

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Stakeholders in Lawrence County have taken the opportunity provided by the passage of HEA 1004 to explore the issue of preschool education within the community.

Through a series of meetings with both public school superintendents, the director of the Bedford and Mitchell Public Libraries, the executive director of the Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce, the director of the Lawrence County Economic Growth Council, the Quality Advisor for the Indiana Accreditation Project Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children and the and executive director of the United Way of South Central Indiana the consensus of all parties is that Lawrence County is not, at this time, ready to participate in the state's Early Learning Pilot Grant Program.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- A) Currently those organizations and entities in Lawrence County that support early learning programs include Hoosier Uplands EDC and the United Way of South Central Indiana. Hoosier Uplands is a community action agency established in 1966 that provides Head Start services to approximately 150 eligible three to five year olds each year. The United Way of South Central Indiana provides a four week summer program in four elementary schools within the county during the summer months to help students that scored poorly on their kindergarten readiness screening be ready to enter school.
- B) The amount of local funding used to support early learning in Lawrence County is approximately \$24,000 per year. These funds come through the United Way from a variety of grants and are used to cover the operating costs associated with their summer program. The program serves approximately 80 students each summer. There are no Title I funds currently being used to provide pre-kindergarten programs in the public schools.

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## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- A) Family engagement services available to families with young children in Lawrence County are extremely limited. The local Healthy Families program serves approximately 34 children and their families. This program stands alone and is not aligned with other early learning programs in Lawrence County.

The Head Start program provides extensive family engagement activities to those families enrolled in their program. Staff of the Head Start program works with Title I staff in the elementary schools to design collaborative family

engagement activities. The Head Start program has also established a "School Readiness Committee" that includes staff of the public schools. This group not only works on the academic preparation of the children enrolled but also works on shared family engagement activities through Title I.

- B) As of this writing, the only county-wide effort to engage parents in their children's early education is the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. This program offers free, developmentally appropriate books to any child in the county from birth through age five. The initiative has been funded solely through local donations and at this time is only funded to provide books through November 2014. Efforts to secure funding between January 1 and June 30, 2014 have not been fruitful. No funding has been secured and the program will most likely conclude in November 2014.
- C) Lawrence County does not have an existing strategy or plan to identify and enroll eligible children in the Pilot Program.

### **PROVIDER CAPACITY**

- A) According to Carefinder on June 30, 2014 there are only six qualified eligible providers in Lawrence County. Four of the six are licensed childcare homes, three at level 3 in Paths to Quality and one at level 4. There are two licensed centers, both Head Start facilities. The estimated capacity of the providers to serve new students is zero at the present time.
- B) There is presently no plan in place to increase provider capacity and due to the short time frame between the date the finalist counties were named and the due date of the Statement of County Readiness, no plan has been formulated.

None of the level 1 or 2 PTQ providers have expressed an interest in becoming a provider for the pilot program.

The public schools in Lawrence County are not enrolled in PTQ and neither have the capacity to allocate space for a pre-kindergarten program.

The local Head Start program entertained the possibility of providing an intensive summer program for children entering kindergarten in August but realized that based on the statute this was not an option due to the fact that the statute defines an "eligible child" is an individual who is at least four years of age and less than five years of age on August 1 of the state fiscal year for which a grant is sought under the pilot program". Targeted children for this program would have already turned five years of age as they would be enrolled to attend kindergarten in August of the same summer in which the program would operate.

## **FINANCIAL MATCH**

- A)** Lawrence County has taken no steps to secure funding as required for match of the Pilot Program. The county's major employers are the two school systems. There is only one major manufacturer in the county—General Motors—and their workforce has been reduced in recent years.
- B)** The county does not have a plan to sustain support for pre-kindergarten beyond the term of the Pilot Program.

## **COUNTY READINESS AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION**

It is the consensus of those stakeholders in Lawrence County that discussed the Pilot Program that Lawrence County would not be ready to implement the Pilot Program requirements by January 1, 2015.

The public schools and the local Head Start program do not have room to accommodate the Pilot Program during the academic school year. There is the possibility that a summer program could be implemented in 2015 if the statute were to be changed to permit children age five to participate during the months of June and July.

According to carefinder.com there is currently one childcare provider at level 4 and three childcare providers at level 3 in the county, all of whom are at capacity and two currently have waiting lists. There are no licensed childcare homes at level 2 and 11 at level 1 making the possibility of readiness by July 1, 2015 even bleaker.

One of the barriers to developing a Pilot Program within the county is the uncertainty of whether or not families would participate. Another is the fact that there are no start-up funds to purchase the necessary supplies to establish classrooms and no guarantees that if programs were developed there would be sufficient participation to cover the costs of operation.

To address the issue of recruiting a sufficient number of eligible children we know that the local Head Start program has struggled with obtaining sufficient numbers of eligible children over the past two years. With the lower numbers of families seeking pre-school services for their children the program has reallocated some of their Head Start slots to other counties within their service area where families are seeking services.