



FSSA News Release

For immediate release

Jan. 5, 2023

Federal grant will help improve quality, access, affordability of early childhood care, education

The Indiana Family and Social Services Administration Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning, in partnership with the Indiana Department of Education Office of Kindergarten Readiness, has been awarded a \$42 million federal grant. These dollars will be used over three years to implement programmatic changes that will improve Indiana's capacity to recruit early educators, increase access to early learning opportunities for students in unserved areas and ultimately, support families as they make important decisions regarding their child's education.

"These funds come at a key time as Indiana has built the foundation for innovation through the collaborative partnership of FSSA, IDOE and the Early Learning Advisory Committee. Together we are uniquely prepared to best serve children and families across the state," said Maureen Weber, chairwoman of the Early Learning Advisory Committee.

The three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will award \$14 million annually to FSSA, which partnered with the Indiana Department of Education on the grant application.

Combined with FSSA's \$4.2 million annual investment as matching funds required by the grant, \$54.6 million will be leveraged in total to accelerate and build Indiana's capacity to implement long-lasting change, including:

- Building upon stakeholders' understanding of the needs, gaps and inequities in Indiana's birth-through-age-5 mixed delivery system, especially as they relate to underserved populations
- Refreshing Indiana's birth-through-age-5 strategic plan to reflect the current environment and the existing opportunities to drive system-level change
- Amplifying the voices of families in decision-making and introducing new services and educational supports that empower them as their child's first and most important teacher
- Introducing new workforce recruitment and career pathways, building the operational capacity of early childhood care and education providers and enhancing workforce conditions and compensation
- Strengthening instructional practices, quality measures and birth-to-age 8 coordination efforts

- Investing in the expansion of high-quality programs in underserved geographies

The funding will build upon key work already underway to improve the early learning infrastructure in Indiana. New state legislation championed by Gov. Eric J. Holcomb restructured and expanded Indiana's Early Learning Advisory Committee, and Gov. Holcomb also launched a new Office of Kindergarten Readiness within IDOE to work in partnership with OECOSL to ensure the early learning experiences children receive are effectively readying them for school. In September 2022, new early learning policy goals were established by ELAC to ensure Hoosier children, especially those most underserved, have access to early learning opportunities that prepare them with the skills required to thrive in kindergarten.

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