

Washington State Early Learning Efforts



A Common Vision

All children are healthy and ready for success in school and in life

Helping young children thrive. Young children's lives and futures are dependent on those who care for them—at home, in child care and preschool, and in the community. Yet too often families and caregivers don't have the information and resources they need to support children's health and development.

Early Learning efforts in Washington State have momentum...and children and families will benefit when Doctors are involved.

Doctors are effective "trusted messengers" with families, and "public champions" in the community. Speaking up about the importance of early learning will make a difference. Docs For Tots encourages you to get involved in your practice, and in your community. Read on to learn more about early learning efforts in Washington State.

Engaging Doctors in Washington State

Docs For Tots Washington State (DFT WA)

DFT WA is part of a nationwide network of doctors advocating for young children. We provide information, tools and connections to make it easy for doctors to get involved in collaborative child advocacy activities. We also provide educational materials to help you know what is available to families in your communities.

Doctors, please join us! We welcome requests from child advocacy groups and others who desire doctor involvement in efforts benefiting young children.

Contacts: Dr. Jill Sells, at JSells@DocsForTots.org; or www.DocsForTots.org/dftwa.asp

Reach Out and Read Washington State (ROR)

Reach Out and Read makes literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric primary care, so that children grow up with books and a love of reading. ROR trains doctors and nurses to advise parents about the importance of reading aloud and gives new books to children at check-ups from six months to five years of age, with a special focus on children growing up in poverty. Reach Out and Read Washington State is growing and supporting a network of programs in medical practices across Washington. ROR is developing statewide and local partnerships with early learning efforts such as those described here; helping ROR become integrated into community level early learning services for children and families. Contacts: Dr Jill Sells, at jill@reachoutandreadwa.org or www.reachoutandreadwa.org

Policies and Frameworks

Kids Matter: Improving Outcomes for Children in Washington State

Kids Matter is a framework for creating a comprehensive, integrated early childhood system. Developed by public and private partners across the state over a two year period, *Kids Matter* defines high-priority outcomes in four goal areas:

1. Health insurance and medical homes
2. Social, emotional, and mental health
3. Early care and education/child care
4. Parenting information and support

Kids Matter brings a comprehensive approach to the "whole child" and family. It can help support and connect all efforts striving to benefit young children at the state, community, and family levels. The *Kids Matter* framework and other tools can be found at <http://www.earlylearning.org/resources/publications/kids-matter>

Public and Private Investments

Department of Early Learning (DEL)

This cabinet level state agency was created in July 2006. The work of DEL focuses on children's earliest years of life, helping Washington's children get ready for school and life. DEL offers information and resources for children's first and most important teachers—parents—as well as others who care for and teach young children. Some of DEL's services include child care licensing and quality efforts, the state preschool program (ECEAP) and the Head Start State Collaboration Office. DEL's **Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)** was legislated in 2007 to allow early learning stakeholder communities to provide input and recommendations so DEL's strategies and actions are well-informed and are broadly supported by parents, early care providers, health/safety experts and interested members of the public. www.del.wa.gov

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Early Learning Initiative

Through a 10-year investment in early learning in Washington state, the Foundation is working with public and private partners, including Thrive by Five Washington. Together, they are investing in two demonstration communities (White Center, East Yakima), promising models, and statewide efforts to build and support the necessary infrastructure so all children have access to early learning opportunities and the greatest chance at success in school and life. <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/UnitedStates/Education/EarlyLearning/>

Public and Private Investments (continued)

Foundation for Early Learning

The Foundation for Early Learning grew out of Governor Locke's Commission on Early Learning more than eight years ago. The Foundation's vision is that all children in Washington will be socially, emotionally and intellectually prepared when they enter school. The Foundation for Early Learning gives children across Washington a strong start to life and learning. In collaboration with community partners, the Foundation support parents and caregivers as they guide their children through critical developmental years. The Foundation for Early Learning is guided by two fundamental goals: Support parents as their children's first teachers; and improve access to high-quality child care and preschool.

www.earlylearning.org

Thrive By Five Washington

Created in 2006, Thrive by Five Washington is a non-profit organization that champions positive early learning opportunities for every child, from birth to age five, so that they are ready to succeed in school and thrive in life. Thrive partners with parents, early learning professionals, communities, philanthropic organizations, businesses and government to develop a sustainable system for statewide early learning improvement—strengthening families and ensuring that all children in Washington experience positive, early learning environments. Reading Readiness Grants announced in late 2007 were the first granting effort of Thrive By Five, in partnership with the Department of Early Learning. Governor Gregoire and Bill Gates, Sr. co-chair the board of Thrive. www.thrivebyfivewa.org

THRIVE BY FIVE is a trademark of financial literacy programs for preschoolers supported by Credit Union National Association, Inc. ("CUNA") and is not affiliated with Thrive by Five Washington. Learn more at <http://www.creditunion.coop/thriveby5/>

Resources and Tools

Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks

The Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks were developed as a tool to help parents and caregivers better understand and support children's development across 5 domains, including:

- Physical Well-Being, Health, Motor Development
- Social and Emotional Development
- Approaches Toward Learning
- Cognition and General Knowledge
- Language, Literacy, and Communication

www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/pubdocs/EarlyLearningBenchmarks.pdf

Child Care Quality Improvement Efforts

In 2007, Governor Chris Gregoire and the Washington State Legislature called for a voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for Washington to improve the quality of child care and give parents access to more information about quality early learning. The QRIS will be a voluntary statewide system that provides incentives and resources for child care providers to improve the quality of their programs, while offering parents valuable information about child care programs available in their community. The ultimate goal is to help ensure all children are safe, healthy, nurtured, learning and having fun in child care as they prepare for kindergarten. The Department of Early Learning will build one statewide rating system for Washington based on input from parents, child care providers and communities. www.del.org

Public Awareness

Born Learning—Washington

Born Learning™ Washington is a public engagement campaign aimed at turning everyday moments into fun learning opportunities for children from birth through age five. There are 10 locally led campaigns along with statewide activities drawing on the strengths of more than 50 state and local partner organizations. This effort is connected to a three-year, national public awareness and engagement campaign. Born Learning Washington is a two-pronged public engagement campaign to: (1) Promote nurturing relationships and ways to make everyday moments into fun, high-quality learning opportunities for young children; and (2). Cultivate champions who take action to make early learning a top priority at the individual and the community levels.

<http://www.thrivebyfivewa.org/bornlearningwa.aspx>

Collaborative Advocacy

The Children's Alliance

The Children's Alliance is Washington's statewide child advocacy organization, championing public policies and practices to deliver the essentials that children need to thrive— confidence, stability, health and safety. The Alliance is a powerful voice for children in Olympia, mobilizing child advocates across the state. The Alliance effectively convenes advocates to support collaboration, including coalitions related to Early Learning and Children's Health.

www.childrensalliance.org

Docs For Tots Washington State is a collaborative advocacy organization, working with the Children's Alliance, physicians groups, and other partners, to engage doctors in efforts to improve outcomes for young children and families.

(September 2008)