

Advocacy Efforts for Early Childhood

“Early childhood advocacy is about making changes – changes in the lives of young children and their families, and the status of those who work so hard to teach and care for them. It is about convictions and compassion, empowerment and energy, courage and consensus.” (Goffin, S.G. and Lombardi, J., 1988)

Advocacy efforts for Early Childhood are not tackled alone by any one agency, entity or organization. In 2002 Iowa Community Empowerment made concerted efforts to coordinate activities with organizations wanting to help children in their earliest years.

Based on recommendations from the Smart Start Technical Assistance grant, Iowa Community Empowerment convened stakeholder meetings across the state and collectively a vision for Iowa’s young children was developed. That vision is “Every child, beginning at birth, will be healthy and successful.” Based on input from the stakeholders, we are currently developing a blueprint of common goals, indicators and strategies. This work will continue into 2003 with the stakeholders.

Iowa Community Empowerment and the Iowa ChildCare and Early Education NetWork joined forces to produce the 10th Annual Iowa Early Childhood Care and Education Congress held in November of 2002. A broad range of speakers, workshops, community networking and information sharing was valued by over 400 attendees.

The success and combined strength from joining forces for the November conference resulted in a continued effort focusing on advocacy for Early Childhood. A subcommittee for advocacy activities was formed. An advocacy agenda for the 2003 legislative session was developed and the events planned are listed on the next page.

An Early Childhood Advocacy Toolkit for Iowans interested in advocating for support for infants and young children will be available in early 2003. The toolkit is developed in response to multiple requests for guidance on how to advocate for children in the community and political arena. The toolkit joins together information from state, local and national resources to help any person who wishes to learn more about advocacy focusing on early childhood.