



CITY OF RICHMOND
EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE – CONCEPT PAPER
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Mayor's 2020 Vision – Human Services Report*, July 2005, identifies early care and parent/caretaker education as a major initiative for the City of Richmond. The goal of the City's Early Childhood Development Initiative is for all Richmond City children ages 0 - 5 to be healthy, well-cared for and ready to succeed in school. Why is this important? Research tells us that the quality of care provided to young children significantly influences the way their brains develop, as well as their chances to be successful in school and life.

Findings of the 40-year longitudinal High/Scope Perry Preschool research project show that high-quality learning experiences set children up for success in school, work and life. The research, conducted by the Minneapolis Federal Reserve, shows that every \$1 invested in high quality early education and care programs saves \$17 down the road, with tangible results measured by lower crime, fewer single parents, and higher individual earnings and education levels.ⁱ

Focusing on Richmond, a look at just a few key health, social and economic indicators shows that problematic conditions exist that make it hard for many City children to reach school ready to succeed.ⁱⁱ

Indicator	Richmond	Statewide
Child Poverty	29.9%	12.5%
Low Birthweight Births	13.3%	8.2%
Child Immunization Rates	40%	80%
High School Dropouts	17.4%	2.8%
Births to Single Mothers	61%	31%
Births to Teen Mothers	49 per 1000	17 per 1000

Further, an assessment conducted annually by the Richmond Public Schools of incoming kindergarteners indicated that 530 (nearly 28%) of the 1,922 children tested in Fall 2005 did not possess the comprehension of literacy fundamentals expected of children entering kindergarten and were in need of additional instruction. In effect, many Richmond children are behind before they even get started. These conditions can not continue.

The Early Childhood Development Initiative has been designed to strengthen critical programs and activities and initiate strategic functions where they are currently lacking. The Initiative will be carried out through strategies in five areas:

1. **Public Awareness** – Helping parents and caretakers understand (1) the importance of their role in ensuring children reach school healthy and ready to learn and (2) that services are available to help them in this role.

2. **Quality Child Care** - Improving the overall quality of early care and education and increasing access by low income families by amending funding practices, addressing barriers to subsidy access, improving knowledge of program requirements, assessing opportunities to tie subsidy rates to program quality, supporting quality initiatives, infusing literacy into child development programs, addressing Latino family needs in strategies, and assessing supply/demand patterns.
3. **Home Visiting** – Reducing infant mortality and improving early childhood outcomes by increasing the number of at-risk families served through home visiting by networking and strengthening home visiting programs, providing additional funds for services, and establishing a consistent City-wide mechanism for home visitor referral.
4. **Parent Education** - Expanding parent education opportunities by coordinating, supporting and promoting parent education classes and filling critical gaps to ensure parents are better served, organizations work collaboratively, and available programming and funding are maximized.
5. **Evaluation and Benchmarking** – Monitoring and evaluating the early childhood development strategies to ensure achievement of outcomes.

Implementing the Initiative will involve working in alliance with not only City government agencies by also with Success By 6 (United Way and the Greater Richmond Chamber), the Richmond Health District, Richmond Public Schools and others. City funds will be leveraged to achieve more than would be possible with City resources alone.

For additional information on the Initiative, please contact Barbara A. Newlin, Early Childhood Development Manager, City of Richmond, Virginia at (804) 646-7320.

ⁱ Schweinhart, Lawrence J. (2005). *The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40: Summary, Conclusions, and Frequently Asked Questions*. High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Ypsilanti, MI.

ⁱⁱ Most statistics are for 2003 and are from *Mayor's 2020 Vision, Report of the Mayor's Human Services Committee*, July 12, 2005.