



Local Leaders Set the P.A.C.E. for Infants, Toddlers, and Families

PRIORITIZE, ALIGN, CONVENE, EDUCATE

As the nation works to build back better, we must not wait to make investments in our most vulnerable residents. Children are the future of our communities and local leaders are their champions. Currently there is a great discrepancy between what families need and the affordability and access of what is available. It is imperative that government works to fill these gaps. Setting the PACE to improve outcomes for young children and families will require policy makers to bring multiple sectors of the community and government together, in doing so local leaders can build a brighter tomorrow.

City government tirelessly works to support the quality of life for its residents. Municipal leaders response to the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a surge in trust and credibility in local governments. During this season of great challenge, residents have relied on the experience and resilience of local leaders to manage crises across their cities. With this track record, local government is uniquely positioned to be a driver of change and will play a key role in ensuring an equitable recovery that prioritizes the needs of children and families.

PRIORITIZE

Early Care and Education in Municipal Government & the Community

1 Set a strong early learning agenda

Include early childhood in city-wide plans by aligning programs, designing policies and build equitable systems that are responsive and supportive of all young children and families – along the early childhood continuum beginning in the prenatal-to-age-three (PN-3) development stage, Pre-K 3 and 4, through the third grade.

2 Dedicate staff to implement the early learning agenda throughout government and the community

In communities of all sizes, an advisor to the mayor or senior agency official who is focused on early childhood success can increase the city's capacity to be a leader on these issues.

3 Leverage local funding and resources for early childhood

Identify dedicated funding to support early care and education. City leaders can budget general funds, propose that a local tax levy—or a specified portion of existing taxes—be earmarked for early childhood programs.

4 Model best practices as an employer

Municipal leaders can communicate the importance of the early years by ensuring that all city employees have access to parental leave. To help working parents pay for quality care, cities can allow employees to put pre-tax money into a “dependent care account” for childcare expenses or offer direct childcare subsidies. Municipalities can also establish on-site childcare centers for city workers.

ALIGN

Supports for Prenatal to Age Three Efforts Through Collaboration and Partnerships for a Shared Vision

1 Coordinate early learning policies across city departments

City officials can challenge all municipal staff to think specifically about how they can support young children and their families as they carry out their core missions.

2 Align with local, regional and state-wide efforts

Going beyond city limits can provide the opportunity to align efforts and resources - across intergovernmental government agencies and state-wide coalitions to improve outcomes and well-being for infants, toddlers, and their families.

3 Establish a shared vision and goals

Partners develop city-wide shared vision, goals and strategies and adjust and align their actions to achieve their shared early childhood goals.

CHATTANOOGA, TN

As part of the Youth and Family Development Department the City of Chattanooga established an [Office of Early Learning](#) in 2017. Dedicated to broadening and deepening early learning opportunities for Chattanooga families by increasing educational skills for babies/infants, the Office of Early Learning works within government and across the provider community.

BOSTON, MA

Expanding the City of Boston's first 2015 [Paid Parental Leave Policy](#) provides up to 12 weeks paid time off for eligible City employees for the care of and bonding with a child added to their immediate family. Regardless of gender or marital status, an employee is eligible for Paid Leave. This policy aids the City's efforts to promote health and wellness for employees and their families.

MEMPHIS, TN

In efforts to improve school readiness for children the City of Memphis and Shelby County officials established an [ordinance](#) to create a joint fiscal agent to oversee the funding for early childhood and pre-kindergarten education. The Fiscal Agent is responsible to provide and maintain health, development, early enrichment, parenting, and advocacy services as are needed for improving “kindergarten readiness” for the children of Memphis, Shelby County.

BURLINGTON, VT

Under the umbrella of the Office of Innovation and Technology, Mayor Miro Weinberger began the [Early Learning Initiative \(ELI\)](#) to address the fact that low-income Burlington children are disproportionately likely to be unready for school. The city supports school readiness for its most vulnerable residents by expanding access and affordability through the ELI Capacity Grant Program which helps to create new and stabilized existing childcare spaces, and the ELI First Steps Scholarship Program, providing scholarships to families with low income to help them afford and access high-quality care.

CONVENE

Key Stakeholders & Support Authentic Partnerships

1 Create an early childhood coalition

Bringing key stakeholders together increases community buy-in for early childhood initiatives and allows for more effective and coordinated planning. Strong coalitions often include public school officials; childcare and early learning programs; local childcare resource and referral agencies; faith-based organizations; health care providers; employers and business organizations; community-based groups; and parents.

2 Organize partners with a stake and who benefit from a strong early learning agenda

Key stakeholders—such as childcare and early education providers, schools, childcare resource and referral agencies (CCR&Rs), local health agencies, and your local business community—can help evaluate how well current programs are addressing the needs of children and families.

3 Incorporate families into leadership and consult parents about their needs

Foster opportunities to elevate family voice in the decision-making process. Municipal officials can hold community dialogues to learn more about what families with young children need and identify barriers and ensure your policies and practices are supportive and responsive.

EDUCATE

The Public and Other Policy Makers to Foster Support for Local Action

1 Use the “bully pulpit” to raise awareness and build support

Utilize opportunities to highlight the importance of early childhood success include public speeches to community members; town hall and city council meetings; business roundtables; newspaper editorials; television interviews; and special programs on cable TV local access channels.

2 Lead a public education/messaging campaign

Mayors and city councilmembers can help get the word out to parents about the importance of the early years in determining future life outcomes through public service announcements; billboards and transit signs; and printed materials or “new baby kits” for all new parents that are distributed through local hospitals.

3 Publish a community resource guide for families

Many parents may not be aware of resources available in the community. To help connect families to support, cities can distribute a resource guide through local libraries, community centers or public offices, and make it available on the city’s website. City leaders can also establish a public information “help line” to answer questions about community services and programs for young children. Many new parents feel overwhelmed at times with the job of caring for an infant or toddler. Cities can offer support by providing information kits for parents leaving the hospital with newborns on how to ensure the healthy development of their child.

FORTH WORTH, TX

The [Early Learning Alliance](#) brings together organizations, institutions and individuals to coordinate efforts, streamline processes and create new solutions that will have a positive impact in the lives of children from birth to age eight. Formed in 2013 as part of national efforts to improve early learning systems in cities. The Alliance includes more than 50 organizations and individuals representing government, community-based early childcare providers, faith-based organizations, educators, school district administrators, training organizations, nonprofit service providers, health and mental health providers, private foundations, the United Way of Tarrant County, Workforce Solutions of Tarrant County and the City of Fort Worth.

DAYTON, OH

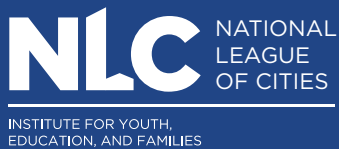
In 2014, the City of Dayton under the leadership of Mayor Nan Whaley launched the [City of Learners](#) initiative to learn what strengths and obstacles to accessing high-quality services and early education in the community. A committee of community leaders and volunteers is meeting regularly and seeking input from the community. A key step was a series of Listening Sessions held to allow residents, parents and others to share ideas about improving education in Dayton.

BALTIMORE, MD

[B’more for Healthy Babies \(BHB\)](#) is an initiative to reduce infant mortality in Baltimore City through programs emphasizing policy change, service improvements, community mobilization, and behavior change. This long-term initiative has been planned to work at the policy, service, community, and individual levels. The BHB Steering Committee brings together leaders from city agencies, medical systems, and the community to improve maternal and child health policy.

DETROIT, MI

The Detroit Health Department is improving birth outcomes and infant mortality rates with support and services such as [SisterFriends Detroit](#). SisterFriends Detroit creates a circle of care around expectant mothers (Little Sisters) throughout their pregnancy and through baby’s first birthday, by connecting them with caring and compassionate mentors (SisterFriends), community health workers, social workers, a nurses, and breastfeeding specialists. SisterFriends Detroit assists women who are pregnant with services, resources, support, and rides to their doctors’ appointments.



Resources

[Supporting Early Childhood: Issue #6](#) – National League of Cities

[Equitable Early Care and Education: An Alignment Framework](#) – National League of Cities

Contact

To learn more about NLC's work around Early Childhood Success reach out to our team at the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families ecteam@nlc.org