

Early Childhood Iowa Areas and Boards

Early Childhood Iowa Areas (ECIA) enable local citizens to lead collaborative efforts in the areas of education, health, and human services on behalf of children, families, and other citizens residing in the area. The focus is to improve results for families with young children. The ECIA boards support activities that promote collaboration and develop early care, health, and education systems in the community for young children and their families.

Local Board Structure

In FY16, 38 Early Childhood Iowa Areas represent all 99 counties. Each area board is made up of volunteers that meet a citizen representative definition or are an elected official. ECIA Boards are required to have representation in the perspectives of business, consumer, education, faith, health, and human services. These requirements are to ensure that ECIA Boards are citizen-led and that the general interest of children and families is primary in all decision-making.

Local Board Purpose

The Early Childhood Iowa Area Boards are responsible for:

- Developing and implementing a Community Plan,
- Administering funds for local services for children 0-5 and their families,
- Educating and communicating the vital importance of the 0-5 age group in the community,
- Reaching out to private, as well as public, organizations in the community to include in the collaborative,
- Building community commitment to reach the ECI Legislated Results, and
- Reporting annually on the performance measures data produced through their investments.

Early Childhood Iowa Levels of Excellence

The Levels of Excellence Rating System is a structure that evaluates and rates each ECIA board's performance. The process is built on the legislated requirements of ECIA boards for designation and funding, as well as the principals for local accountability, on-going collaboration, and continuous improvement and self- evaluation.

Early Childhood Iowa legislation established the requirement for a community plan to be developed by the local ECIA Board and other community partners. An effective community plan builds a strong foundation for community collaboration. The plan should be a living, breathing, ever-changing document that reflects the needs and assets of a community. Also built into the rating system are multiple opportunities for the ECIA Board to look closely at their operations and structure in order to measure their capacity as a leader in their early care, health and education system-building efforts. They are encouraged to scrutinize their collaborative efforts and the progress they are making to that end.

2016 was the second year of the second cycle of Levels Excellence designation reviews. (5th year total)

- 4 area boards were rated at the Probation Level and were offered intensive technical assistance to meet the requirements. These boards must meet the required criteria and move to Compliant Level by June 30, 2016.

- 1 area board was awarded Compliant Level, meeting all foundational requirements and those specified in law.
- 4ECI Area Boards were awarded the highest level within the Levels of Excellence Rating System, Model Level.

Additional information regarding the Levels of Excellence Rating System, is found on the ECI web site, http://www.earlychildhoodiowa.org/local_system/levels_of_excellence.html.

Performance Accountability

All Early Childhood Iowa Areas are required to collect performance data from the programs and services they fund during the fiscal year. This information is submitted in the local annual reports to the ECI Office. The data is then compiled and shared from a state perspective in the ECI state annual report. In order to increase the consistency of the data reported, all areas must report the same program measures for the types of services funded. Beginning in FY'11, consistent program measures were required for all programs funded with both Early Childhood and School Ready dollars.

In addition to program performance data, Early Childhood Iowa also provides statewide data for the identified result indicators. When available, the same data is also published in the state annual report at the ECI area or county level.

ECIA boards often develop their own executive summary or a public annual report that reflects highlights of their year's work. This information can be found on the electronic version of this annual report or on the area's website.

Early Childhood Iowa Toolkit

The *Early Childhood Iowa Toolkit*, a publication developed by the ECI State Technical Assistance Team, serves as a resource for local ECI areas. Providing technical assistance to ECI areas has been a vital component of the Early Childhood Iowa State Board. The Toolkit is designed to provide communities with ideas and resources to assist in the organization and ongoing activities of the ECIA Boards. It offers a variety of tools for communities to utilize in the event specific issues arise. It provides both a basic overview and identifies resources for additional detailed information and advice.

The Tools within the Toolkit are organized to reflect a manual of operations. It is divided between "required" and "best practice" guidance, as well as items specific to Levels of Excellence and Early Childhood Iowa State Board Policy.

To access the *Early Childhood Iowa Toolkit*, go to the ECI Website at http://www.state.ia.us/earlychildhood/local_system/index.html and click on "Tools".