Indicators for Early Success  

Significant scientific evidence exists supporting the correlation between early experience, brain development and long-term developmental outcomes. Successful preparation of young children includes ensuring adequate growth in a range of physical, social, emotional and cognitive skills. To increase the likelihood of success in school and life, young children require access to appropriate health care, nurturing early relationships, family economic security and quality early learning experiences. Also important is the creation of a set of meaningful indicators will track public commitments to young children over time. In Delaware, work toward this goal is being led by the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative and the Delaware Early Childhood Council who have developed *Early Success: Delaware’s Early Childhood Plan.*

### Counting the Kids: Delaware Demographics

**2008 Population Estimate and Age Distribution, Delaware**

![Pie chart showing age distribution]

- **65+: 14.3%**
- **6-9: 6.1%**
- **10-14: 6.3%**
- **15-19: 6.9%**
- **20-64: 59.5%**

**Delaware Total:** 875,953

**Total Children 0-19:** 229,849

- **Children 0-5:** 69,573
- **Children 6-9:** 44,613
- **Children 10-14:** 55,355
- **Children 15-19:** 60,308

**Population Estimate of Young Children Age 0-5 by Sex and Race, Delaware, 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender/Age</th>
<th>All Races</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>6,018</td>
<td>4,237</td>
<td>1,577</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>5,577</td>
<td>3,953</td>
<td>1,416</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** 69,573 49,052 18,010 2,511


Demographically speaking, we are much less of a child centered society now than we were 100 years ago. In the United States, children accounted for 40 percent of the population in 1900, but only 26 percent in 2000. Similar trends are evident in Delaware.
The neighborhood a young child lives in can greatly influence his or her health, education and personal/social development. Neighborhood amenities such as parks, recreation centers, sidewalks and libraries make it safer for children to play and spend time outdoors, provide for educational enrichment, serve as a vehicle for socializing and enhance overall quality of life. With recent trends of increased obesity rates in children nationwide, encouraging construction and use of neighborhood amenities is one way of encouraging healthy lifestyles—by eliminating barriers that many families face for escaping sedentary activities.

A 2006 study by Nemours Health and Prevention Services of their Delaware Outpatient and Specialty Care found that 14.3% of children age 2-4 were overweight (had a BMI at or above the 95th percentile for age) and that an additional 15.2% were at risk for becoming overweight (had a BMI between the 85th and 95th percentile for age).

Diseases that once spread quickly and killed thousands of children and adults are now largely controlled by vaccines, one of the most cost-effective preventive health measures. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccinating children against most vaccine-preventable diseases by the time they are two years old. Today, children in the United States routinely get 9 vaccinations that protect them from 13 diseases. Protecting children against severe illnesses also results in positive outcomes other than improved physical health. Children are able to attend school or child care more regularly and parents are not kept home caring for sick children allowing increased parental productivity in the workplace.
Access to Adequate Health Services

Improved access to effective health care means improvements in the child’s health status over time, which can positively affect the child’s life. Children with health insurance, whether public or private, are more likely than children without insurance to have a regular and accessible source of health care. Having health insurance makes it more likely for a child to have a medical home, which the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) describes as: care provided through a trusting, collaborative, working partnership with families. This care respects families’ diversity and recognizes that they are the constant in a child’s life. A family centered, coordinated network designed to promote the healthy development and well being of children and their families is core for the high quality, developmentally appropriate health care services that continue uninterrupted as the individual moves along and within systems of services and from adolescence to adulthood. Finally, a high performance health care system requires appropriate financing to support and sustain medical homes that promote system wide quality care with optimal health outcomes, family satisfaction and cost efficiency.

House Bill 139 (passed in 09) extends Delaware’s Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to include reduced-cost health insurance coverage for children of families with personal incomes above 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. A cost-sharing program is to be implemented under CHIP where payments must be paid on behalf of the child for such care. The cost-sharing provision of the bill is designed to have the new program impose no cost on the state.
Studies conducted by U.S. neuroscientists have found that a child’s poverty status has a direct correlation with brain development, especially for very young children—those between the ages of 6 months and 3 years. Unhealthy levels of stress hormones coupled with inadequate nutrition and exposure to environmental toxins produce impairments and delays in brain development, particularly in cognition, language development and memory. Young children who live in poverty continue to perform lower than their peers from higher income families throughout childhood and into adulthood.

Very young children living in poverty are much less likely than are non-poor children to be able to recognize the letters of the alphabet, count to 20 or higher, write their name, read or pretend to read.

—Child Trends Data Bank

In 2009, the General Assembly strengthened Delaware’s laws protecting consumers from predatory lending practices. Legislation was enacted to provide protection for consumers of short-term loan products (i.e., payday loans and title loans). Senate Bill 108 requires conspicuous disclosure of significant terms of such loans. It also requires that a lender offer a workout agreement to a consumer and limits the duration and amount of interest that can be charged when a loan is in default.
Supporting Families of Young Children

“Children do well when their families do well, and families do better when they live in supportive communities.”

— Annie E. Casey Foundation

Family is the most important influence in a young child’s development. When families have the necessary knowledge, skills and resources to engage a young child, the child will be much more likely to enter school ready to learn. Families are more successful when they are part of a supportive community. Supportive communities have been described as those in which people help each other out and neighbors watch each others’ children or those in which parents know that other adults are nearby who will help a scared or hurt child.

Approved in the 2009 legislative session, House Bill 199 requires that private health insurers in Delaware cover the developmental screenings for infants and toddlers that are recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Delaware Early Childhood Council. Such screenings were already covered for children in the state’s Medicaid program. The estimated cost to policyholders of covering these screenings is three cents per member per month.
All fifty states in the U.S. invest in child care subsidy systems to enable low-income parents to access child care while they work and to support child development. In Delaware, this subsidization is termed Purchase of Care. Subsidy rates are calculated based on local market rate of child care. Market rates are non-discounted prices charged to unrelated and unaffiliated parents. Market rates vary based on location (county), age of child in care and type of child care (family care or center).

Because market rate has increased over time without a corresponding increase in the subsidy rate, Purchase of Care now supports a smaller percentage of a recipient’s total child care cost than in previous years. In 2005, the typical Purchase of Care subsidy supported about 72% of a recipient’s child care costs (rates ranged from 67% to 75% of market rate) and in 2007, the typical subsidy supported only about 65% of a recipient’s child care costs (rates ranged from 57% to 74% of market rate).

Source: The Family and Workplace Connection
Quality Child Care and Early Learning in Delaware

Quality early care and education is important to a young child’s development, well-being and future success. Because child care standards and practices can vary among early care centers, having a standardized rating system as a uniform method to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings is crucial. Rating systems build on licensing regulations and help policymakers and funders better understand the quality of programming available in a community. These systems help programs make change to achieve higher quality benchmarks and also help parents make informed decisions when selecting a program for their child.

Delaware Stars for Early Success

Delaware Stars for Early Success is a voluntary rating and improvement system that was initiated in 2006 by the Delaware Early Childhood Council. Under this initiative, participating programs receive a rating based on a five star scale that ranges from meeting Child Care Licensing Regulations to meeting progressively higher quality standards in the areas of:

- Qualifications and Professional Development
- Learning Environment and Curriculum
- Family and Community Partnerships and
- Management and Administration.

Delaware’s Quality Rating and Improvement System for Child Care and Early Learning Programs

By 2015, the goal is to have 75% of the state’s centers and 15% of the state’s family care programs participating in Delaware Stars quality improvement efforts.

By November 2009, Delaware Stars had successfully enrolled 150 programs, including family and large family child care, early care and education and school-age centers, meaning that the program has touched approximately 10,350 children in the state.

For More Information

Additional information about Delaware Stars for Early Success is available from the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Education at: (302) 658-5177 or http://www.dieec.udel.edu/delaware-stars-overview

Source: Delaware Department of Education
The Department of Education's Office of Early Childhood, in collaboration with Health and Social Services, Children, Youth and Their Families, the Delaware Early Childhood Council and partnering agencies strive to ensure Delaware's youngest children enter school healthy and ready to learn. *Early Success: Delaware’s Early Childhood Plan* is a collaborative approach to developing a comprehensive, high quality early childhood system for the State of Delaware. Promoting evidence-based strategies, Early Success represents a commitment by public and private sectors to young children and their families. The plan is multi-faceted, represented by this simple equation:

**Ready Families + Ready Early Care and Education + Ready Communities + Ready Schools = Ready Children**

This Issue Brief supports the statewide collaborative effort to link data, evidence-based practice and surveillance to policy and decision-making for comprehensive early child serving systems and is Delaware's commitment to nurturing improved child health outcomes which will ensure our children's long-term academic success.

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One of fifty-three similar projects throughout the U.S. and its territories funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, **KIDS COUNT in Delaware** is housed in the Center for Community Research and Service at the University of Delaware and led by a board of committed and concerned child and family advocates from the public and private sectors. KIDS COUNT in Delaware is especially indebted to the support of the University of Delaware and the State of Delaware.

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**DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES**
Division of Public Health
Family Health and Systems Management

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**KIDS COUNT IN DELAWARE**

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