



Early Childhood Systems Reform

Interim Report

Feb. 28, 2018

Report prepared by the Early Childhood Systems Reform Project Team

For more information on this report, contact the Minnesota Children's Cabinet

<https://mn.gov/governor/issues/childrens-cabinet/>

As requested by Minnesota Statute 3.197: This report cost approximately \$1,000.00 to prepare, including staff time, printing and mailing expenses.

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Early Childhood Systems Reform Project Overview

Rationale

A lack of equitable opportunities has caused significant disparities in developmental outcomes for children prenatally through age 8. These disparities threaten Minnesota's economic viability and generational success. There are ongoing commitments to continuous improvement of the state's system of early childhood programs and services. In March 2017, the Early Childhood System Reform project was launched to ensure that children and families are receiving the supports they need in a manner that encourages their optimal growth and development, and eliminates racial disparities in program access and outcomes.

Project Intentions

The project's focus is to:

- Ensure that all Minnesota children experience healthy development
- Ensure that all children are cared for in safe, stable, nurturing environments
- Ensure that all children thrive in their families and communities, and achieve their full potential
- Put families and communities at the center of the process to identify and promote solutions
- Build on the foundational work of early childhood stakeholders and align with previous and current efforts to support communities, parents, and service providers to support positive outcomes for families.

Early Childhood Systems Reform Steering Committee

To ensure system reform decisions are made without bias, a steering committee comprised of culturally and geographically diverse members from family-centered, community-based organizations, key partners and task forces, and state agency leaders, has been convened to develop a unified vision and action plan for Minnesota children and families. This prenatal to age 8 plan will be a phased effort, with the first phase focused on serving pregnant women and parenting families with infants and toddlers, where it is known to have both the greatest opportunities and the deepest need to invest. Four state agency leaders attend meetings; see the chart on page five for a list of committee members.

Committee Responsibilities

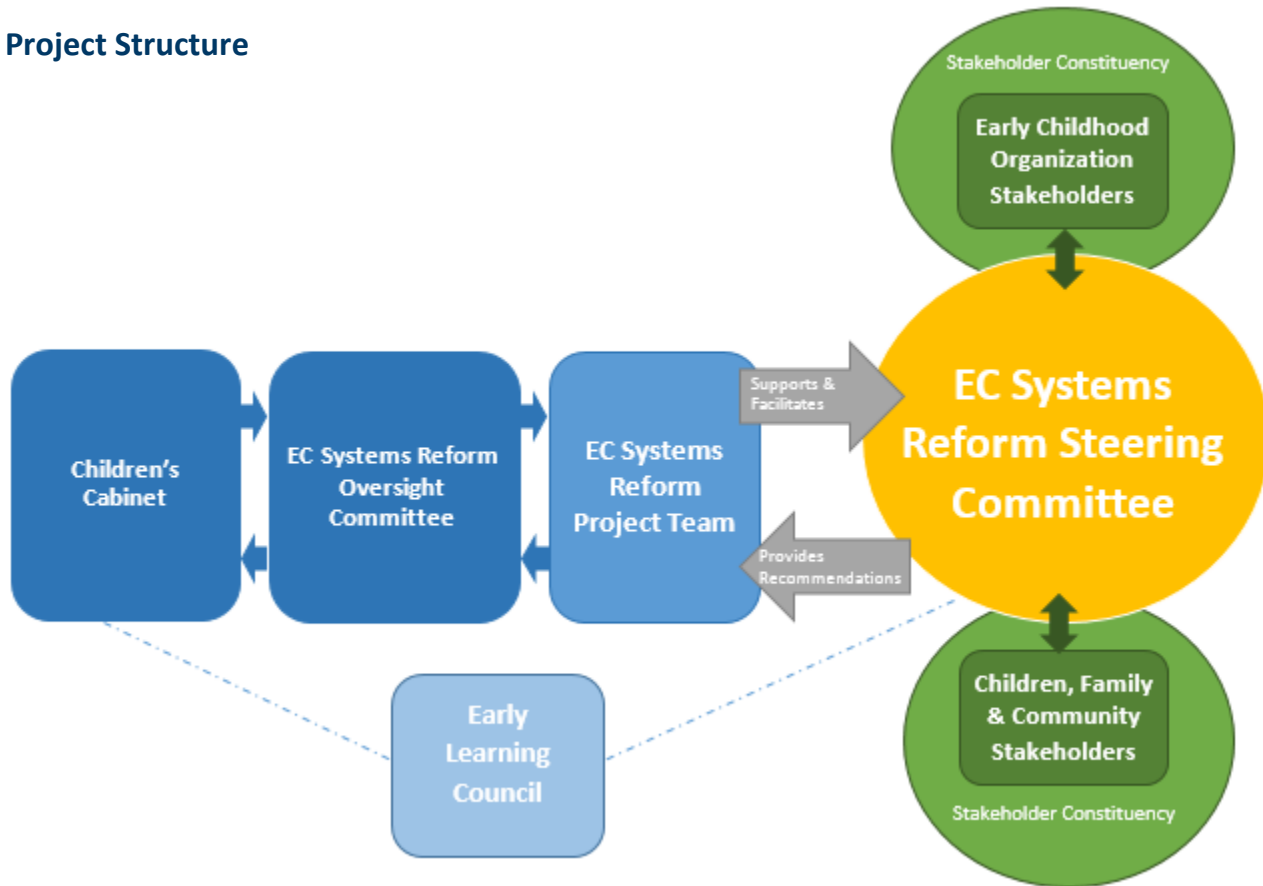
Committee members will:

- Examine, analyze and synthesize information gained from both a deep study of individual human cultures and comprehensive community research, as well as information on state and community-level efforts, practices, programs and systems to identify barriers, root causes, strengths, opportunities and promising solutions.
- Act as a conduit for information exchange with children, families and community committee members.
- Identify and make connections to families and community-level stakeholders as the need for more in-depth research is needed.
- Identify, review drafts, and provide feedback on project communication, mechanisms, and audiences including formal reports. Provide input to content of final report in June 2018 with recommendations for action.

Early Childhood Systems Reform Steering Committee Members

Organization	Representative	Organization	Representative
Minority Child Care Association	Ikram Mohamed	Local Public Health Association (LPHA)	Lorna Schmidt
Special Education and Family Voice	Mai Chang, Zang Vang-Lee	Minnesota Coalition for Targeted Home Visiting	Laura LaCroix-Dalluhn
People Serving People	Daniel Gumnit	Greater Minnesota Tribal Nations	Lee Tourney, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Tri-Valley Opportunity Council	Laurie Coleman	Coalition of Asian American Leaders	Kaying Yang
Voices and Choices for Children	Bharti Wahi	Isuroon (Somali Community)	Fartun Weli
American Academy of Pediatrics	Krishnan Subrahmanian	CLUES	Ruby Azurdia-Lee
Minnesota Initiative Foundations (MIFs)	Nancy Jost	Professional Organization: MNAFEE	Monica Potter
Head Start Association (Early Head Start)	Kraig Gratke	Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council	Vayong Moua
Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center	Patina Park	Think Small, Voices & Choices, Early Learning Council	Dianne Haulcy
City of St. Paul	Daniel Yang	Greater Minnesota Tribal Nations	Barb Fabre
Family Voice: Parent Leadership Team	Danielle Swift	Family Voice: Head Start Parent Council	Loren Groves
Family & Provider Voice: Rural (Duluth)	Melissa Meyer	Family Voice: Rural (Ely)	John Soghigian
State Agency Ex-officio Members			
Minnesota Department of Human Services	Jim Koppel, Cindi Yang, Jovon Perry	Minnesota Department of Health	Jeanne Ayers, Joan Brandt
Minnesota Department of Education	Hue Nguyen, Bobbie Burnham	Minnesota Housing Finance Agency	Ryan Baumtrog

Project Structure

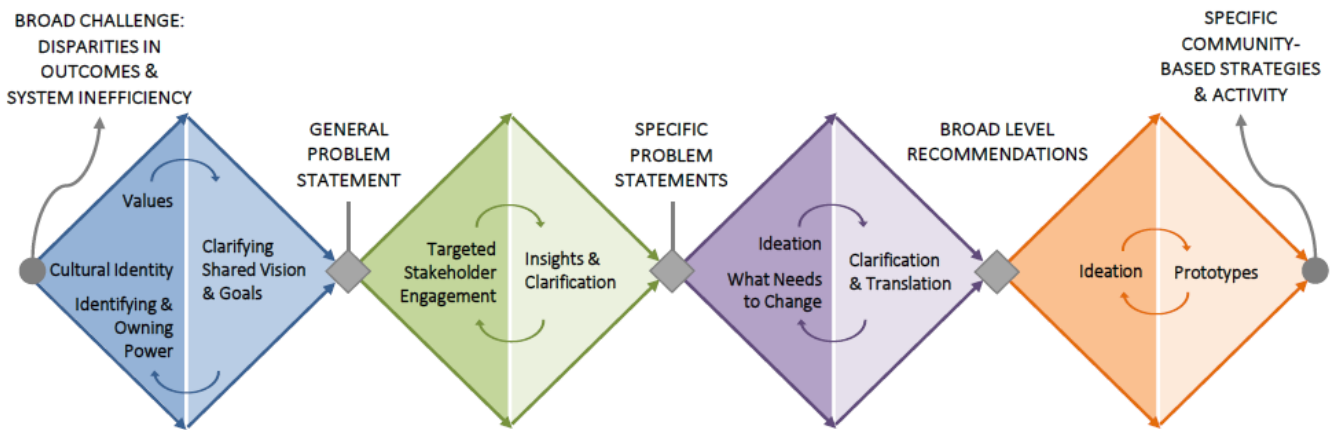


The Early Childhood Systems Reform project is an interagency effort, with oversight by the Minnesota Children’s Cabinet. An assistant commissioner and division directors from the Minnesota Departments of Human Services (department), Health (MDH), and Education (MDE), supervise staffing of the project. The Early Childhood Systems Reform Steering Committee will generate recommendations, with state agency staff responsible for analyzing appropriate state policy, practice and program decisions to implement recommendations.

Steering committee meetings occur on a monthly basis for three hours, convening at either a state agency facility or other community venue hosted by steering committee members. Meeting facilitation is contractually provided by the Wilder Center for Communities, Community Initiatives program. The Community Initiatives program staff have extensive experience with community-driven collaboration, addressing complex challenges and creating new narratives to advance racial equity. The figure below shows the project process model and a description of the work of the Early Childhood Systems Reform Steering Committee.

Early Childhood Systems Reform Activities

Project Process Model



The project process model is a visual of the methodology used in the first phase of the Early Childhood Systems Reform project. The methodology used is a hybrid of Systems Thinking and Human-centered Design approaches. Using a Systems Thinking lens, the steering committee is first developing a vision and mission statement, which serve as guiding principles for the work. The vision statement describes the future reality to be created through the systems reform process; the mission describes the ways that future objectives will be accomplished. The steering committee will also produce goals coupled with a results-based accountability metrics structure to allow for ongoing analysis of project progress. As shown above, the steering committee will first spend time comprehensively considering barriers or gaps in achieving goals to ensure that identified recommendations have a high likelihood of success. At the end of the first year, a report will be published that outlines specific recommendations, some of which will have immediate impacts for institutional policy, practice and program change.

Year two of the project will focus on conducting a deeper level of human-centered design methodology, primarily focused on community-based human culture research within the recommended areas of study to understand the conditions of children and families, and to use short-term trial strategies and activities followed by an evaluation period to generate additional recommendations for policy, practice and program change.

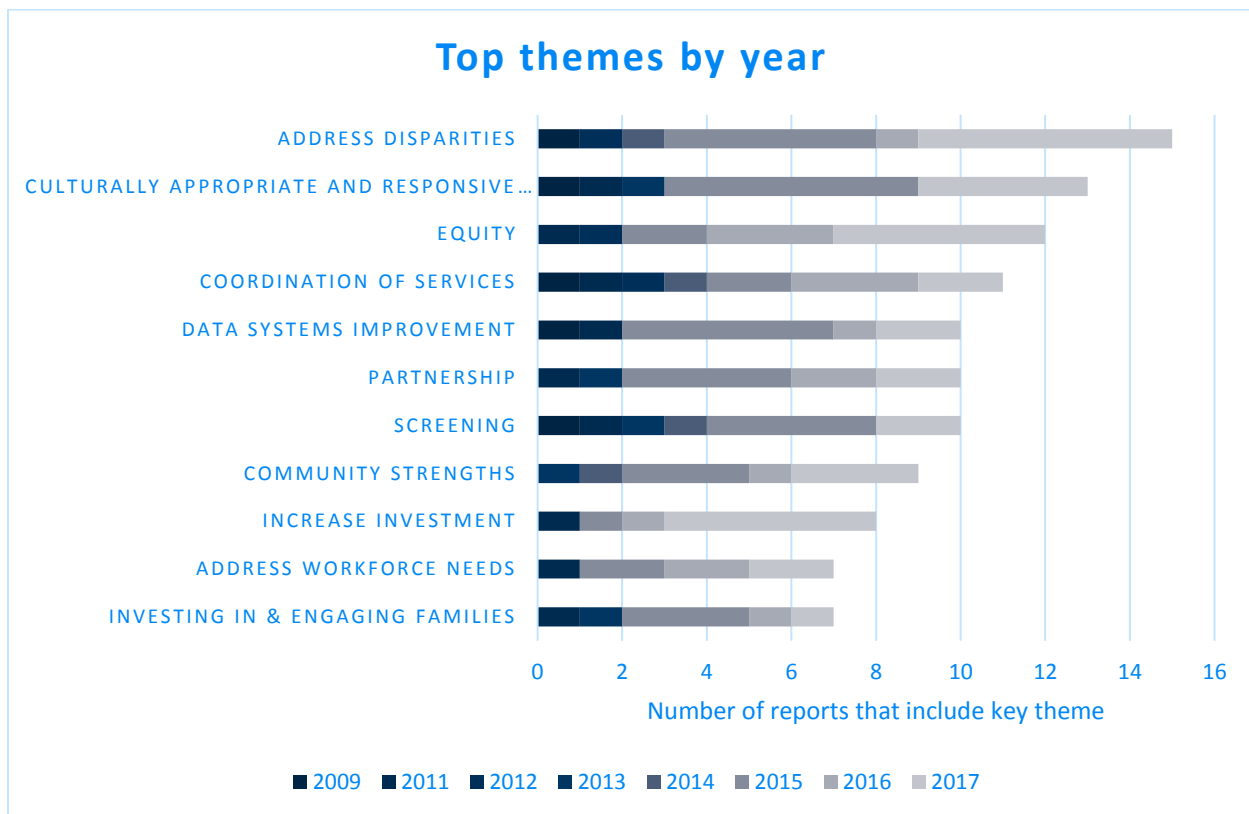
Early Childhood Landscape Analysis

To ensure work of the Early Childhood Systems Reform project is based on a strong foundation of ongoing efforts, a review was conducted to identify reports that both inform full understanding of Minnesota's current early childhood systems, and provide an overview of identified strengths, opportunities, barriers, gaps and recommendations for short- and long-term action. The reports included in the analysis are primarily from 2011 to 2017. Key stakeholders were interviewed who provided information that identified relevant reports and other sources of information used to identify reports to include. Key stakeholders included state agency division directors, managers and other staff from the three agencies involved, as well as directors and managers of key

community-based and early childhood advocacy organizations, some of whom are members of the project steering committee.

Report Theme Analysis

All reports were coded according to key topics or themes identified in reports. Themes are broad and include identified needs, goals for improvement, and when warranted, recommended actions. Most reports included multiple themes, with more than 40 unique themes identified. The chart below shows the top 11 identified themes, identifying the number of reports that included a theme, and the year it was published. The full review of reports is at <https://mn.gov/governor/issues/childrens-cabinet/>.



Results from the analysis have been incorporated into Early Childhood Systems Reform project planning, providing structure and framing for steering committee deliberations. The themes will also influence the problem identification and idea generation phases of the work. It should be noted that the Minnesota Children’s Cabinet has already acted on some of the themes. A description of these efforts is included below in the section titled, Early Childhood Systems Reform: Building the Infrastructure for Broad Scale Change.

Updated Compilation of Early Childhood Services and Supports

The project team completed an update of the report, Minnesota Supports and Services for Families with Young Children, a compilation of state-administered programs and services that serve Minnesota children and families.

This document was originally completed by the Children’s Cabinet in 2015 as a resource guide for state interagency staff to continue ongoing work of program coordination, eligibility alignment, and defining coordinated policy goals.

The 2018 update accounts for program changes (i.e., eligibility criteria changes, budgetary/fiscal changes, etc.) that have occurred in the past two years. The report includes information on more than 40 programs and services administered by the Minnesota Departments of Health, Education, Human Services, Revenue, Commerce, Higher Education, Minnesota Housing Finance Agency and the Internal Revenue Service. It is on the Children’s Cabinet website: <https://mn.gov/governor/issues/childrens-cabinet/>.

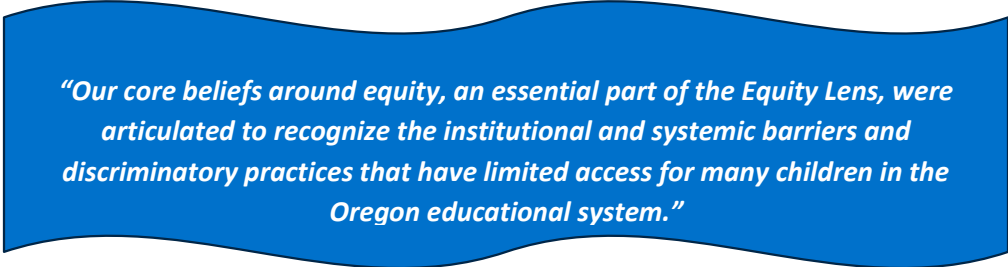
This compilation provides comprehensive background information on state programs essential to the Early Childhood Systems Reform analysis of gaps, redundancies, opportunities and strengths for building a racially equitable early childhood system. It will also inform steering committee analysis as it moves toward generating recommendations.

Early Childhood Systems Building: A Look at Other States

As Minnesota embarks on a new era of early childhood systems building, it must also look to other states for innovation and tested strategies from which to learn. Other states have accomplished much in the last decade that can inform work of the steering committee as it engages in developing recommendations to eliminate structural and institutional racism and inequity within Minnesota’s early childhood policies, programs and practice.

Racial, Health and Wealth Equity

- [Oregon’s Early Learning Council](#)’s Equity Implementation Committee has developed an Equity Lens that guides policy development and implementation strategies within the Oregon Department of Early Learning.

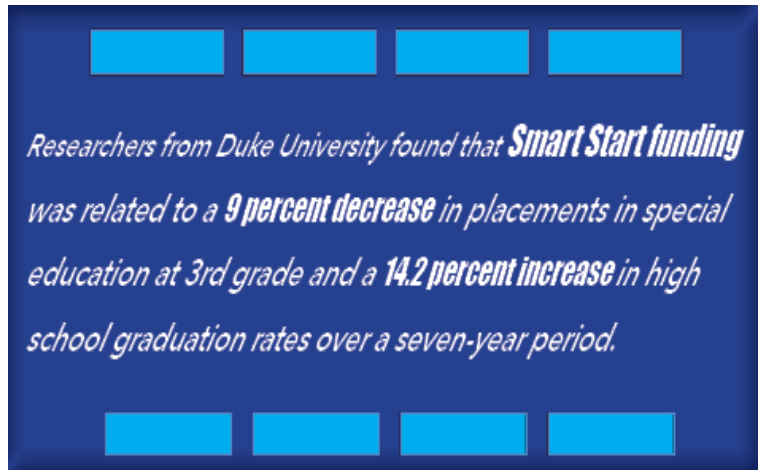


“Our core beliefs around equity, an essential part of the Equity Lens, were articulated to recognize the institutional and systemic barriers and discriminatory practices that have limited access for many children in the Oregon educational system.”

- The state of Washington has developed and adopted a [Racial Equity Theory of Change](#) (TOC) which provides a collaborative vision and approach that supports concerted action among all levels of its Early Learning System. It’s building blocks are:
 - Increase community voice and influence for those furthest away from opportunity
 - Inform practice with diverse measures and stories
 - Make decisions that genuinely meet requirements of communities of color
 - Design and implement systems that respond to children’s diverse situations.

Community and State/Local Initiatives

- Cross-agency child partnership: Washington’s Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)public-private initiative (APPI). [APPI](#) is a group of public, private and community organizations in Washington that seeks to reduce childhood exposure to toxic stress. It includes state and local government agencies, community-based organizations and foundations. They build local capacity to support community-based prevention of ACEs and support communities through research, policy and investment. The goal is to foster communities whose culture, programs and services all help to reduce childhood ACEs. To date, it has assessed efforts in five counties and found lower prevalence rates of ACEs, a decrease in the rate of child welfare referrals, and reductions in school suspension and expulsion trends.
- [North Carolina’s Smart Start](#), a public/private partnership including 76 local partners, has been in operation since 1993, and has produced statewide population-based outcomes. Researchers from Duke University found that Smart Start funding was related to a 9 percent decrease in placements in special education at third grade, and a 14.2 percent increase in high school graduation rates over a seven-year period.
- [Michigan’s Great Start System](#), a public/private partnership that engages 54 local collaboratives and partners with 70 parent coalitions, observed a 15 percentage point jump in parents reporting “easier access to services” within their communities between 2010 and 2012.



Whole Family Approach

- Georgia’s Department of Early Care and Learning has partnered with the Head Start Collaboration office, University System of Georgia, Technical College System of Georgia, Department of Economic Development Workforce Division, and Department of Labor to explore how to better support the connection of parents of young children in the early learning system with workforce training and post-secondary education.
- The [New Haven Mental Health Outreach for Mothers](#) (MOMS) Partnership in Connecticut is a collaboration of agencies that aims to help mothers overcome major challenges they identified in their lives and promote the well-being of their families. One-stop centers called MOMS Zones address basic needs, as well as mental health and employment challenges. They also offer mothers skill-building classes and workshops on job readiness and stress management.

Data and Data Sharing

- The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) helps ensure that children get a great start in kindergarten and is mandatory in state-funded full day kindergarten. The data collected from the kindergarten entry assessment portion of WaKIDS helps teachers tailor instruction to the needs

of individual students, begin meaningful conversations in communities to prioritize next steps, and help inform state-level decisions about early education and K-12 policy and investments. WaKIDS assessed 94 percent of all kindergartners in the state (77,314 children) in 2016. Data is disaggregated by race/ethnicity and geography.

- The [Texas Foster Care Health Passport for Foster Care](#) (Star Health and Superior Health Plan) has three components: A provider network which allows foster care families to find medical providers in their area; a health passport which is a patient-centered internet-based health record; and a member page where users can manage the health of a foster child (keep track of benefits, checkups and other important information). Star Health offers the following for foster children: An integrated medical home; care coordination services; and training programs for foster parents, providers, caregivers, caseworkers and other child advocates. These services are available in all Texas counties under a contract with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission so that every foster child has access to comprehensive health care.

Economic Stability

- [Eight states \(Ariz., Calif., Colo., Maine, N.Y., Ore., Vt., Wash.\) and the District of Columbia](#), have increased their minimum wage standards above \$10/hour in 2018, with some increasing to \$15/hour incrementally over time, and all nine are indexed to either cost of living or inflation. Children living in families and communities with higher incomes are more likely to have safe homes and neighborhoods, full-service grocery stores with healthy foods, safe spaces for physical activity, and high-quality schools.
- [Five states \(Calif., N.J., N.Y., R.I., Wash.\) and Puerto Rico](#) have some sort of paid leave. California has the oldest program in the U.S., dating back to its passage in 2004. States offer between four and 12 weeks of wage replacement. Most states have a state cap based on a combination of factors. Studies have shown paid family leave policies have had positive impacts on infant and maternal health, have been associated with greater labor-force attachment (women retaining jobs into their pregnancy and returning to work after giving birth), and have resulted in increased wages for some women (perhaps as a result of lessened interruption to employment resulting from greater labor-force attachment).

Building the Infrastructure for Broad Scale Change

Children's Cabinet Infrastructure

In 2011, Governor Dayton re-established the Minnesota Children's Cabinet consisting of commissioners of the Minnesota Departments of Education, Health and Human Services. The purpose of the Cabinet is to better coordinate policies, programs, and resources across agencies and communities to support improved outcomes for Minnesota children. The Children's Cabinet is focused on ensuring all Minnesota children are healthy, safe, supported, and prepared to achieve their full potential.

Since 2011, the Children's Cabinet has led efforts to reform Minnesota's early childhood system and expand Minnesota's Help Me Grow system. It also has advanced policies around voluntary pre-kindergarten, home visiting, health and well-being, and ensuring all Minnesota children have access to foundational education opportunities. In addition, the Children's Cabinet has worked to improve interagency communication and the coordination of services across state government.

In January 2018, the Children’s Cabinet was expanded to include commissioners of the Minnesota Department of Transportation (DOT), Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA), Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), and the Metropolitan Council. The expansion reflects the consensus that families with young children must have a broad spectrum of needs met to ensure healthy development and future life success. Inclusion of the additional agency commissioners in the Children’s Cabinet ensures that Minnesota is taking a whole-family approach to serving children and families, and will improve coordination and streamline services.

Since its inception in early 2017, the Early Childhood Systems Reform project has strengthened and greatly expanded the Children’s Cabinet’s focus on early childhood systems reform, creating a venue for community-centered decision making and a process for translating community-driven ideas into action. The Children’s Cabinet meets quarterly to provide high-level governance, vision stewardship, accountability, and to ensure needed capacity and resources are available to act on recommendations from the Early Childhood Systems Reform project. In addition, the Children’s Cabinet sub-cabinet, comprised of assistant commissioners from participating state agencies, meets monthly to provide real-time stewardship of Children’s Cabinet projects, ensure timely communication across state agencies, and approve final recommendations to the Children’s Cabinet. This infrastructure ensures a strong avenue for systems reform recommendations, producing the intended impacts.

One early example of this strategic infrastructure support for systems reform efforts is that the vision and mission articulated by the Early Childhood Systems Reform Steering Committee has been adopted by the Children’s Cabinet to ensure all early childhood efforts in Minnesota have a unified direction and common purpose. The vision and mission statements are below.

Early Childhood Systems Reform Vision and Mission Statement

Vision:

By focusing on children facing racial, geographic, and economic inequities, all children in Minnesota will be born healthy and able to thrive within their families and communities.

Mission:

Create an equitable system that supports pregnant and parenting families with young children. To do this families, communities, and government agencies will partner to eliminate structural racism and inequities that exist in access, policies, programs and practices.

Partnership with the BUILD Initiative

The Children’s Cabinet and the Early Childhood Systems Reform Project are taking a comprehensive universal approach to early childhood systems building that can be tailored to the unique needs of families and communities in Minnesota living with inequities that meet at the intersection of race, wealth, health and geography. Minnesota has engaged with the BUILD Initiative to become a BUILD state. The BUILD Initiative has diversity of resources, partners, staff, and methodology to assist Minnesota in its early childhood systems reform and systems building efforts.

BUILD offers unique one-stop-shop technical assistance in issue areas pertinent to comprehensive early childhood systems including but not limited to: Child care funding; quality rating and licensing; the impact of social determinants of health on early childhood outcomes; racial equity in system building; and cross cutting issues such as governance, finance, access, communications, leadership and accountability. In addition to this technical assistance, the BUILD Initiative provides opportunities to collaborate with and learn from other states through its state partnership network, which includes Washington, Georgia, Michigan, Illinois, South Carolina, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

The partnership with BUILD amplifies Minnesota’s capacity to strategically build on lessons learned in other states, and provides unique expertise to strengthen long-term systems building efforts. BUILD provides insights on how other states are approaching the undoing of systemic institutional racism in their family-based programs, practices and policies, and supports the translation of community voice in to effective state policy and practice.

Early Childhood Systems Reform: What to Expect

This report is provided as a process update for the Early Childhood Systems Reform project. A final year one report is anticipated to be released by July 2018, which will provide recommendations including practice and program actions that can be implemented immediately, policy recommendations geared toward the 2019 legislative session and beyond, as well as a Human Centered Design research-to-implementation plan for steering committee identified points of interaction between state/local systems and children and families.