



T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Delaware Advocacy Toolkit



This toolkit is designed to prepare you to successfully advocate for public policies that benefit young children and their families such as the Delaware Association for the Education of Young Children's (DeAEYC) public policy agenda. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Delaware is administered by DeAEYC.

DeAEYC's Public Policy Agenda

- **A great start for Delaware's children** so that they are the healthiest in the nation – physically, emotionally and behaviorally.
- **Access for all Delaware's children to high quality early childhood programs and professionals** who are highly skilled and well-supported.
- **Implementation of high-quality education and professional development** across all sectors of the early childhood workforce
- **An aligned and effective early learning system birth through third grade** that enables all children to arrive at school ready and eager to succeed and that prepares K-12 schools to further enrich children's early learning in ways that are developmentally appropriate.
- **Sustainable system improvement:** policies, programs and partnerships that address the comprehensive developmental needs of all children and are adequately supported and funded over time.

What is Advocacy vs. Lobbying?

Advocacy is building support for an issue among audiences such as the general public, elected officials, the media, and key opinion leaders. Activities such as educating audiences about a topic, sharing illustrative stories, or working on a solution to a problem are considered advocacy. Individual citizens can always contact their elected officials as constituents. State and federal governments do not regulate the public at large from participating in advocacy or lobbying activities.

Lobbying is communicating with elected officials to influence their actions regarding a specific piece of legislation. Many nonprofits can legally lobby, as long as they do not exceed restrictions on how time and resources are expended based on federal Internal Revenue Service tax laws. Expert legal and tax advice should be sought by an organization before engaging in lobbying activities.

Advocacy activities that are not lobbying

- Invite a legislator to visit your program and hear about the work being done.
- Provide a policymaker with information or educational materials on a topic.
- Talk with the media about a specific social issue.
- Track legislative positions and voting records.

Learn more about permissible activities during an election in the Voting and Elections section.¹

Case Advocacy involves efforts to secure appropriate services for a child (“case”) through agencies, courts, self-help groups, etc.

Case advocacy examples—

- sharing with someone how they can get help for a child who needs glasses
- giving someone a pamphlet on ways to help a child who is a biter
- taking someone to the food stamp office and helping them enroll

Class Advocacy focuses on a “class” of children (a large group, such as all children with disabilities or all children in poverty); the changes are often handled through the legislature or the court system.

Class advocacy examples—

- suggesting that someone join an organization that supports their effort
- helping someone write testimony on a bill to make child care safer and driving them to the state capitol so they can testify.

Did you know that the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct includes:

Ethical Responsibilities to Children:

- I-1.9—To advocate for and ensure that all children, including those with special needs, have access to the support services needed to be successful.

Ethical Responsibilities to Families:

- P-2.15—We shall be familiar with and appropriately refer families to community resources and professional support services. After a referral has been made, we shall follow up to ensure that services have been appropriately provided.

Responsibility to Community and Society:

- I-4.7—To support policies and laws that promote the well-being of children and families, and to work to change those that impair their well-being. To participate in developing policies and laws that are needed, and to cooperate with families and other individuals and groups in these efforts.

You may want to print the code for your files:

<http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/Ethics%20Position%20Statement2011.pdf>

Why do we need advocates?

Among industrialized nations, U.S. policy has resulted in our country being ranked:

The State of America’s Children

- ✓ 1st in Gross Domestic Product
- ✓ 1st in number of billionaires
- ✓ 1st in number of incarcerated people
- ✓ AND
- ✓ 17th in reading scores
- ✓ 23rd in science scores

- ✓ 29th in infant mortality
- ✓ 31st in gap between the rich and the poor

The State of Early Childhood Programs

- In 2011, the average annual cost of center-based infant care was more than the annual in-state tuition at public four-year colleges in 35 states and the District of Columbia.
- The most common infant-to-staff ratio across the U.S. is 4:1; 5 states allow a ratio of 6:1.
- For highest quality care, the National Association for the Education of Young Children advises a 3:1 ratio.

State of Young Children in DE

- In Delaware, there are **67,180** children under age six.
- **70.1%** of children under age 6 have both parents in the workforce.
- Over **25,000** Delaware children, birth to five years old, are from low-income families - that's **40%** of our children
- Only **33%** of Delaware 4th grade students are on track in reading and math, and only 25% will catch up by 10th grade

Early Childhood Education in Delaware

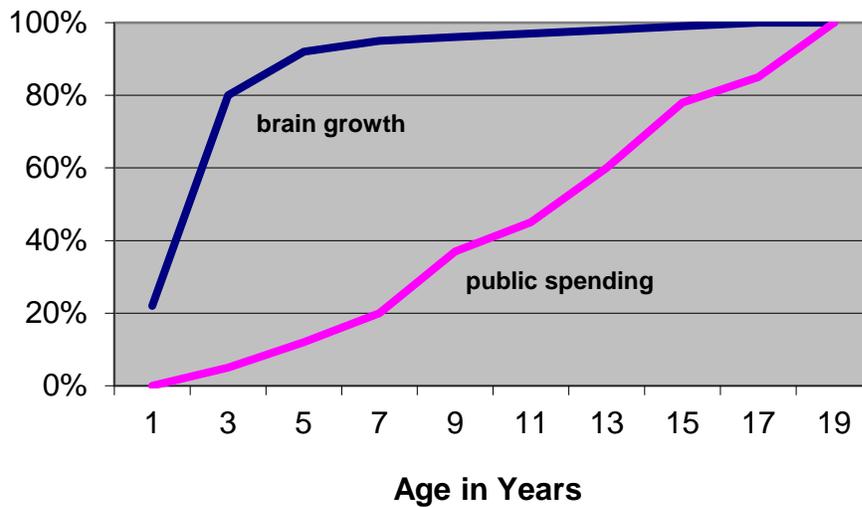
- Only 36% of early childhood teachers and administrators have a Bachelor's degree or higher
- 20% have a high school diploma or less
- \$23,920 is the average yearly salary for Delaware's early educators – the poverty level for a family of four

Huge problem that those who have the most important jobs are paid the least in our society.

- **Economists estimate a 7-16% return on investment for high quality early education in:**
 - reduced health care;
 - special education;
 - social welfare (incarceration) costs, and;
 - increased productivity and tax revenues.

How we frame a policy issue is so important – policy meaning, laws and public investment or funding

Investing in early learning, preschool education and learning means that children will do better once they get into school...they read better, they learn better...they go on to graduate and will attend college. Therefore, less costs in health care system, special education, criminal justice system – cost of prison \$80000/year. Higher employment and contributions to society – increased productivity, direct contribution of tax revenues, etc.



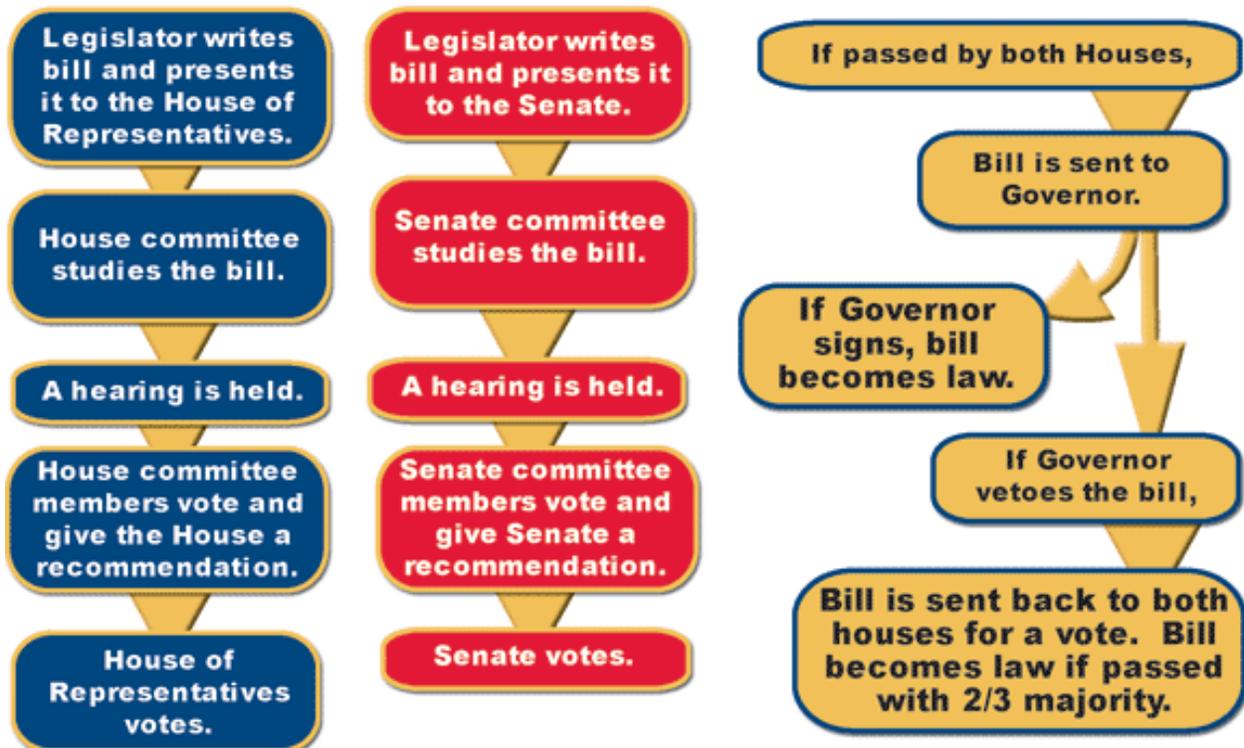
Nationally—and in each state—the amount of public money spent on children’s services/education increases by age. As the brain is in the most rapid growth stage, the least amount of money is spent supporting the children. Also, the least amount of funds are spent on the education of the poorest children!

Understanding the process to influence policy makers . . .

The Delaware legislature and the U.S. Congress work in similar ways to make a bill become a law.

1. Introduce a bill and refer it to a Committee
2. Committee Action—hearings and vote
3. Send bill to floor of Senate or House—debate and votes
4. Refer to other chamber (House or Senate)
5. This chamber can reject it, ignore it, amend it, pass it
6. If passed with changes (amendments), it goes to conference committee made up of members of both chambers
7. If same bill is voted on by both chambers, it is sent to the Governor (or President) for signing into law or vetoing.

How a Bill Becomes a Law



Your Call to Action

1. Participate in Children's Advocacy Day
2. Visit, email and/or call your legislators
3. Write a letter to the editor.
4. Stay informed and talk to othersⁱⁱ

Communication with Elected Officials

Use the sites below to find representatives near you:

www.house.gov

www.senate.gov

www.legis.delaware.gov

General Tips

As you are building these strong, personal relationships, it is important to remember that:

- Policymakers care about issues that affect their constituents and they respond to concise, persuasive arguments that are easily understood and communicated.
- Letters, e-mails, and phone calls are effective ways to communicate. Five or six letters or phone calls on a specific issue will encourage the elected official to pay much closer attention to that issue. Personalized letters are always most effective.
- You know much more about children's issues than your elected official. Leverage your knowledge to educate and build up a relationship with your elected official so that you are seen as a resource for information on children's issues and possible legislation.
- Sharing stories about children and their families and how they are affected by an issue is very effective at building support for your position.
- Legislators' staff members are wonderful resource. Developing a good relationship with legislative staff can lead to direct contact with a legislator over time.

Phone Calls, Letters, and E-mails

Correspondence from constituents reminds elected officials that the public is tracking specific issues, legislation, and their voting records. Whenever communicating with legislators through a phone call, letter, or e-mail, remember these tips:

Remember to use your personal e-mail and telephone when contacting policymakers

- Identify yourself as a constituent.
- Make sure you touch on every point you wish to convey.
- If possible, keep written correspondence to one page, and phone calls to five minutes.
- When addressing a specific piece of legislation, refer to the bill number.

- Include factual and, if possible, local information and examples that support your viewpoint.
- Stay on topic—discuss one issue per written communication or conversation.
- Include a call to action, specifying what you want the lawmaker to do.
- If making a phone call, practice your remarks. The more you rehearse, the more comfortable you will be delivering your message when it counts. Practice with another person to identify any areas where your message isn't clear or effective.ⁱⁱⁱ

Sample Phone Script

- Hello, I am (your name), a constituent in Representative/Senator _____'s district.
- I am calling to speak with Representative/Senator _____ about early childhood programs in our community.
- I ask that you support (bill name) to increase funding for high-quality early learning programs.
- The birth-to-five years are the most important of a child's development. Economists, business leaders, and researchers agree that high-quality early childhood services are among the smartest public investments we can make.
- Early childhood programs provide the best and most cost-effective way to give at-risk children the chance to succeed in school and become more productive adults.
- I ask that you vote in support of legislation that increases funds for needed early childhood programs in your legislative district. These funds will greatly affect the lives of young children and families in our community.
- Thank you for your hard work.

Sample Letter/E-mail

Dear Representative/Senator _____,

I am writing to you about the importance of early childhood programs in our community. As a constituent in your district, I ask that you support (bill name) to increase funding for high-quality early learning programs in our community.

Research tells us that children who participate in high quality early learning programs have better language, math, and social skills than their peers who missed this opportunity. They are also more likely to graduate from high school, less likely to become involved in crime, and more likely to become positive, productive citizens as adults.

The birth-to-five years are the most important of a child's development. Economists, business leaders, and researchers agree that high-quality early childhood services are among the smartest public investments we can make. Early childhood programs provide the best and most cost effective way to give at-risk children the chance to succeed in school and become more productive adults.

My early learning center, (name of center), has a waiting list of XX children, and without additional funds, I am unable to serve them. Please vote in support of (bill name) so that all the children in our community will be prepared to enter school ready to learn.

Thank you for your hard work.^{iv}

In-Person Meeting with Your Elected Official

Legislators want to be responsive to their constituents and their needs and will spend time with visitors when possible.

Scheduling a Visit

- Schedule an appointment with policymakers in advance of your visit.
- Have several dates and times available for a face-to-face meeting. When calling to make an appointment with a member of Congress, ask for the scheduler, not the legislator. If the scheduler is not available, leave a message and follow up with another phone call.
- Let the scheduler know what issue you want to discuss with the legislator.
- If the representative won't be available during your visit, ask to meet with a staff person knowledgeable about your issue.
- Find out how much time you will have with the policymaker.
- After making an appointment, leave your name and contact information with the scheduler as well as the names of any relevant organizations you are affiliated with.

Meeting with Your Representative

- Dress professionally.
- Practice your talking points.
- Look for common ground and compliment the official for past support if applicable.
- Allow the elected official time to ask questions and share observations or opinions.
- Anticipate opposing arguments. Be prepared to defend your perspective and stay focused on suggestions for constructive solutions.
- Ask elected officials what it would take for them to change their minds. Several communications may be necessary to effectively persuade a policymaker.
- Be friendly, firm, and positive in your messaging even if your legislator does not share your perspective. A rational, balanced conversation will keep the official's door open to future contact.
- Bring informational materials such as fact sheets, articles, or research studies to leave with the legislator and staff. When possible, use local data. For example, cite how many children under five live in their district and how many early childhood slots are available.
- Remember that you are an authority with content knowledge and expertise to share.
- Do not forget a call to action. Let the legislators know what you want them to do: vote for a bill, talk with colleagues, sponsor legislation, etc.
- Offer to provide relevant follow up contact or materials after the meeting.
- Take notes, particularly if further contact is expected.

- Thank your legislators or their staff members for the time they've spent and any supportive actions they will take.

After the Meeting

- Follow up with an e-mail thanking the legislators or staff persons for their time and reminding them of any action commitments they made.
- Let them know what follow-up action they can expect from you if you offered to provide their office with further information.
- Talk with other advocates about the meeting and strategize next steps.
- Do not send photocopied letters to legislators. It is better to send brief personalized letters than to send letters that have clearly been duplicated.

U.S. Congress

United States Congress is the nation's bicameral legislative body in Washington, D.C. The Senate is made up of 100 senators, two from each state who are elected for six-year terms. Elections occur on a rotating basis; about one-third of the Senate is up for re-election every two years. The 435 members of the House of Representatives are each elected for two years from districts within each state determined by population. Each chamber of Congress is divided into committees that focus on specific legislative areas. Committee members are generally the first to hear and work on bills.

Contacting Your Federal Elected Officials

The U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 can transfer calls to the appropriate legislator's office. It can be difficult to contact federal representatives directly. When you call their offices, you will most likely speak to a staff member. You can ask for the legislative aide who handles the issue you are calling about or leave a message about your opinions on legislation with the person who answers the phone. Federal legislators have staff members who generally take care of the day-to-day policy issues, briefing them before important debates and votes.

Senators and representatives are usually available in their district offices during congressional breaks. You can schedule meetings with them or invite them to local programs or events by contacting the district office and speaking to the scheduler. They may also hold town hall meetings or appear at public events where you can communicate directly with them.

If you are in Washington, DC, you can visit your elected officials in their offices. This can be a great way to build relationships and to advocate for issues directly. Most legislators offer weekly constituent events, open to all visitors from their home district. Also, staff members are usually available to give tours and answer questions whenever the office is open. Call the office before your visit for more details. ^v

Letter to the Editor

Writing a letter to the editor is one of the best ways to respond to articles, editorials or op-eds published in your local paper. You can submit a letter to amplify a positive editorial, mitigate the damage caused by a harmful op-ed or highlight key information left out of an article. The letters section is popular, and policy makers in particular pay close attention to letters that express the views of their constituents. The following are some tips for writing a successful letter to the editor.

- Swift response. Timeliness is key. After you identify a story or editorial that merits a response, draft and submit your letter as soon as possible.
- Read the letters section. Read letters to the editor published recently by the newspaper, and mirror their format.
- Follow the rules. Look for guidelines about format, length and other requirements on the paper's website or printed in the paper near the letters section. If you can't find them, call the newspaper and ask. You don't want your letter to be rejected because you didn't follow the rules.
- Brief is best. Keep your letter brief and to the point – focus on making one key point in two or three paragraphs, and use just a couple of key facts or statistics, or a very brief story, to support your argument.
- Edit. Proofread carefully to eliminate typos and grammatical errors.

Sample Letter to the Editor

DATE

Dear Editor,

The [DATE] story ["Name of Article"] highlighted [MAIN PREMISE OF STORY]. Over a lifetime, investments in early childhood education generate big returns for all of us. With more than 80 percent of brain development occurring before age five, quality early childhood education develops cognitive and social skills that help children succeed in school and as adults. Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman has shown that every dollar invested in quality early childhood education for at-risk children delivers economic gains of 10 percent per year. Investing in these programs also saves states money due to fewer referrals for special education and lower incarceration rates.

However, in order for [STATE] to see these benefits, [SPECIFIC STATE POLICYMAKERS] must prioritize funding for [SPECIFIC PROGRAM] and invest in our state's greatest resource. Now is the time to put our precious tax dollars where they will do the most good.

[NAME OF AUTHOR]

[CONTACT INFORMATION]^{vi}

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Delaware Success at a Glance



T.E.A.C.H. awards associate degree and bachelor degree scholarships to early childhood professionals in an effort to address the key issues of under-education, poor compensation, and high turnover within the early childhood workforce.

In 2015-2016:

- **185 early childhood professionals received T.E.A.C.H. scholarships.**
- **The average GPA for an associate degree recipient was 3.06.**
- **The average GPA for a bachelor's degree recipient was 3.53.**
- **47% of T.E.A.C.H. recipients were the first family member to attend college.**
- **53% of T.E.A.C.H. recipients were people of color.**
- **9,892 children in Delaware benefited from the education their early childhood teachers received due to the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program.**

Advocacy Resources

State of Delaware Resources

- **Delaware Early Childhood Council**

<http://decc.delaware.gov/>

The DECC's mission is to promote the development of a comprehensive and coordinated early childhood system, birth to eight, which provides the highest quality services and environment for Delaware's children and their families.

- **Wilmington Early Care & Education Council**

<http://decc.delaware.gov/meetings/wilmington-early-childhood-council/>

The mission of the WECEC is that all Wilmington children will have access to an integrated early childhood system which fosters collaboration among existing programs, and identifies gaps in current delivery systems for children birth through 8 years old.

- **Sussex Early Childhood Council**

<http://decc.delaware.gov/meetings/sussex-early-childhood-council/>

- **Kids Count**

<http://www.ccrs.udel.edu/kids-count/data-center>

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#DE>

A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT is the premier source for data on child and family well-being in the United States. Access hundreds of indicators, download data and create reports and graphics on the KIDS COUNT Data Center that support smart decisions about children and families.

Federal Government Resources

- **The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**

www.naeyc.org

NAEYC is the world's largest organization working on behalf of children. NAEYC promotes high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age 8, by connecting practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.

- **Childcare Aware of America**

<http://childcareawareamerica.org/>

Child Care Aware of America is a leading voice for child care, working with state and local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&Rs) and other community partners to ensure that all families have access to quality, affordable child care. To achieve our mission, the organization leads projects that increase the quality and availability of child care, offers comprehensive training to child care professionals, undertakes research, and advocates for child care policies that improve the lives of children and families.

- **Open Congress**

www.opencongress.org

Opencongress.gov is operated by the Sunlight Foundation which advocates for open government globally and uses technology to make government more accountable to all

- **U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Child Care**

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ>

The Office of Child Care (OCC) supports low-income working families by providing access to affordable, high-quality early care and afterschool programs. OCC administers the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and works with state, territory and tribal governments to provide support for children and their families juggling work schedules and struggling to find child care programs that will fit their needs and that will prepare children to succeed in school. CCDF also improves the quality of care to support children’s healthy development and learning by supporting child care licensing, quality improvements systems to help programs meet higher standards and support for child care workers to attain more training and education.

- **National Women’s Law Center**

www.nwlc.org

Since 1972, the Center has expanded the possibilities for women and girls in this country. We have succeeded in getting new laws on the books and enforced; litigating ground-breaking cases all the way to the Supreme Court, and educating the public about ways to make laws and public policies work for women and their families. Today, an experienced staff of nearly 60 continues to advance the issues that cut to the core of women’s lives in education, employment, family and economic security, and health and reproductive rights—with special attention given to the needs of low-income women and their families.

- **National Governor’s Association**

www.nga.org

The National Governors Association (NGA) is the bipartisan organization of the nation’s governors. Through NGA, governors share best practices, speak with a collective voice on national policy and develop innovative solutions that improve state government and support the principles of federalism.

- **National Association of State Legislatures**

www.ncsl.org

NCSL’s mission is to improve the quality and effectiveness of state legislatures, promote policy innovation and communication among state legislatures, and ensure state legislatures a strong, cohesive voice in the federal system. The strength of NCSL is our bipartisanship and commitment to serving both Republicans and Democrats. It is recognized in our comprehensive, unbiased research.

- **The Center for Law and Social Policy-CLASP**

www.clasp.org

Through careful research and analysis and effective advocacy, CLASP develops and promotes new ideas, mobilizes others, and directly assists governments and advocates to put in place successful strategies that deliver results that matter to people across America. We are nonpartisan and situated at the intersection of local practice, national research, and state and federal policy, and striving to translate each world to each other.

- **Alliance for Justice**

www.afj.org

AFJ works to ensure that the federal judiciary advances core constitutional values, preserves human rights and unfettered access to the courts, and adheres to the even-handed administration of justice for all Americans. It is the leading expert on the legal framework for nonprofit advocacy efforts, providing definitive information, resources, and technical assistance that encourages organizations and their funding partners to fully exercise their right to be active participants in the democratic process.

- **Alliance for Early Success: An Inventory of National Organizations Supporting Early Success for Young Children**

[State & National Partner Summaries 2014-15](#)

The Alliance for Early Success is a catalyst for bringing state, national, and funding partners together to improve state policies for children, started at birth and continuing through age eight.

- **ZERO TO THREE**

<http://www.zerotothree.org/>

ZERO TO THREE is a national, nonprofit organization that provides parents, professionals and policymakers the knowledge and know-how to nurture early development.

- **The BUILD Initiative**

The BUILD Initiative works with early childhood leaders within states and nationally to better prepare young children to thrive and succeed. The BUILD Initiative supports state leaders from both the private and public sectors as they work to set policy, offer services and advocate for children from birth to age five.

<http://www.buildinitiative.org/>

ⁱ Ounce of Prevention Fund, *Early Childhood Advocacy Toolkit 2009*, p. 6.

ⁱⁱ Devona E. G. Williams, Ph.D., “Early Learning: *We Need, We Care, Our Future!*” May 2015. PowerPoint presentation.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ounce of Prevention Fund, *Early Childhood Advocacy Toolkit 2009*, p. 11.

^{iv} Ounce of Prevention Fund, *Early Childhood Advocacy Toolkit 2009*, p. 22.

^v Ounce of Prevention Fund, *Early Childhood Advocacy Toolkit 2009*, p. 12-14.

^{vi} Birth to Five Policy Alliance, *Advocacy Toolkit: Promoting Quality Early Childhood Education*, July 2011, p.27-28.