designed to measure the current level of community and parent awareness and understanding, which Early Childhood Connections is striving to enhance. Some questions were drawn from surveys conducted in other states to determine the level of public awareness and the public's attitudes regarding early childhood education (available at www.earlycare.org). Adopting questions from other surveys provided comparisons for benchmarking purposes in addition to strengthening the reliability and validity of the instrument designed specifically for the ECC initiative in Eaton County. The 2002 survey also included questions on recall of the statewide media campaign, "Be their Hero from age Zero," and local public awareness efforts. This information is being used to develop the message of ECC's continuing local public awareness and education effort. The evaluation design calls for a second survey near the close of year two to assess changes in community and parent understanding and awareness.

A random sample of 800 adults in Eaton County was surveyed. The sample was drawn by Survey Sampling, Inc., using a single stage, equal probability design. This means that the probability of being included in the sample was equal for all telephone numbers in Eaton County. Nonworking numbers were deleted from the sample; working numbers where a person could not be contacted but could be called again remained in the sample. The resulting sample yields a margin of error of ± 3.5 percent at the 95 percent confidence interval. This means that for this sample, we are 95 percent confident that any of our sample estimates, such as for demographics, are within ± 3.5 percent of the true value, had we been able to survey the entire population of Eaton County.

The composition of the sample is generally representative of Eaton County residents (see Appendix C for detailed frequencies for all demographics for the general sample and the parent sub-sample). Forty-five percent of respondents (approximately 350) report having at least one dependent child in their home. This is higher than the proportion for the general population of Eaton County (34 percent). However, less than 16 percent of these parents report having a child under age five in their home (approximately 130 respondents out of 800). This low number makes it difficult to render a statistically reliable analysis of parents with very young children. Nevertheless, the high number of parents overall makes comparisons of parents, nonparents, and the general population possible. The parents who comprise the subsample are more likely to be married, slightly younger, and have slightly higher incomes than the general sample. With few exceptions, parents did not differ significantly from nonparents in the ways that they perceive early childhood education and issues. These exceptions are discussed in the analysis below.

Key Findings

- Overall, the public in Eaton County values early childhood programs, high-quality childcare, and other key elements such as access to health care. However, a majority (69 percent) values investment in schools (K–12) more than new or expanded funding for early childhood programs.
- Almost half (48 percent) of respondents indicate awareness that the first three years of a child’s life are key to brain development, yet respondents do not see the connection between the importance of this period and investing public dollars. Public education ranks highly in the minds of respondents as a priority issue (39 percent rank it as the most important issue), yet again, they do not see the long-term connections between high-quality early childhood education and school performance (5 percent rank improving early childhood education as the most important issue).
- A significant majority believes that state and local government should do more for families with young children. Over three-fourths of respondents agree (34 percent strongly agree and 43 percent somewhat agree) that Eaton County should play a stronger role in providing supports and resources for families with children under age five.
- Overall, the public believes that the county should play a *supportive* role and that tax dollars should support learning programs for all children from birth to age five. Most respondents agree that the county should play a stronger role, yet most also see early childhood education as the responsibility of the child’s parents. More than 60 percent of respondents strongly agree that early childhood education is primarily the role of the parent.
- Most agree that tax dollars should support learning programs for children from birth to age five so all children have an equal opportunity to start school ready to succeed. Seventy-eight percent of respondents agree with this statement (44 percent strongly agree).
- Seventy-eight percent are very *unfamiliar* with “Early Childhood Connections of Eaton County,” while only 6 percent are very familiar. However, parents are slightly more likely to be familiar with ECC. Twenty-nine percent are very or somewhat familiar (10 percent are very familiar).

- Thirty-one percent indicate that they have heard or seen something about early childhood education in the past six months. In contrast, 42 percent of parents indicate hearing or seeing something about early childhood education in the past six months. Parents are significantly more likely to have seen or heard something than nonparents.
- Twenty-five percent are able to complete the phrase “Be their Hero from age Zero,” while 36 percent of parents are able to complete this phrase.

Findings by Short-term Outcomes

1. Parent and community awareness of the value of children is heightened.

Asking the public direct questions about the value of children tends to generate highly positive responses. To elicit attitudes that can be used to gain an understanding of the community’s awareness of the value of children, the public was asked to respond to several statements that might be heard in policy debates. Respondents could “strongly agree,” “somewhat agree,” “somewhat disagree,” or “strongly disagree” with each statement.

Overall, the public in Eaton County values early childhood programs, high-quality childcare, and other key elements such as access to health care. However, a majority values investment in schools (K–12) more than new or expanded funding for early childhood programs.

- **Access to health care:** The public in Eaton County overwhelmingly agrees with the statement that no child should be denied health care based on the inability of parents to pay for health insurance or care: 95 percent agree (81 percent strongly agree and 14 percent somewhat agree). This statement was drawn from the 1998 Colorado Children’s Campaign Poll of registered voters, which also found 95 percent agreeing with this statement.
- **Spanking as a regular form of punishment:** 45 percent agree (14 percent strongly agree; 31 percent agree) with the statement, “Using spanking as a regular form of punishment helps children develop a better sense of control.” Of the 55 percent who disagree with the statement, 35 percent strongly disagree and 20 percent somewhat disagree. Most child development experts believe that young children learn self-control when parents set limits and encourage desired behavior, rather than as a result of physical punishment.
- **Government should help ensure the availability of high-quality child care:** A significant majority of the public in Eaton County (83 percent, with 51 percent strongly agreeing) believes that government should help ensure the availability of high-quality child care for parents at a price they can afford to pay. Only 8 percent strongly disagree. This statement was drawn from the 1998 Colorado Children’s Campaign Poll, which found that 75 percent agreed with this statement (45 percent strongly). The Eaton County public’s response demonstrates a high awareness of the value of high-quality childcare and perception of a clear role for government.
- **The market will take care of it:** 47 percent agree that “the market can be counted on to take care of parents’ childcare needs without the government getting involved. While this response seems to contradict the previous statement about government’s role, the level of support for each statement suggests that about half of the public val-

ues the marketplace approach but also supports the role of the government in assuring access, quality, and affordability. Also drawn from the Colorado Children's Campaign Poll, the statement drew a similar response in that survey, with about equal proportions agreeing and disagreeing with the statement.

- **Spending on early childhood programs is an investment:** There is strong agreement in Eaton County with the statement, "Spending on early childhood programs is an investment because kids with better early childhood learning experiences do better in school and become more productive adults." Ninety-two percent agree, with only 4 percent strongly disagreeing. This question was drawn from the 2000 Illinois Early Childhood Statewide Survey, which found 82 percent agreeing with the statement.
- **The public schools are already struggling with budgetary problems:** 69 percent agree with the statement, "Public schools are already struggling with budgetary problems as is. The government should care take of the schools before spending money on new or expanded early childhood programs." While the public agrees that spending on early childhood programs is an investment (92 percent), a large proportion (69 percent) think that more money should be directed to existing school programs before funds are used for new or expanded early childhood programs. These findings show that while the public sees early childhood spending as an investment, people think it competes with the need to fund K–12 education, which comes first in the eyes of a majority of the public.

2. Parent and community understanding of issues that impact the lives of children is increased.

Respondents were asked a series of questions designed to ascertain their understanding of early childhood issues and how important they consider these issues.

Overall, respondents indicate awareness that the first three years of a child's life are key to brain development, yet respondents do not see a connection between the importance of this period and investing public dollars. Public education ranks high in the minds of respondents as a priority issue, yet again, they do not see long-term connections between high-quality early childhood education and school performance.

- **Overall perceptions of Michigan:** Respondents were asked how satisfied they are with things in Michigan and specifically, how satisfied they are with things for children in Michigan. Overall, respondents have a very positive outlook. Seventy-eight percent of respondents overall are either very satisfied (18 percent) or somewhat satisfied (60 percent) with the way things are going in Michigan, and 70 percent are also very satisfied (12 percent) or somewhat satisfied (58 percent) with the way things are going for children in Michigan. Parents in Eaton County are significantly more likely to hold a positive view than nonparents. This is one of the few areas where there is a statistically significant difference between parents and nonparents. Eighty-five percent of parents are very satisfied (21 percent) or somewhat satisfied (64 percent) with Michigan compared to 72 percent of nonparents (16 percent very satisfied and 56 percent somewhat satisfied). Seventy-seven percent of parents are very satisfied (17 percent) or somewhat satisfied (60 percent) with how things are for children in

Michigan, compared to 65 percent of nonparents (9 percent very satisfied and 56 percent somewhat satisfied).

- **Most important age for developing capacity to learn:** Almost half (48 percent) of the public believes that the most important period for developing a child's abilities to learn is from age one to three.
 - Up to age one (6 percent)
 - One to three (48 percent)
 - Four and five (26 percent)
 - Six to ten (17 percent)
 - Eleven to fourteen (4 percent)

This question was drawn from the 2000 Illinois Early Childhood Statewide Survey, which found 7 percent saying up to age one is the most important age, 44 percent saying age one to three, 27 percent age four and five, and 13 percent age six to ten.

- **Most important period for investing public funds:** Fifty-two percent of the respondents believe that elementary school is the most important period for investing public funds to improve the learning experiences of children in Eaton County, compared to only 14 percent for the period birth to age three. The public does not seem to see a connection between investing in the period from birth to age three and improved learning experiences.
 - From birth to age three (14 percent)
 - Four and five (19 percent)
 - Elementary school (52 percent)
 - Middle school (10 percent)
 - High school (5 percent)

The findings in Eaton County are very consistent with those found in Illinois, where 46 percent said the most important period for investing public funds is elementary school, followed by 17 percent who believed that age four to five is the most important. Birth to age three was seen as most important by only 15 percent.

- **Issue Priorities:** Of the following six issues, which were all ranked above 6 (on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not a priority at all and 10 is the highest priority), the public ranks improving K–12 education as the highest priority and cutting taxes the lowest.
 - Improving K–12 education (8.5)
 - Helping at-risk children (8.4)
 - Fighting juvenile crime (8.3)
 - Improving access to health care (8.2)
 - Improving quality of learning for children under age five (7.2)
 - Cutting taxes (6.6)

Improving the quality of learning for young children is ranked only above cutting taxes. This may reflect the need for more public awareness of the impact of early

learning on reducing risks for children, on student performance at the K–12 level, and on juvenile crime. The ranking for improving the quality of early learning and cutting taxes is consistent with the findings from the Illinois survey, from which the list of issues was adapted.

- **Most important issues for state and local government to address:** From among the issues listed, the largest percentage of respondents (39 percent) rank improving K–12 education as the most important issue for state and local government to address. In contrast, only 5 percent rank improving early childhood education as most important.
 - Improving K–12 education (39 percent)
 - Fighting juvenile crime (16 percent)
 - Improving access to health care (16 percent)
 - Helping at-risk children (11 percent)
 - Cutting taxes (7 percent)
 - Improving quality of learning for children under age five (5 percent)

Again, respondents in Eaton County demonstrate the lack of connection between improving early childhood education and K–12 education. These findings are consistent with those found in Illinois.

- **Children’s abilities are set from birth:** Ninety-one percent disagree—80 percent strongly disagree—with the statement, “Children’s abilities are pretty much set from birth and cannot be affected by how their parents interact with them.” Almost everyone is aware of the important effect of parental interaction on children’s abilities.
- **Children’s experiences in the first three years of life affect their brain and learning over the long term:** Ninety-six percent agree—72 percent strongly agree—with this statement. Again, the public is well informed about the impact of a child’s experiences early in life.
- **Concern about issues:** Respondents were asked to describe their level of concern (very concerned, somewhat concerned, somewhat unconcerned, not at all concerned) about issues that affect children’s lives. Child abuse and neglect is of greatest concern to respondents, with 74 percent indicating that they are very concerned about this issue, compared to 42 percent who are very concerned about school readiness.
 - Abuse and neglect of children (74 percent)
 - Children growing up without both parents (57 percent)
 - Access to affordable, high-quality childcare for all families (52 percent)
 - Children who aren’t prepared to start school (42 percent)
 - Creating more family-friendly workplaces (39 percent)

3. The role the community plays in supporting all children is highlighted.

Role of the Community in Early Childhood Education

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements related to early childhood education. These questions are used to understand the level of

support respondents have for a community-wide effort at improving early childhood education. They also uncover the extent to which respondents see early childhood education as the purview of parents alone, or if they see the wider community playing a role.

Overall, the public believes that the county should play a supportive role and that tax dollars should support learning programs for all children from birth to age five. Most respondents agree that the county should play a stronger role, yet most also see early childhood education as the responsibility of the child's parents. Over 60 percent of respondents *strongly* agree that early childhood education is primarily the role of the parent. These findings suggest that efforts to increase public investment in early childhood programs should emphasize the primacy of the parent's role and the community supports that should be available to them.

- **Eaton County should play a stronger role in providing supports and resources for families with children under age five.** Over three-fourths of respondents agree with this statement (34 percent strongly agree and 43 percent somewhat agree).
- **Eaton County should play a stronger role in providing supports and resources for all families.** More respondents agree with this statement than the previous one about supports for families with young children, but not by a large percentage. Eighty-four percent of respondents agree with the statement (46 percent strongly agree).
- **Tax dollars should support learning programs for children from birth to age five so all children have an equal opportunity to start school ready to succeed.** Seventy-eight percent of respondents agree with this statement (44 percent strongly agree).
- **The county should make sure young children are safe. It should not take over the job of educating them.** Seventy percent agree with this statement (37 percent strongly agree). In the Illinois survey, which used the term "state" rather than "county," 55 percent agreed (29 percent strongly agreed).
- **Educating children under age five is primarily the responsibility of the parents.** Eighty-five percent agree with this statement (62 percent strongly agree).

Support for Early Childhood Services

As another way of determining the public's view of the role of the community, residents were asked to prioritize early childhood services in Eaton County. They were read a list of services and then asked to indicate whether they thought each service should be a high, medium, or low priority. More respondents rate health screenings and providing parenting information to new parents as high priorities, while the lowest percentage of respondents rate home visits as a high priority. Making voluntary, professionally organized early learning experiences available to all children aged five and younger was rated as a high priority by less than 40 percent. These findings are consistent with the opinions described above: the public views the community in a supportive role. A more active community role, such as home visits, is viewed more cautiously.

- Provide low- or no-cost health screenings (70 percent rated as a high priority)
- Provide all new parents with information on early brain development (63 percent)
- Make early learning experiences available to all children (37 percent)

- Provide parenting classes or groups (33 percent)
- Provide home visits to parents (22 percent)

4. Community knowledge of the available services and supports for families with young children is promoted.

The survey asked respondents if they are aware of a program in the community called “Early Childhood Connections of Eaton County.” Seventy-eight percent are not at all familiar with the program, while only 6 percent are very familiar with it. Parents are slightly more likely to be familiar with ECC. Twenty-nine percent are very or somewhat familiar (10 percent are very familiar), while 71 percent of parents are still not at all familiar with ECC. This relationship is statistically significant, indicating that we can be confident that parents in the general population are more likely to be aware of ECC, if only slightly.

Early Childhood Connections has promoted the many agencies and organizations that are part of the network providing programs and services for families with young children. It is possible that because of this focus on promoting the agency partners, the public is less aware of ECC as an entity. While promoting the agencies that make up the network may help to build a partnership among the agencies, it may be less effective in creating an identity for the network overall, potentially making it more difficult for parents to access services. This may negatively influence progress toward an integrated service delivery system characterized by “one-stop referral” (if not one-stop services) for families seeking services.

Recall of the State and Local Public Awareness Media Campaigns

In order to assess the extent to which the “Be their Hero from age Zero” campaign has permeated the county, residents were asked if they recalled seeing or hearing anything about early childhood education in the past six months. Thirty-one percent of the entire sample indicated that they had. Forty-two percent of parents indicated hearing or seeing something about early childhood education in the past six months, compared to 24 percent of nonparents. Parents are significantly more likely to recall seeing or hearing something related to early childhood education than are nonparents.

A follow-up question was asked of respondents who indicated that they had heard or seen something. Of the 251 responses, 73 percent mentioned some general type of information they had heard or seen on television, billboards or in printed media. Within this 73 percent, 4 percent did not specifically mention a program or source of information, but they did use the phrase “zero to five” when discussing early childhood programs or information. This we interpret as a partial absorption of the early childhood message. Five percent mentioned or described Eaton County Early Childhood Connections, 3 percent mentioned a similar program in Ingham County, ACTS. Twelve percent specifically mentioned the “Be their Hero from age Zero” campaign by name.

Finally, respondents were asked to complete the “Be their Hero...” phrase. Twenty-five percent of the entire sample was able to complete this phrase. In contrast, 36 percent of parents and 16 percent of nonparents were able to complete this phrase. Parents are significantly more likely than nonparents to be able to complete the phrase when prompted. Eaton County

residents have much higher recall (25 percent) of the “Be their Hero...” campaign compared to the state, which has a recall of 15 percent.

Goal Two: Enhance and Expand Early Childhood Services

There are seven short-term outcomes directed toward reaching this goal:

- Parents are linked to Early Childhood Connections and are referred to community services and resources.
- A seamless continuum of services is established to support families in preparing their children for school success.
- Parent group meetings/classes and parent/child playgroups are expanded.
- In-home services are expanded.
- Access to periodic developmental screening is increased.
- The ability of preschool providers and parents to support children with behavioral needs is strengthened.
- Families are linked with quality preschools and preschools are helped to meet standards.

To assess the progress toward the goal of expanding services for early childhood education and care, information from the ECC database was analyzed and a parent survey was conducted in June 2002. The survey was designed to gather information about parent participation in and knowledge of early childhood education and care services provided by ECC. Parent satisfaction was also addressed. The survey was mailed to the 1,838 parents in the ECC database as of May 2002. The survey contained a cover letter from Ronda Rucker, grant administrator and coordinator of ECC, and a business reply envelope. PSC received 355 surveys, a response rate of 19 percent with a margin of error of ± 4.7 percent.

This survey also included questions on recall of the statewide media campaign, “Be their Hero from age Zero,” and ECC’s campaign, “Eaton County Values Every Child.” The findings can be used to establish baselines and targets for expanding the use of early childhood education and care services. (See Appendix D for a complete description of the findings from the parent survey.)

Findings by Short-term Outcomes

1. Parents are linked to Early Childhood Connections and are referred to community services and resources.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 6,599 children under age five in Eaton County, or approximately 6 percent of the total population. Although the ECC enrollment numbers are not precisely comparable due to the inclusion of children aged 5–6 in their data, ECC has done quite well at reaching its targeted population with approximately 50 percent of children enrolled.

Exhibit 9 illustrates the proportions of children in ECC who received a kit during year one. For this table, “eligible children” is determined by adding a 12-month window to the front and back of each of the target ages. For example, an infant aged 10 months who enrolled in ECC in September 2001 *could* have received both an infant kit (upon enrollment) and an 18-month kit in May 2002.

EXHIBIT 9
Proportion of Children Receiving a Kit

Kit Type	Total Children Who Received the Kit	Total Number of Eligible Children (Target Age Sometime during Year One)	Percentage of Eligible Children
Infant (0–12 months)	321	715	45%
18-month	482	869	55
36-month	481	864	56
48-month	262	1,173	55
READY kit	91	—	—
TOTAL	1,637	—	—

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

ECC has been most effective at delivering the 18-month, 36-month, and 48-month kits, with over half of ECC children eligible to receive such kits receiving them.

The parent survey further illustrates how well ECC has penetrated into the community by contacting parents throughout the community through another outreach and linkage tool, the ECC *Valuing Every Child* newsletter. Eighty-seven percent of parents who filled out an ECC information card recalled receiving the Valuing Every Child newsletter.

In terms of linking parents with resources and services during year one, 24 percent of parents were referred to a program, agency or organization in Eaton County that provides information or services to families with children aged five or younger.

According to the parent survey, 2 percent of parents would turn to ECC for assistance regarding a question or concern about their child. This compares to 42 percent who would contact a relative and 38 percent who would contact a family doctor or pediatrician.

Exhibit 10 presents data on referral sources to ECC. Data collection on referral sources began mid-year, hence 43 percent of family records do not identify referral source. Of those with a known referral source, twenty percent were referred through a kindergarten roundup. Approximately 8 percent of families were connected or referred to ECC by postcard (received in the mail directly from a parent). “Referral postcards” are filled out by one of the agency partners and given to ECC.

EXHIBIT 10
Referral Sources to ECC

Contact/referral source	Number of Families	Percentage of Families
Unknown	990	43%
Kindergarten Roundup 2002	448	20
Agency	311	14
Postcard	182	8
Toddler Time	58	3
Sparrow Hospital	32	1
Newspaper Births	29	1
Literacy Week Drawing	23	1
Inbound Phone Call	24	1
4-H Fair 2002	149	7
Newsletter	8	<1
Family Fun Night	10	<1
Park Frolic	14	<1
Referral postcard	4	<1
Frontier Days	0	0
Color Cruise	0	0
Hayes Green Beach	0	0
Foster Parent	0	0
Meijer	0	0
TOTAL	2,282	100%

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

2. A seamless continuum of services is established to support families in preparing their children for school success.

According to the parent survey, 31 percent of parents report that they are familiar with In Touch with Community Resources. However, only 2 percent of those who have heard of the service have utilized it through the Internet and only 5 percent have utilized it through the 1-800 number.

3. Parent group meetings/classes and parent/child playgroups are expanded.

Parent group meetings were attended by 133 families (6 percent). The database does **not** include information on the number of parent groups held; therefore, the exhibits below show total attendance at the parent group meetings. Since these are attendance figures, the family count is duplicated (i.e., the same family attending more than one parent group meetings is counted each time). Exhibit 11 shows the total parent group meeting attendance by month. After peaking in October 2001, attendance declined through January. Another peak was reached in March 2002, with a decline as summer approached.

Exhibit 11
Parent Group Meeting Attendance, by Month
(includes duplicated counts for families)

Month/Year	Total Parent Meeting Attendance
June 2001	0
July 2001	0
August 2001	0
September 2001	0
October 2001	101
November 2001	93
December 2001	73
January 2002	32
February 2002	54
March 2002	59
April 2002	3
May 2002	2
June 2002	2
TOTAL	419

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

Responses to the parent survey indicate 11 percent attendance at parent groups. This discrepancy may be attributed to the lag time in the entry of attendance data from partner agencies.

Exhibit 12 contrasts attendance of all families at parent groups with attendance of high-use families. High-use families are defined as those who are one standard deviation above the mean, or in the 68th percentile of parent meeting attendance. These families account for approximately 1 percent of ECC families, yet they account for 40 percent of attendance at parent meetings. In other words, a small proportion of families are attending a plurality of the parent meetings.

EXHIBIT 12
Parent Group Meeting Attendance, by High-use Families

	All Families Attending a Parent Meeting	High-use Families
Total parent meeting attendance	133 families accounted for a total of 419 attendees	13 families accounted for a total of 162 attendees
Minimum # of meetings attended	1 meeting	7 meetings
Maximum # of meetings attended	24 meetings	24 meetings
Median # of meetings attended	2.0 meetings	10.0 meetings
Average # of meetings attended	3.2 meetings	12.5 meetings
Standard deviation	3.8 meetings	6.0 meetings

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

According to the parent survey, parents who attended a parent group or parenting class are satisfied with the experience. Ninety-seven percent of parents attending these meetings are either very or somewhat satisfied with the experience. Of those who did not attend a group meeting or class, 42 percent did not know that the service is available in Eaton County and 37 percent did not feel they needed the service at this time. Only 1 percent of parents report that the groups are not easy to get to.

Exhibit 13 presents attendance figures for playgroups. Parent and child playgroups were used by 416 children and 313 families in the ECC database. The database does **not** include information on the number of playgroups held; therefore, the tables below show total child attendance at the playgroups. Since these are attendance figures, the child and family counts are duplicated (i.e., the same child/family attending more than one playgroup is counted each time.)

EXHIBIT 13
Playgroups, by Program Month (includes duplicated counts)

Month/Year	Total Playgroup Attendance (Children)
June 2001	0
July 2001	0
August 2001	0
September 2001	38
October 2001	153
November 2001	128
December 2001	165
January 2002	246
February 2002	265
March 2002	472
April 2002	31
May 2002	31
June 2002	32
TOTAL	1,561

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

Exhibits 14 and 15 present information on playgroup attendance by families and children, comparing all families and children with high-use families and children. Thirteen percent of families and children have attended a playgroup.). “High use” is defined as those above the first standard deviation (the 68th percentile or above) attending a parent and child playgroup during year one. High-use families and children, who account for 2 percent of all families and children in ECC, account for approximately 40–45 percent of attendees at playgroups. In other words, a small number families and children account for a plurality of playgroup attendees.

Exhibit 14 **Playgroup Attendance, by Family**

	All Families	High-use Families
Total number of playgroups	313 families accounted for 1,561 attendees	36 families accounted for 688 attendees
Minimum # of playgroups	1 playgroup	11 playgroups
Maximum # of playgroups	52 playgroups	52 playgroups
Median # of playgroups	3.0 playgroups	17.0 playgroups
Average # of playgroups	5.0 playgroups	19.1 playgroups
Standard deviation	6.2 playgroups	7.7 playgroups

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

Exhibit 15 **Playgroup Attendance, by Children**

	All Children	High-use Children
Total number of playgroups	416 children accounted for 1,561 attendees	49 children accounted for 678 attendees
Minimum # of playgroups	1 playgroup	9 playgroups
Maximum # of playgroups	28 playgroups	28 playgroups
Median # of playgroups	2.0 playgroups	11 playgroups
Average # of playgroups	3.8 playgroups	13.8 playgroups
Standard deviation	4.6 playgroups	6.0 playgroups

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

According to the parent survey, there is a statistically significant relationship between attending a playgroup and higher level of child development knowledge. Attending a parent meeting, receiving a home visit, or having a health screening for their children were not significantly related to higher developmental knowledge.

4. In-home services are expanded.

Home visits were used by 585 children (18 percent) and 442 families (19 percent) in the ECC database. Counts include all visits to all children in the family (e.g., 30 visits to a family with 3 children counts as 90 home visit encounters); therefore Exhibit 16 shows all home visit encounters.

EXHIBIT 16
Home Visits, by Program Month (includes duplicated counts)

Month/year	Total Home Encounters
July 2001	11
August 2001	0
September 2001	66
October 2001	281
November 2001	287
December 2001	255
January 2002	339
February 2002	351
March 2002	418
April 2002	114
May 2002	71
June 2002	95
TOTAL	2,288

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

Exhibits 17 and 18 present data on home visit utilization by family and child, comparing high-use families and children with all families and children. As with all other services, high use means usage of the service is at the 68th percentile, or one standard deviation above the mean. Overall, there is greater use of this service, compared to parent meetings and play-groups. However, the pattern evident with the other services appears with home visits as well. A small proportion of families and children account for a disproportionate share of the home visit encounters. In this case, 2 percent of families and children account for 55 percent of home visit encounters.

EXHIBIT 17 **Home Visits, by Family**

	All Families Receiving a Home Visit	High-use Families
Total number of home visits	442 families received 2,288 encounters	42 families received 1,304 encounters
Minimum # of visits a family received	1 encounter	18 encounters
Maximum # of visits a family received	105 encounters	105 encounters
Median # of visits a family received	2.0 encounters	25.0 encounters
Average # of visits a family received	6.9 encounters	31.0 encounters
Standard deviation	10.8 encounters	17.4 encounters

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

EXHIBIT 18 **Home Visits, by Child**

	All Children Receiving a Home Visit	High-use Children
Total number of home visits	585 children received 2,288 encounters	82 children received 1,338 encounters
Minimum # of visits a child received	1 encounter	10 encounters
Maximum # of visits a child received	35 encounters	35 encounters
Median # of visits a child received	1.0 encounter	14.0 encounters
Average # of visits a child received	3.9 encounters	16.3 encounters
Standard deviation	5.8 encounters	6.5 encounters

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

According to the parent survey, 21 percent of parents report receiving a home visit from an organization in Eaton County, and those who did receive home visits are satisfied with the service. Ninety-six percent of parents are either very or somewhat satisfied with their home visit experience. Of those parents who have not had a home visit, 46 percent feel they do not need the service at this time. The second most reported reason for not having had a home visit is that parents did not know the service is available (37 percent). Only 4 percent of par-

ents did not have a home visit because they do not like the idea of having a stranger in their home.

4. Access to periodic developmental screening is increased

Exhibits 19 and 20 present data on four types of periodic screenings: vision, hearing, developmental, and other. Exhibit 19 demonstrates that in all four categories, 7–9 percent of children received a screening during year one. It is important to note that vision, hearing, and developmental screenings may be undercounted because they may be noted in the “other” category. Exhibit 20 shows that overall, 297 children—9 percent—received at least one type of screening. Of these children, 57 percent received all four types of screenings.

EXHIBIT 19
Percentage of Children Receiving a Screening

	Vision Screening	Hearing Screening	Developmental Screening	Other Screening (At Least One)
Number of children	225	254	235	283
Percentage	7%	8%	7%	9%

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

EXHIBIT 20
Distribution of Screenings, by Type

Number of Screenings Received	Number of Children	Percentage of Children
1 type	19	6%
2 types	26	9
3 types	82	28
4 types	170	57
TOTAL	297 children (9%)	100%

Note: Totals in this table differ from those in Exhibit 19, which duplicates children (a child may receive two of the four screenings); in this table, children are counted only once. Therefore, according to the ECC database, 9 percent of all eligible children have received at least one type of screening.

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

Exhibit 21 presents screening data by month. Note that there is a relatively high number of screenings where the month is unknown. Totals in this table do not equal those in Exhibits 19 and 20 because they include duplicate counts for children. In other words, if a child received a vision screening in November and again in February, this counts as two vision screenings.

EXHIBIT 20
Number of Screenings, All Types, by Month of the Program
(includes duplicated counts for children)

Month/year	Vision	Hearing	Developmental	Other
June 2001	5	4	—	5
July 2001	3	4	—	4
August 2001	32	39	30	6
September 2001	15	13	37	4
October 2001	11	10	19	2
November 2001	49	45	12	7
December 2001	7	8	2	2
January 2002	26	19	15	9
February 2002	13	24	22	21
March 2002	8	13	16	13
April 2002	8	14	13	22
May 2002	7	15	23	20
June 2002	11	13	15	14
Unknown	7	8	15	179
TOTAL	202	229	219	256

SOURCE: ECC database. Calculations by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

Through the parent survey, 61 percent of parents report having had their child screened in Eaton County for health, vision, hearing, or development. Of these parents, 96 percent are either somewhat or very satisfied with their experience. Thirty-nine percent of parents who did not get a health screening in Eaton County got one outside of the county. A quarter of the parents do not feel they needed this service and 21 percent did not know that the service was available in Eaton County.

6. The ability of preschool providers and parents to support children with behavioral needs is strengthened.

This goal is addressed through in-kind services from Clinton/Eaton/Ingham Community Mental Health (CEI-CMH). The Keeping Early Education Positive Program (KEEP) addresses the issue of children being able to maintain placement in preschool (and daycare) by working with the child, provider, and parents on behavioral issues. Measurement of progress toward this goal will be addressed in year two of the evaluation. CEI-CMH also provides (with ASAP-PIE funding) the Parent-Young Child Program (PYC) for parents. This is a

home-based program to work with families and children who have exhibited behavioral needs that may stem from a variety of mental health issues—attachment, parenting skills, trauma, loss, etc. PYC has reported working with 38 families since the beginning of the ASAP-PIE funding.

7. Families are linked with quality preschools and preschools are helped to meet standards.

Under an in-kind arrangement, the Office for Young Children (OYC) provides help finding childcare to parents served by ECC. The ECC newsletter has published information on choosing child care (written by OYC) and brochures include information about area preschools.

OYC is providing classes and trainings for all childcare providers and Head Start is working with preschools to help bring them into compliance with Head Start standards.

Goal Three: Develop a Community-based Early Childhood Education and Care System

There are four short-term outcomes addressing development of an early childhood education and care system:

- New opportunities are created for community-based organizations to become partners in building a system of early childhood services.
- A single-entry process for parents accessing early childhood services is implemented.
- An inter-agency referral process for early childhood services exists.
- Family-centered and strength-based agency policies and practices are established and implemented.

Findings by Short-term Outcomes

1. New opportunities are created for community-based organizations to become partners in building a system of early childhood services.

Mini-Grants

ECC awarded 12 mini-grants to community groups, agencies, and preschools to create new partnerships. Projects range from a preschool backpack program to an early literacy project for a local hospital sponsored by a sorority. From the nine reports available at the time of this report, 894 children, 962 adults, and 547 families were reported as participants in mini-grant activities.

0 to 5 Work Group

The 0 to 5 Work Group identified ten priority areas for children and families in 2001. These priorities formed the basis for the Eaton County ASAP-PIE application. With the implementation of ECC, the workgroup has turned its attention to assessing progress on the priority areas, particularly from the standpoint of engaging new partners in expanding and enhancing early childhood services and building a community system of early education and care. Each month, the workgroup considers a priority area from this perspective, inviting new partners to participate in a dialogue about what is happening related to the priority and identifying opportunities and new strategies to intensify progress. During year one, links have been made between ECC and the Eaton County Department of Parks and Recreation and the local United Way to carry out mutual activities on behalf of families with young children. For example, ECC outreach materials are disseminated at the entry gates of local parks and Parks and Recreation activities for families are highlighted in the ECC newsletter.

2. A single-entry process for parents accessing early childhood services is implemented.

The PIE Management Committee, whose purpose is to translate the Eaton County vision of systems change into a sustainable, long-term reality, focused on this short-term outcome during year one. In addition to helping agencies reach a common understanding of systems change, the committee also works on “stuck” issues to remove barriers. During year one, the committee identified the major steps that must be taken to establish a single, easy entry process for parents and a common database for service providers. Phase I entails the use of a

common online enrollment form, Phase II would institute a membership card system for data entry, and Phase III would culminate in a common database used by all agency partners, with families presenting a card with a barcode (thus eliminating repeat form completion) and with a “real time” view of all services delivered by all agency partners. At the close of year one, the Common Systems Committee implemented common forms for enrollment, authorization for release of information and records, and revocation of release of information and records for early childhood services.

During year two, specific steps will be considered by the Common Systems Committee to continue progress toward a single-entry process for parents using early childhood services and a common database for agency partners. The need for this activity is confirmed by the results of a survey conducted with ECC agency partners. When asked if the organizations have the information needed to connect any parent with children aged five and younger with other services and resources in the community, all respondents expressed an interest in improving the referral process. While all agency directors who responded (9 out of 18) indicated that they had sufficient information to make referrals, only 60 percent said that their organizations have policies and procedures for making these referrals. Staff in the partner agencies were also surveyed. Of the 43 respondents, 28 percent did not respond to this question, indicating either uncertainty or reluctance to answer the question. Seventy percent agreed that their organization had sufficient information to connect families with other services in the community.

3. An inter-agency referral process for early childhood services exists.

A weekly referral team session provides a common point of entry for families who request, or are referred for, services provided by ECC. This team is made up of front-line workers who are knowledgeable about the services their agencies provide and also know of other resources that are available in the community. The team endeavors to connect the family with the service that most closely meets the needs that are described on the enrollment form. Following a family-focused model, the particular program or service that a family requests is considered priority. The referral team aims to reduce duplication in services, while providing services that most adequately meet family needs.

4. Family-centered and strength-based agency policies and practices are established and implemented.

There are three sub-goals under this short-term outcome:

- Creating and maintaining a common understanding of each community agency and partner’s role in the development and continuous improvement of an early childhood system
- Increasing agency and partner understanding of effective policies and practices supporting early childhood development
- Increasing understanding and use of strength-based and family-centered policies and practices

This short-term outcome was another focus of the PIE Management Committee in year one. The agency partner and mini-grantee survey helped assess the degree to which agency partners have family-centered and strength-based policies and the degree to which they believe

their staff understand school readiness. This assessment generated the following baseline information, which is also being considered as professional development programs are designed.

- Most of the agency partners believe that their staff share a common understanding of school readiness, while only half believe that their role is made clear to the community.
- Two-thirds of agency directors indicate that appropriate staff are familiar with strength-based, family-centered service delivery. The staff indicate that more than 70 percent are familiar. Eighty percent of mini-grantees indicate familiarity with these policies.
- Forty percent of agencies indicate that their organization routinely assesses its policies and practices to identify ways to strengthen family-centered and strength-based service delivery.

Activities of the School Readiness and Early School Success Committee contributed to the growing knowledge base in Eaton County regarding the application of brain science research to family-centered practices. Articles were reviewed and discussed, speakers on the application of research to practice were featured, and members attended conferences on brain research. A subcommittee is meeting on the topic of brain-based learning.

The School Readiness and Early School Success Committee also developed an action plan to expand practices in local education agencies based on brain research by linking these practices with the curriculum efforts of the Eaton County Instructional Leadership Team. Regular, focused dialogue was held among superintendents, early childhood programs, and instructional specialists. A key result is that superintendents have identified early childhood as one of the ten strategic priorities for Eaton County schools.

Activities of local coordinators/developers also supported progress toward a family-centered early childhood education system by presenting information, organizing events, and promoting ECC in their communities. Their work was supported by the School Readiness and Early School Success Committee, which identified roles and functions for local community councils.

Recommendations

Evaluation Capability for Measuring and Demonstrating Progress toward Outcomes

- **Apply the information produced by the year one evaluation.** Three specific uses are proposed:
 1. Consider the information from year one evaluation as a baseline and set targets for the future. These targets will help agency partners focus and mobilize while providing a basis for assessing progress over time.
 2. The findings should be the basis for dialogue among agency partners, helping all levels of each organization to become familiar with what has been learned, to enhance the interpretation of findings, and to use the information in improvement activities.
 3. The findings should be used during the next wave of public information and awareness activities to inform and mobilize community stakeholders in support of early childhood education and care.
- **Focus the evaluation in year two on selecting measures that will support links between the participation of families and children in ECC services and the long-term outcomes sought by the community and the State of Michigan.** This requires dialogue on appropriate and feasible measures and strengthening the database, following the steps identified by the PIE Management Committee in year one. PSC also recommends continuation of data collection on priority measures, e.g., service utilization and community and parent perceptions.
- **Continue development of a common database.**
 - Year two activities should focus on strengthening the capacity of the database to generate information that will increase coordination of local early childhood services. A key enhancement is the addition of fields to identify which services were provided by which partners, so there is a way for ECC agency partners to use the database to aggregate information on the developing early childhood system. Currently, these determinations might be possible using data from multiple databases, but only through a burdensome process. In year two, the ECC database should be further developed to maintain a comprehensive view of all services provided to families with young children.
 - Year two activities have begun to address the issue of missing or incomplete data, which reduces the conclusiveness of analysis. For example, the extent to which records lack birth date is problematic: 13 percent of the records don't have a date of birth listed for the child. This limits the utility of the database as a support to the process of determining which children should receive which age-appropriate kit. The use of the database to track whether all enrolled children received invitations/follow-ups at the given ages is limited when birthdays of children are not added to the ECC database. And, unless ECC recognizes that the same child is receiving services from three partners, families may receive redundant information.

- Another example is the tracking of the date of enrollment. Without this date, it is extremely difficult to conduct a “point in time” analysis to look at growth of the program over time. Both birthday and date of enrollment should be required for entry into the ECC database, in addition to the child’s name and address. If data privacy is a problem, at least the child’s month and year of birth should be captured; ECC staff could then artificially set the first of the month as the birth date for tracking and mailing purposes. A final example of missing data that is being addressed in year two relates to the state ASAP-PIE evaluation, most notably race and ethnicity of children and parents who are using services other than receiving information by mail.
 - The database includes 36 columns to track playgroups, home visits, and parent group meetings; one column is for each of 12 months for each of the three activities. Therefore, the database includes columns from July 2001 to June 2002. In year two, the database should be modified so that ECC can keep track of activities in the future. At this point it is unclear how this will be done. Perhaps columns will be added to the database for July 2002 or the July 2001 data will be overwritten with data from the current program year. Both options have substantial disadvantages; for the former, the database table itself will grow by 36 columns/year, and for the latter, the program will only be able to show a rolling 12-month history for the services provided to children and families.
 - In year two, the format of the database should be redesigned to record the number and/ or the location of playgroups and parent group meetings, making it possible to know the average attendance at each playgroup, and whether playgroups in one school district (or from one partner) are better attended than playgroups in another town (or from another partner).
- **Continue to develop methods to map the ECC partner network particularly the relationships among the agency partners.** Questions to be addressed include:
- How do family utilization patterns fit with the goals of ECC and ASAP-PIE? The database reveals that relatively small numbers of ECC families account for a disproportionate share of home visits and the attendance at parent meetings and playgroups. Because we cannot connect the services to the agencies providing the service, we cannot evaluate this finding as being in line with ASAP-PIE and ECC goals of providing services universally. It also makes it difficult to map the system of early childhood education because we cannot discern a more precise baseline of utilization patterns.
 - How do families get connected to ECC? Efforts to track how a family actually gets connected to ECC can make it easier to interpret service information. For example, much emphasis has been on filling out “the yellow card,” the information and contact card that a parent can receive from any number of places and points of contact with the ECC network. Currently, the degree to which partner agencies are giving out the cards is unclear. If, for example, agencies providing periodic developmental screenings pass out yellow cards with greater frequency than do agencies providing other services, we could expect to see more ECC parents reporting a screening than these other services.
 - How much of each service is actually being delivered? During year one, we can determine how many ECC families, in total, have received a particular service.

However, we do not know how much of the service has been delivered to each family, making it difficult to assess the relationship between varying levels of service and outcomes for children and families.

These questions and suggestions reflect the complexity of the task with which ECC has been charged—to expand and enhance programs and services for *all* families with young children while at the same time building the infrastructure of an early childhood education network with existing agencies that already provide services, primarily to at-risk families. This is truly a systems change agenda. The recommendations above are offered in the spirit of helping the ECC agency partners determine, document, and disseminate their progress toward an early childhood system.

Appendix A: **Performance Management and Evaluation**

GOAL 1: Increase Community and Parent Education and Awareness

Short-Term Outcomes			Program Management		Evaluation Measurements		
	Standard of Performance	Activity Monitoring	Data Sources	Indicators	How the Indicator Will Be Measured	Data Sources	
Parent and community awareness of the value of children is heightened.	(1) ECC, in partnership with the Michigan Ready to Succeed Partnership, manages the development and implementation of a local media campaign.	(1–2) Quarterly by ECC Administrative Coordinator	(1) Contract, meeting minutes from Campaign Committee	Increase in community-wide public awareness for services for children	Baseline of parent and community awareness, understanding, and knowledge set in 2002 community survey; changes assessed in 2004 community survey	Community survey (baseline in year one and follow-up in year three)	
	(2) EISD PPS provides community-based session on the asset approach.		(2) PPS session log				
Parent and community understanding of issues that impact the lives of children is increased.	(1) ECC local campaign is implemented.	(1) Quarterly by ECC Administrative Coordinator	(1) Contract	Increased awareness of issues that affect young children			
The role the community plays in supporting all children is highlighted.	(1) ECC local campaign is implemented	(1–2) Quarterly by ECS Administrative Coordinator	(1) Contract	Heightened public awareness about the role of the community in supporting early childhood development			
	(2) EISD PPS provides community-based sessions on the asset approach.		(2) PPS session log				

GOAL 1: Increase Community and Parent Education and Awareness (cont.)						
Short-Term Outcomes		Program Management			Evaluation Measurements	
	Standard of Performance	Activity Monitoring	Data Sources	Indicators	How the Indicator Will Be Measured	Data Sources
Community knowledge of the available services and supports for families with young children is promoted.	(1) MFLRC located at any community event, e.g., parades, fairs. Serves as a moving "billboard." (NOTE: The mobile family resource center was not implemented in year one.)	(1) Quarterly review of outreach and training log by ECC Administrative Coordinator	(1) Outreach and training log	Increased awareness of services of ECC		
	(2) ECC will provide a 1-800 information and referral line. (3) Barry-Eaton District Health Department will further develop the In Touch I & R system, place 5 kiosks in the community, and staff the 1-800 consumer hotline (4) Local public awareness campaign	(1-4) ECC Administrative Coordinator quarterly review of partner performance	(1-4) Partner and Mini-grantee progress report			

GOAL 2: Enhance and Expand Early Childhood Services

Short-Term Outcomes		Program Management		Evaluation Measurements		
	Standard of Performance	Activity Monitoring	Data Sources	Indicators	How the indicator will be measured	Data Sources
Parents are linked to ECC and community referrals [Community resource network development].	ECC community outreach services will contact each family in Eaton County at the following milestones: birth, 18, 36, and 48 months. Each contact will provide age appropriate information and referral information for available services, including periodic developmental screening.	ECC Administrative Coordinator reviews quarterly report of family contacts and referrals.	Outreach and training log, postcard return date	Increased levels of contact with families Increased referrals to community services	Comparison of changes in the level of family contacts Parents indicate increased contact Parents indicate increased sense of support	Logs and database; postcard date Parent survey (Baseline YR1, Follow-up in third year)

GOAL 2: Enhance and Expand Early Childhood Services (cont.)						
Short-Term Outcomes		Program Management			Evaluation Measurements	
	Standard of Performance	Activity Monitoring	Data Sources	Indicators	How the indicator will be measured	Data Sources
A seamless continuum of services is established to help families prepare their children for school success [Community resource network development].	(1) ECC will provide a 1-800 information and referral line.	(1-5) Quarterly review of agency partner reports and regular database reports by ECC Administrative Coordinator	(1-5) Partner and mini-grantee progress report			
	(2) Barry-Eaton District Health Department will further develop the In Touch I & R system, place five kiosks in the community, and staff the 1-800 consumer hotline.					
	(3) American Red Cross will provide follow-up services to former homeless families following transition to permanent housing.					
	(4) Each local school district employs a local resident to develop and coordinate a local community council.					
	(5) Siren/Eaton Shelter will work with homeless families and provide six-month follow-up after housing is secured.					

GOAL 2: Enhance and Expand Early Childhood Services (cont.)

Short-Term Outcomes		Program Management		Evaluation Measurements		
	Standard of Performance	Activity Monitoring	Data Sources	Indicators	How the indicator will be measured	Data Sources
Expand and enhance parent education and support groups [Parent groups].	(1) A Mobile Family Resource and Learning Center (MFLRC) will make regular visits to locations accessible to parents.	(1) ECC Administrative Coordinator reviews quarterly report of MFLRC visits and usage numbers	(1-2) Outreach and training log, MFLRC schedule	Increased number of parent education programs	Comparison of quarterly number of parent group meetings.	Database and outreach and training log
	(2) ECC specialists will work with five Community Coordinators to establish an infrastructure to coordinate and increase the number of parent support groups.	(2) ECC community coordinators develop plan for infrastructure by 12/31/01.		Regular schedule of parent education/information meetings is established.		
	(3) Head Start will implement FAST.	(3-4, 6-9) Quarterly review of agency partner reports and regular database reports by ECC Administrative Coordinator	(3-4, 6-9) Partner and mini-grantee progress report, enrollment and service form	Community coordinators establish parent education library that becomes part of MFLRC.		
	(4) EISD will provide parent education in each (5) local community.			Level of age-appropriate developmental understanding is increased.	Assess proportion of parents reporting increased understanding of child development.	Parent survey (Baseline YR1, Follow-up in third year)
	(5) ECC Family Mentors will provide coordination and work as mentors with low functioning families.	(5) Quarterly review of outreach and training log by ECC Administrative Coordinator				

GOAL 2: Enhance and Expand Early Childhood Services (cont.)						
Short-Term Outcomes		Program Management			Evaluation Measurements	
	Standard of Performance	Activity Monitoring	Data Sources	Indicators	How the indicator will be measured	Data Sources
	(6) MSU Extension provides Building Strong Families program parent education.			Parents report more positive interactions with child.	Assess proportion of parents reporting positive interactions.	Parent survey (Baseline YR1, Follow-up in third year)
	(7) FIA and Peckham, Inc., will provide support groups for new mothers.					
	(8) Capital Area Community Services provides space for parent education and playgroups.					
	(9) Hanen Training will be provided to develop and enhance language and communication between parent and child.					

GOAL 2: Enhance and Expand Early Childhood Services (cont.)

Short-Term Outcomes:		Program Management			Evaluation Measurements		
	Standard of Performance	Activity Monitoring	Data Sources	Indicators	How the indicator will be measured	Data Sources	
Enhance in-home services [Home visitation].	(1) ECC Family Mentors will provide coordination and work as mentors with low functioning families.	(1) Quarterly review of outreach and training log by ECC Administrative Coordinator	(1) Outreach and training log	Increased level of in-home services delivered to families	Comparison of changes in level of family contacts	Database, Parent Survey	
	(2) Head Start will implement FAST	(2-6) Quarterly review of agency partner reports and regular database reports by ECC Administrative Coordinator	(2-7) Partner and mini-grantee progress report, service and enrollment form	Increased level of parent satisfaction	Comparison of changes in parent satisfaction		
	(3) Highfields will provide Family Empowerment services						
	(4) Barry-Eaton Health Department will provide expanded services through the Healthy Families program						
	(5) Building Strong Families will provide in-home parent education for at-risk families						
	(6) Parent-Young Child Program						

GOAL 2: Enhance and Expand Early Childhood Services (cont.)

Short-Term Outcomes			Program Management		Evaluation Measurements		
	Standard of Performance	Activity Monitoring	Data Sources	Indicators	How the indicator will be measured	Data Sources	
	(7) ECC arranges training for 45 staff associated with this initiative on principles and best practices for home visits, including child protective services.	(7) ECC Administrative Coordinator assures that all partner agencies delivering home visit services have been trained.					
Access to periodic screening is increased [Periodic developmental screenings].	(1) Development screenings will be made available by the MFLRC.	(1) ECC Administrative Coordinator reviews quarterly report of mobile FRLC visits and usage numbers.	(1) Outreach and training log, schedule of MFLRC				
	(2) Barry-Eaton District Health Department will conduct periodic developmental, health, vision, and hearing assessments.	(2) Quarterly review of agency partner reports and regular database reports by ECC Administrative Coordinator	(2) Partner and mini-grantee progress report	Increase in number of periodic screenings conducted; 600 new assessments are conducted by end of the first grant period (June 2002).	Quarterly review of database findings to compare level of increase in screenings; year end review of database findings to compare level of increase in screenings	Database	

GOAL 2: Enhance and Expand Early Childhood Services (cont.)

Short-Term Outcomes		Program Management		Evaluation Measurements		
	Standard of Performance	Activity Monitoring	Data Sources	Indicators	How the indicator will be measured	Data Sources
The ability of preschool providers and parents is strengthened to support children with behavioral needs [Quality preschool connections].	(1) ECC will provide Positive Behavior Support meetings and training.	(1) Quarterly review of outreach and training log by ECC Administrative Coordinator	(1) Outreach and training log, schedule of MFLRC, enrollment and Service Form			Database
	(2) CEI Community Mental Health will work with preschools on challenges of children with behavioral problems and assist in developing preschool responses to community need.	(2) Quarterly review of agency partner reports and regular database reports by ECC Administrative Coordinator	(2) Partner and mini-grantee progress report			
Link families with quality preschools and help preschools meet national standards [Quality preschool connections].	(1) Office for Young Children helps preschool providers work toward national accreditation.	(1-2) Quarterly review of agency partner reports and regular database reports by ECC Administrative Coordinator	(1-2) Partner and mini-grantee progress report			
	(2) Capital Area Community Services will help three local preschools meet Head Start quality standards.					

GOAL 3: Create an Early Childhood System

Program Management						Evaluation Measurements	
Short-Term Outcomes:	Standard of Performance	Activity Monitoring	Data Sources	Indicators	How the indicator will be measured	Data Sources	
Create new opportunities for community-based organizations to become partners in building a system of early childhood services.	Mini-grants will be distributed to support activities and initiatives related to ASAP-PIE goals and principles.	Annual or biannual reports from mini-grant recipients	Grantee report/evaluation to ECC Administrative Coordinators	Enhanced ECC capacity	Degree to which mini-grantees provide or expand services related to ASAP-PIE and ECC goals	Partner and mini-grantee progress reports	
All Doors Are Open" approach to early childhood services is implemented throughout the Eaton County early childhood service system. ["All Doors Are Open" = single-entry process into ECC via online enrollment and service form; fast, easy transitions between partner services or agencies] Interagency referral system exists	(1) ECC arranges training for all partner agencies' front line workers and service providers on use and maintenance of a single on-line enrollment and service record.	(1-2) ECC Administrative Coordinator assures training for all workers by December 31, 2001. (1-2) ECC administrative coordinator oversees on-going training and coordination	(1-4) Outreach and training log	(1) A single-entry process into ECC is implemented through cross-agency registry. (2) Referrals to early childhood agency partners increase.	(1-2) Degree to which a cross-agency single-entry process is utilized by agency partners as measured quarterly by use of the online cross-agency enrollment and service form or review of registration procedures and changes in referral levels.	(1) Agency procedures for Registration of families into ECC (2) Database: # of referrals	

GOAL 3: Create an Early Childhood System (cont.)

Short-Term Outcomes:		Program Management			Evaluation Measurements		
	Standard of Performance	Activity Monitoring	Data Sources	Indicators	How the indicator will be measured	Data Sources	
	<p>(2) ECC trains appropriate partner agency staff on use of In-Touch information and referral system.</p> <p>(3) ECC establishes common understanding among partners of referral process.</p> <p>(4) ECC promotes awareness of 1-800 info line and In-Touch information and referral system.</p> <p>(5) All agency partners promote awareness and encourage use of the In Touch I & R system and the 1-800-info line.</p>	<p>(5-6) ECC Administrative Coordinator quarterly review of partner performance and enrollment and service records</p>	<p>(5-6) Partner and mini-grantee progress report, enrollment and service record</p>	<p>All ECC partner agencies meet expectations as described.</p>	<p>Annual review of documentation comparing the degree to which expectations have been met</p>	<p>Partner and mini-grantee progress reports</p>	

GOAL 3: Create an Early Childhood System (cont.)

Short-Term Outcomes:		Program Management			Evaluation Measurements		
	Standard of Performance	Activity Monitoring	Data Sources	Indicators	How the indicator will be measured	Data Sources	
	<p>(6) All agency partners use single, on-line enrollment and service record to track services, referrals and other pertinent information.</p> <p>In addition, partners listed below will perform indicated activities:</p> <p>—Office for Young Children links families with special needs to pre-schools.</p> <p>—Highfields provides wraparound services.</p>						
Intensive leadership and coordination of inter-agency services is provided	ECC reports monthly activities by all partners	ECC monthly reports	ECC monthly reports				

GOAL 3: Create an Early Childhood System (cont.)

Short-Term Outcomes:			Program Management		Evaluation Measurements	
	Standard of Performance	Activity Monitoring	Data Sources	Indicators	How the indicator will be measured	Data Sources
Policies and practices of early childhood services agencies and partners are improved by —Creating and maintaining a common understanding of each community agency and partner's role in the development and continuous improvement of an early childhood system —Increasing agency and partner understanding of effective policies and practices supporting early childhood development —Increasing understanding and use of strength-based and family-centered policies and practices	(1) ECC develops policies and practices brief as addendum to partners' agreement.	(1) ECC administrator assures that "Policies and Practices Brief" is finalized and attached to partner agreements by 12/31/01.	(1) Policies and practices brief	Increasing number/type of actions undertaken by PIE Management Committee	Comparison of meeting summaries to determine change in number/type of actions over time	PIE Management Committee meeting summaries
	(2) PIE Management Committee identifies needs and supports improvements in agency partner policies and practices	(2) PIE Management Committee is meeting.	(2) PIE Management Committee meeting summaries	(1) The agency partners assess their policies and practices. (2) Actions needed to strengthen policy and practice are put in motion by the end of the first grant period (June 2002).	Degree to which findings from the agency survey are used to set a baseline in 2002 and to identify actions to strengthen policies and practices Degree to which actions are undertaken to strengthen policies and practices	Agency survey; PIE Management Committee meeting summaries
	(3) ECC Childhood-Family Systems Specialists provide technical support to partner agencies and local community coordinators	(3) ECC specialists provide on-going technical support as needed by partner agencies and community coordinators	(3) Outreach and training log			

Appendix B:

Focus Group Findings

SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

The following pages summarize the results of three early childhood education and care focus groups conducted by Public Sector Consultants on behalf of Eaton County Early Childhood Connections. The sessions were held between April 7 and April 14, 2002, according to the following schedule:

- April 7, 2002: Focus Group of Frequent Voters
- April 9, 2002: Focus Group of Parents
- April 14, 2002: Focus Group of Community Stakeholders

Participants were selected and recruited by Public Sector Consultants. The groups themselves were identified because each brought an important perspective to the challenge of devising a campaign to better inform the Eaton County public about the critical importance of early childhood education and care. Frequent voters are generally an active and influential group in any community, and a group whose support is vital to any effort to effect positive change. Parents are presumed to have a strong and personal attachment to early childhood issues because of their direct involvement. Stakeholders are the community and opinion leaders who wield considerable influence in the community and have a capacity to “get things done.”

Each of the three focus groups lasted approximately 1.5 hours and followed the same general format. After an initial “welcome” and explanation of the project, those present were asked to complete a brief participant survey and then led through a series of questions from a formal protocol that varied slightly in length and format from group to group.

In the remainder of this section, we analyze the survey results and the high points of the discussion for all three focus groups and offer, by way of conclusion, an analysis of the key findings and common themes we identified.

Focus Group Descriptions

Voters There were ten participants—eight women and two men. Most of the participants came from Charlotte, Eaton Rapids, and Grand Ledge. With the exception of two participants, all were long-term (i.e., more than ten years) residents of Eaton County. Most had a definite connection with the area schools. However, this was an older group. Only two participants reported having young children now. In most cases, the children of these participants were high school or college students or finished with schooling altogether.

Overall this was a savvy group—interested, informed, and involved in their communities. It was clear that several were professionals at local schools. Although we did not ask specifically about education levels, it seems clear that a good many in the room were, at a minimum, college graduates.

Parents There were only four participants, all of whom had children with special needs. The combination of these factors makes it unlikely that these were typical Eaton County parents. Because of the special needs of their children, they had become much more attuned to child development and education issues and were seemingly quite adept at conducting research for themselves. The parents who participated in the focus group were engaged, thoughtful, and produced a number of very useful ideas.

Stakeholders As the term “stakeholder” implies, the 11 persons who participated in this discussion were a very knowledgeable group whose participants included, among others, a school superintendent, a probate judge, a pediatrician, and a director of the local United Way.

Findings and Common Themes

Each of the three focus groups offered important insights and valuable suggestions that will strengthen the ability of Eaton County Early Childhood Connections to effectively communicate the importance of early childhood education and care to county residents.

Most importantly, the view of the communication challenge did not vary greatly across groups. That is to say, the individual groups did not have a unique or readily identifiable “point of view” that differed from that of the other groups.

For this reason we feel quite confident in offering the following findings and identifying the common themes that are most relevant to the early childhood communication strategy for Eaton County.

- Members of all of the groups think that they are much better informed about early childhood education and care issues than the general public. There is a persistent concern that the young parents who most need this sort of information are not aware of it. The need to focus on the “at-risk” population is a constant theme. Targeting teenagers is deemed especially important.
- Group members seem most aware of some of the basic facts of child development; they are less informed about economic and demographic issues (childcare wages, the percentage of population with children in school, etc.).
- Participants think that the public at large is aware of the fact that 95 percent of public investment in education occurs after age five. However, they think that the public is unaware of the other facts regarding child development listed on the participant survey.
- Group members believe that the emerging communication strategy must be multi-faceted and use different means of communicating with different target groups. The urgency of the message was repeatedly stressed. Scientific facts relating to brain science are viewed as an excellent way to get attention and establish the importance of the subject.
- The group members distinguish strongly between types of information—that is, between information designed to “get attention” and in-depth information about research or services. Further, they insist that there has to be a strong link between the two. In-depth information that nobody knows about is not useful. Information that gets your attention but does not lead anywhere is not useful either.
- Most focus group members have seen or heard the phrase “Be their Hero from age Zero.” Billboards were the most frequently mentioned source, but in reality the campaign has clearly succeeded in drawing attention to itself through a number of media sources.
- At best, 20–25 percent of the participants could accurately recall the phrase “Eaton County Values Every Child.” Posters seem to be the most effective communication means, but, of course, the number saying this was small.
- Both the “Be their Hero” and the “Eaton County” campaigns are perceived to have two weaknesses: (1) it is not immediately obvious what the two phrases mean; and (2) for the

most part, neither campaign did a particularly good job of directing the public to additional sources of information.

- Articles and advertisements in local (weekly) newspapers, billboards, pamphlets, posters, and radio and TV spots are seen as good ways of attracting interest. In the case of radio and TV, however, particular care must be taken to ensure that ads run at times and on stations where they will be seen or heard.
- Kiosks are not viewed as a good source of information; the Internet is much more promising. There was a strong feeling in several groups that kiosks are of limited value and, in any case, “old technology.” The Internet, by contrast, is a powerful and highly flexible tool. One need only communicate a single Web address in order to open up a world of information.
- Schools (including kindergarten roundups and high school health classes) and doctor’s offices and hospitals (especially maternity wards) are seen as good places to convey information to the population of interest. The two librarians who were part of the stakeholder group also made it clear that these institutions are poised to help.
- Doctors, medical workers, teachers, and other school personnel are seen as natural and reliable sources of information. A number of participants also think that ministers and priests can be effective and persuasive communicators. Conversely, politicians and state department heads are not seen as particularly good spokespersons.
- Group members strongly believe that the best spokesperson for a media campaign should either: 1) be a recognizable celebrity or 2) have instant credibility because of who they are (e.g., a young mother). The best spokesperson, of course, would combine these traits. In two groups, Michigan State University basketball coach Tom Izzo was mentioned as an ideal figure because he is recognizable, respected, and, most importantly, known to be the parent of young children.
- Members in all of the groups think that it is important to find effective ways of hooking into the informal connections that make up a community. Such venues as church groups, service organizations, high-school classes and clubs, grocery stores and restaurants, special events and regular festivals (e.g., the Syrup Festival and Frontier Days) were all suggested as possibilities. They also suggested that campaign coordinators enlist the aid of elderly volunteers or well-respected persons in individual communities (e.g., retired teachers). To make progress, it is ultimately necessary to change culture, and exploiting informal networks is a good way to do just that.

Appendix C: **Selected Demographics for Eaton County**

EXHIBIT C-1
Selected Demographics for Eaton County

Age			
	Sample	Parents	Eaton County
Under 25	8%	6%	12%
25–34	17	26	13
35–44	22	39	16
45–54	24	25	15
55–64	15	3	9
65 and over	15	1	11

Education			
	Sample	Parents	Eaton County
Less than high school	4%	4%	11%
High school or GED	27	24	30
Some college or AA degree	37	40	38
4-year college degree or beyond	33	32	22

Race			
	Sample	Parents	Eaton County
White/Caucasian	93%	91%	92%
Black/African American	2	3	6
Hispanic or Latino	1	2	3
Native American	1	2	1
Asian/Asian American	0	1	1
Other	2	2	2

Household Income			
	Sample	Parents	Eaton County
Less than \$25,000	16%	12%	20%
\$25,000–\$49,999	32	31	30
\$50,000–\$74,999	27	30	25
\$75,000 and over	25	27	25

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.

Appendix D: Parent Survey Findings

KEY FINDINGS

- **ECC is reaching parents.** Eighty-seven percent of parents who completed and submitted a “yellow card” to receive age-appropriate gifts for their children and developmental information report that they are receiving the *Valuing Every Child* newsletter.
- **ECC’s message is being received.** Eighty percent of parents completed the “Be their Hero from age Zero” advertising slogan and 55 percent of parents completed the “Eaton County Values Every Child” slogan.
- **Parents are well informed.** Parents were consistently correct when asked to evaluate statements regarding the education and development of young children. On average, ECC parent clients scored 6.75 out of 9 on an index of questions concerning child development issues.
- **Health services are the most utilized service.** Over 60 percent of parents have had their child screened for health, vision, hearing and/or development, compared to 25 percent or less who have had a home visit, attended a playgroup, or attended a parenting meeting or class.
- **Satisfaction with services is high.** Those who use core services consistently rank their experience as either very or somewhat satisfactory.
- **A small percentage of parents report using the In-Touch with Community Resources service.** While 31 percent of parents surveyed had heard of the service, 2 percent has accessed the service through the Internet, and 6 percent has accessed the service through the 1-800 number.

DETAILED FINDINGS

■ Contact with Early Childhood Connections (ECC) of Eaton County

ECC has been very successful at establishing contact with parents in the community. Of those who report filling out an information card, 87 percent recall receiving a newsletter.

■ Services for Families in Eaton County

Thirty-one percent of parents are familiar with the In-Touch with Community Resources service. Two percent of parents have utilized this service through the Internet and 6 percent have accessed the service through the 1-800 number.

■ Home Visits for Parents with Young Children

Twenty-one percent of parents report receiving a home visit from an organization in Eaton County; those who did receive home visits are satisfied with the service. Ninety-six percent of parents are either very or somewhat satisfied with their home visit experience. Of those parents who have not had a home visit, 46 percent feel they do not need the service at this time. The second most reported reason for not having had a home visit is that parents did not know the service is available (37 percent). Only 4 percent of parents did not have a home visit because they do not like the idea of having a stranger in their home.

■ Parent Group Meetings or Classes

Eleven percent of parents have attended a parent meeting or parenting class; as in the case of home visits, those who did attend are satisfied with the experience. Ninety-seven percent of parents attending these meeting are either very or somewhat satisfied with the experience. Of those not attending a group meeting or class, 42 percent did not know that the service is available in

Eaton County and 37 percent do not feel they need the service at this time. Only 1 percent of parents report that the groups are not easy to get to.

■ **Parent-Child Playgroups**

Eighteen percent of parents report attending a parent-child playgroup in Eaton County. Continuing a trend of high rating for ECC services, 97 percent of parents report being either very or somewhat satisfied with their playgroup experience. Of those who did not attend a playgroup, 47 percent report that they did not know about the service, 27 percent feel that they do not need the service, and 15 percent report a conflict with the times that the groups are held

■ **Periodic Development and Health Screenings**

Sixty-one percent of parents have had their child screened for health, vision, hearing and/or development in Eaton County. Of these parents, 96 percent are either somewhat or very satisfied with their experience. Thirty-nine percent of parents who did not get a health screening in Eaton County got one outside of the county. A quarter of the parents do not feel they need this service and 21 percent did not know that the service is available in Eaton County.

A clear majority of parents in the ECC network have had developmental screenings for their child, compared to 25 percent or less who have had a home visit, attended a playgroup, or attended a parenting meeting or class.

■ **Early Childhood Information**

Overall, ECC parent clients score very well when asked a series of questions related to early childhood development and education. PSC asked parents nine questions covering a wide variety of both child education and care issues. PSC then scored the parents' answers and created an index measuring a parent's knowledge of child development issues. On a scale of 0 to 9, with 9 being the highest, ECC parent clients have an average score of 6.75. PSC considers an index score of 5 to represent a satisfactory level of knowledge concerning child development.

On individual questions, parents demonstrate a great deal of knowledge of age-appropriate child development information. These findings, along with the composite measure, provide baseline measures on levels of knowledge about brain development. Future surveys will allow for an assessment of change in levels of knowledge about brain development.

- A vast majority (83 percent) say that the belief that reading to an infant has little impact on his or her development is definitely false.
- Only 9 percent of parents think that it is either "definitely" or "probably" true that a young child needs about the same amount of sleep as an adult.
- Ninety-one percent of parents disagree with the statement that spanking children as a regular form of punishment helps them develop a better sense of control.
- A slight majority (53 percent) disagrees with the statement that a child should be ready to move out of diapers and begin to learn how to use a toilet by the age of two.
- Almost all parents (99 percent) disagree with the statement that a child's abilities are pretty much set from birth and cannot be affected by how their parents interact with them.
- Almost all parents (97 percent) agree that parents' emotional closeness with a child can strongly influence the child's intellectual development.

- Almost all parents (99 percent) agree that it is just as important for a ten-month old to spend time playing as it is for a five-year old.
- Ninety-two percent of parents agree that the first year of a child's life has a major impact later on performance in school.

It does not appear that having attended a parenting class, receiving a home visit or having a health screening for their child results in a greater understanding of issues related to child development. There is, however, a significant relationship between attending a playgroup and a higher score on these child development questions.

■ **Contact with Agencies**

While ECC has done a good job contacting parents, 2 percent of parents would turn to or call ECC for assistance if they had a question or concern about their child that they could not figure out on their own. Since most parents responding to this survey have already been connected to ECC, and ECC's role is to connect them to community resources, it may be that parents are reflecting this structure. Twenty-four percent of parents have been referred to a program, agency, or organization in Eaton County over the last year.

■ **Advertising Effect**

Eighty percent of parents recall seeing or hearing a recent advertisement about early childhood nurturing and development in the past six months. Furthermore, 80 percent of parents answering can correctly complete the "Be their Hero from age Zero" advertising slogan, and 55 percent of parents answering can complete the "Eaton County Values Every Child" slogan. This is an excellent retention rate.

■ **Demographics**

The median length of residence in Eaton County was eight years. Most (83 percent) parents were married, and the average age was 32. Parents had an average number of two children, with the average age of the older child six years and the second child two years. A majority (79 percent) had received some level of college education; 36 percent have a four-year college degree or higher. Parents were overwhelmingly white (94 percent) and the majority (61 percent) earned over \$44,000 a year.