

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Governor Pence Announces Counties Selected for Pre-K Pilot Program**

#### **Allen, Jackson, Lake, Marion and Vanderburgh Counties will pilot program to launch in early 2015**

Indianapolis (July 22, 2014) – Governor Mike Pence today announced that Allen, Jackson, Lake, Marion and Vanderburgh counties have been selected for the pre-K pilot program which will help prepare low-income four-year-olds for success in school. The 2014 General Assembly established the pilot program in House Enrolled Act 1004.

The program funds services delivered via accredited private schools, public schools and community based early education providers who have achieved Level 3 or Level 4 in Paths to QUALITY™, Indiana's voluntary child care quality rating and improvement system.

"Every Indiana child deserves to start kindergarten ready to learn and to begin a lifetime of learning," said Governor Pence. "Today, I am pleased to accept the recommendations of our working group. The State looks forward to partnering with these counties and working to ensure that these resources are made available to assist some of our most vulnerable children early next year."

Last month, the Indiana Family Social Services Administration (FSSA) [announced the 18 counties which were selected as finalists](#) and gave each the opportunity to submit a statement to FSSA detailing their readiness to participate in the pilot. Each county submitted a statement for consideration by June 30. The statements reflected input from more than 100 respondents, including nonprofits, businesses and business leaders, school corporations, private providers, colleges and universities, and representatives of local government.

"The broad participation and expertise represented in the county submissions demonstrates not only the success of the county selection approach, which was specifically designed to encourage collaboration, but also the high level of interest in early learning across the state," said Melanie Brizzi, Director of FSSA's Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning.

The final five counties were selected by FSSA with the assistance of a group of objective evaluators representing academia, nonprofit and business interests. The advisory group, composed of early education experts, included academic researchers from Ball State, Notre Dame, Purdue and Indiana University; staff representatives from FSSA, the State Budget Agency, the Indiana Department of Education and the Center for Education and Career Innovation; members of the Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC); and external organizations including the Indiana Philanthropy Alliance and the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children.

The selection process was based on an objective determination of need and the county's ability and readiness to meet that need.

"We are grateful for all 18 counties who participated in this process and submitted high quality applications. These five counties demonstrated the highest levels of readiness, capacity and financial commitment to implement Indiana's first state-funded pre-k program," said Pence.

Governor Pence also recognized the 13 other finalists – Bartholomew, Delaware, Elkhart, Grant, Howard, Kosciusko, Lawrence, Madison, Noble, St. Joseph, Tippecanoe, Vigo and Wayne – for their dedication and commitment to Indiana's children as demonstrated by their statements of county readiness.

FSSA is working to implement the major design phases of the program, which include devising plans for the longitudinal study for students, monitoring the design and implementation of a new kindergarten readiness assessment and the program accountability system, establishing guidelines and activation of fundraising activities, and making modifications to interagency IT and staffing infrastructure to support the pilot program.

The program remains on track to launch in early 2015.