



# THE IMPERATIVE TO INVEST IN INFANTS AND TODDLERS: WHY AND HOW

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# Our Mission

- NIEER improves the learning and development of young children by producing and communicating knowledge that transforms policy and practice.
- CEELO, a project of NIEER, seeks to build capacity of state agencies to lead sustained improvements in early learning opportunities and outcomes.



# The Imperative to Invest in Infants and Toddlers

"Research shows that 85 percent of brain development happens before age three."

- Healthy infants and toddlers become joyful and confident preschoolers.
- Pre-k is simply not soon enough to invest in children's learning and development.

**Louisiana is only providing publicly funded early care and education to 7 percent of its at-risk children between birth and age two and 33% of three year olds.**



# How: Learning From Other States

*LA has already laid the groundwork, the time is now to target funding, quality and local infrastructure to infants-toddlers, and maintain efforts in preschool.*

- Illinois Early Childhood Block Grant
- Kansas Early Childhood Block Grant
- Nebraska Early Childhood Education Endowment
- Oklahoma Pilot Early Childhood Program
- Other states: Indiana Happy Babies Brain Trust, Oregon Best Beginnings, Vermont Everything Matters for Babies Washington Birth to Three Early Regional Coalitions, Help Me Grow Connecticut





# Strategies for Increasing Investments in Infants-Toddlers (I-T)

## ■ Targeted Population

- Direct funds to at-risk IT to include services & supports
- Link Birth-Five Systems
- IL & KS I-T set aside ensures any new investments in PreK included automatic set-aside for at risk I-T
- CO & WA provide funding to local I-T councils to determine services



# Financing Strategies

- **Set Quality Standards**

- High-quality, evidence-based services
- Strong accountability structure
- Assistance for programs moving toward high-quality standards

- OK Pilot Early Childhood Program required that all programs meet a specified list of 25 requirement and *Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers*.

- IL Early Childhood Block Grant requires 20% of set aside to be used for quality enhancements.



# Financing Strategies

- **Set Aside Funding- create a floor, not a ceiling**
  - Tap all Sources: State general revenue, state education funds, tobacco settlement funds, CCDF, Early Head Start, Part C, Maternal & Child Health, Medicaid, CHIP, Title I
  - Flexibility to blend funding streams that support a range of high-quality programs
- NE created “Sixpence”, a public-private partnership, including \$40 million in state funding and an additional \$20 million in private sector dollars. Sixpence generates earnings each year and is not subject to annual appropriations or state fiscal fluctuations.
- VT made improving financing and sustainability for evidence-based home visiting programs a priority and worked together to a specific funding proposal.
- KS established state funding for Early Head Start, and utilizes portion of Master Tobacco Settlement dollars for I-T



# Selected Resources

- Cohen, J. et al (2009). *Inspiring Innovation: Creative State Financing Structures for Infants and Toddlers*.
- Zero to Three (2017). *Advancing State Policies for Infants and Toddlers Lessons Learned From Three States*.
- Lieberman, A. (2018) *Lessons from the Bayou State: Three Reforms for Improving Teaching and Caregiving*. New America





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