

2009 Legislative Agenda for Young Children

Updated March 11, 2009



RATIONALE

From the time of conception to the first day of kindergarten, children's development rapidly progresses at a pace exceeding that of any subsequent stage of life.

Early Care and Education

1.) **Do Not Cut Vital Services to Young Children**

During a weakened economy it is the wrong time to dump the state's 'best earning stock'—early care and education that supports infants to children age 5. Cutting these vital initiatives is a huge distraction during a fiscal crisis, taking focus away from other early childhood issues. Legislators must focus on maintaining and enhancing services to vulnerable young children and their families and address the needs of an increasing number of families who will be impacted by the recession, loss of jobs, and extended periods of unemployment.

2.) **Plans for an Early Childhood System Must Incorporate the Following Themes:**

- Comprehensive systems approach
 - Strong and integrated infrastructure
 - One voice and a shared platform for early childhood
 - Standardization/quality/greater accountability and efficiency
 - Program supports, such as professional development; monitoring; technical assistance; data collection; Ready Schools

Health Services for Young Children

(In Partnership with Action for Children's 2009 Legislative Agenda)

3.) **Fully Fund N.C. Health Choice**

North Carolina families have been steadily losing employer-provided health insurance coverage for their children. Young children who are healthy are more likely to enter school ready to learn. Preventive health care is vital for children and according to the NC Division of Public Health, children are more likely to receive well child checkups and preventive care including developmental screens and referrals to early intervention services if there is a developmental concern. According to early intervention experts, about 16 percent of the children have disabilities including speech and language delays, mental retardation, learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral problems, however only 30 percent of children with disabilities are detected before school entrance. State elected officials should take all steps necessary to avoid a waiting list or freeze Health Choice.

