

PRENATAL-TO-THREE (PN-3) IMPACT CHAMPION TOOLKIT:

1-2-3, Elevating Prenatal-to-Three for Elected and Senior City Officials



Introduction

The Prenatal-to-Three Impact Champion Toolkit is designed to provide local leaders and their key partners information on **communicating the benefits of early investments, elevating local actions, and steps to strengthen a PN-3 agenda.**

Municipal leaders are uniquely positioned to utilize their “bully pulpit” to educate their constituents, build public will, and demonstrate their commitment to building equitable early care and learning systems that impact outcomes for children and families beginning in the prenatal-to-age-three (PN-3) developmental period.

There’s a growing importance and recognition of cities as agenda setters and problem solvers. City leaders are not only responsible for how their city performs today but they are also responsible for the future of the city. The National League of Cities (NLC) Institute for Youth Education and Families is calling on municipal leaders to join us as a PN-3 Impact Champions. We hope you will join us in highlighting the impact cities, towns, and villages are making to improve outcomes for birthing people, infants, and toddlers.



Using this Toolkit

Municipal leaders have an impact on the opportunities and resources that are available, and the challenges young children and their families face. Place matters and cities matter for child well-being. Child well-being is an indicator of what the future holds. Cities can drive engagement, awareness, and action around their early childhood efforts through these three steps.



Communicating the Benefits of Early Investments



Elevating Local Action



Strengthening your PN-3 Agenda

Local leaders can start conversations with what we know works best and look for ways to take a multi-generational approach, starting at the beginning when conducting business and making policies.



Communicating the Benefit of Early Investments – Topline Messages

Why Start Early

Research shows that critical brain development occurs in the earliest years of a child's life, with the most rapid period of brain development occurring within the first three years, building the foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health – **with more than 1 million new neural connections forming** in an infant's brain every second.

Early childhood care and education is an economic issue. Ensuring children have **access to high quality early childhood experiences is essential** to a city's infrastructure and to the economic vibrancy of a city.

Supportive relationships and positive learning experiences begin at home but can also be provided through a range of effective programs and policies.

Example

[Why Early Childhood Success is Top of Mind for Local and Organization Leaders](#)

The Opportunity

Supporting families requires elected officials, policymakers, and multiple systems coming together—health care, childcare, and family support services—to ensure that all parents, particularly those with high need, get what they need to nurture their children's healthy development from the very beginning.

Parents play the lead role in their child's healthy development, but all parents are stretched in the earliest months and years of their child's life and welcome supports.

Every child deserves a strong start in life. By ensuring that all babies and toddlers have access to resources and services they need—regardless of where they live, their family's income or education, their gender, or the color of their skin—we can strengthen our communities and live up to our promise as a nation. We must make investments to support families who are most in need so that all children can succeed in school and life.

The Return on Investment

It's not just infants, toddlers, and their families who benefit when we start early but the entire community. When we invest in the first three years of a child's life, the return for communities is the highest, and we can reduce the need for more expensive intervention later.

Birth to three investments in high-quality childcare bolsters the economy today – companies providing childcare decrease employee absences by 30% and job turnover by 60%

Programs that connect parents to nurses before and after birth result in a 48% reduction in child neglect and abuse, a 67% reduction in children's behavioral problems, and an 82% increase in mothers' employment.

Example

[Developing Early Childhood Success Through Local Investments](#)

Leveraging National Narratives

MATERNAL MORTALITY AND MORBIDITY

Nearly 25% of all U.S. women start prenatal care late in pregnancy or do not receive the recommended number of prenatal visits. This number rises to 34% among Black women and 41% among Indigenous or Alaska Native women.

COVID-19

Because of COVID-19, countless infants and toddlers have fallen behind because of isolation, economic hardships, and family stress, but it's not too late to help.

We must act now to ensure that families have the support they need in their children's earliest years to recover and build a strong foundation for a healthy future.

Examples

[DC Councilmember's fight to reduce maternal mortality is personal](#)

[Mayor Andrew Ginther: Child Care and Early Education is Key to a Full and Equitable Recovery](#)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Investing in home visiting programs can save in ER visits, child abuse and neglect, special education and grade repetition, and future juvenile delinquency and crime.

By providing access to high-quality early education for kids today, we can see less crime and incarceration in the future while reaping millions in taxpayer savings and other economic benefits.

EQUITY

Every child deserves a strong start in life, but not every child starts from the same place. Historically systemic racism has resulted in deep inequities simply because of where a child lives or the color of their skin. It can mean they begin life with fewer advantages than their peers and these children keep losing ground over time. That is not how our country is supposed to work. We must demand that our systems work for all kids and families with programs that support every mother and give every child the same strong start.

The pandemic has exacerbated centuries of glaring structural racial disparities throughout our society. America is at a pivotal moment, as we acknowledge the racial, social, and economic inequality that has historically fallen hardest on people of color and families with low incomes. If we're serious about doing better, now is the time to prioritize addressing the root causes and issues that have led to persistent inequities so that all children can build the foundation they need to meet their full potential.

Example

[Local Leaders on the Importance of Affordable, Quality Early Childcare](#)





Elevating Local Actions – Building Awareness

In making the case for long-term early investments, it's important to share how you are making an impact to improve outcomes for birthing people, infants, and toddlers. Think about the policy and practice changes made, call out the specific investment, share why it happened and how it impacted families and the community.

As you elevate local actions consider the many platforms and opportunities for communication.

Example

[Mayors from Across the Country Join Mayor Bowser for DC's First Maternal and Infant Health Summit.](#)

Published Communications

- ◆ A “PN-3 Champion” blog, vlog, or press release op-eds highlighting the efforts your city has taken to improve maternal and child health outcomes, utilizing the topline message points that align with your local efforts.



Social Media

- ◆ Post on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn to let your residents and colleagues know you are a PN-3 Impact Champion.
- ◆ Invite a community-based organization to take over the mayor's or city's social media accounts for a day to share content about what early childhood success means to them.

Awareness day

Increase [visibility of opportunities](#) and services for young children and families. Consider writing a city proclamation in support of policies and programs that support young children, families, and those who care for them.

Appreciation Celebration

Cities can take the lead to [recognize the important work](#) of child care providers and say “thank you” for the difference they make in children's lives. Consider having city staff and officials can make videos thanking their child care providers.



Community and Public Events

- ◆ Center family and provider voices
- ◆ Speak to the experiences of your constituents
- ◆ Include children and families as a priority in state of the city addresses

Timed Advocacy

Stay up to date on calls to action relative to early childhood to celebrate local actions.

National Early Childhood and Health Observances:

- ◆ Week of the Young Child: April
- ◆ Black Maternal Health Week: April
- ◆ National Child Care Provider Appreciation Day: The Friday before Mother's Day
- ◆ Mother's Day: May
- ◆ Father's Day: June
- ◆ Grandparents Day: September

Example

[Local Leaders Celebrate the Week of the Young Child by Leading the Way on Early Childhood](#)



Getting Started? Explore steps city leaders can take to strengthen an PN-3 Agenda

1 Assess the Issue: understand the state of PN-3 in your city (where you are now)

- ◆ Ask yourself, what do Infants and Toddlers Need in Your Our City?
- ◆ What are the most critical areas for improvement?
- ◆ What supports are needed to act?
- ◆ What parts of the work do you anticipate being hard?

2 Build a Team: create a shared vision and what actions are needed and who you will work with

- ◆ Who can contribute to achieving our goal and must be included?
- ◆ What opportunities are available to better coordinate services and systems?
- ◆ Are there any gaps in resources, and how can they be closed?
- ◆ What non-traditional partners should be considered?

3 Identify Metrics for Success: How will you know it worked?

- ◆ What information is needed to better meet the needs of infants and toddlers?
- ◆ What can we measure to determine success -tangible and intangible?
- ◆ Where do we get the data needed to measure success? Who collects the data and when?
- ◆ How will we know we have achieved the goals?

Additional Resources

[Setting the P.A.C.E for Infants, Toddlers, and Families](#)

[Embedding Equity Into How Your City Does Business for Early Childhood Success](#)

[Fireside Chat: State and Local Government Prenatal-to-Three Collaboration in Action](#)

For any questions, please reach out to: NLC's Early Childhood Success Team **ECteam@nlc.org** or Jammie Albert, Program Manager, Early Childhood Success **albert@nlc.org**.

Citations

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