

# Strategic Planning Map for Early Childhood Family Engagement in Cuyahoga County

## Local Conditions: Why Here?

## Root Causes: Why?

## What If?

## How do we know?

## What will we do?

- 1a. Families lack social support needed to be empowered to make changes at home
- Families with low income have high levels of emotional investment in their children, but do not have the support to overcome the challenges of poverty (Bierman, 2017).
- 1b. Families' basic needs are not being met.
- One of out 3 families of children ages 0-6 in Cuyahoga County live in poverty(Children, 2010).
- 2a. Organizations that offer resources to families are not reaching families where there are
- ECE providers noted that they had challenges in making sure that families were aware of upcoming events and opportunities by traditional techniques like word of mouth (Daugherty, 2014).
- 2b. Families have low health literacy or literacy, making it challenging to understand resource materials
- When early care and education providers create opportunities for family engagement and involvement with the program, family background, parent education, and income play a large role in family participation (McWayne, 2014).
- 3a. Families live in food deserts, where healthy, affordable foods are not available.
- One in 4 people in Cuyahoga County and 1 in 2 people in Cleveland live in a neighborhood that is over half a mile from the nearest grocery store (HIP-Cuyahoga, 2013).
- 3b. Homes that families live in are unsafe, and safe homes are not affordable
- 14.3% of children under 6 in Cuyahoga County and 18.7% in Cleveland had a blood lead level of 5 or higher. 5.6% of children under 6 in Cleveland had a blood lead level of 10 or above. (HIP-Cuyahoga, 2013)

1. Community norms are not favorable to family engagement in early childhood health.
- Early care and education based programs and events for family engagement do not successfully encompass the needs of families from varying cultures, backgrounds and preferences. (Stark, 2009)
2. Families are not able to access health resources needed to engage in health.
- Research conducted by RAND found that barriers related to language and communication can have a negative effect on parent engagement. (Daugherty, 2014)
3. Healthy lifestyles are not available to families of young children.
- Preschools in low-income communities often lack sufficient resources and are low quality as compared to higher income communities (Yoshikawa, 2013).

### The Problem

**Families are not engaged in early childhood health.**

### Data Supporting the Problem

- National research found that while many preschools do include activities and events that foster family engagement, many low income families are not able to participate. (Bierman, 2017)
- In Cuyahoga County, early childhood institutions (Pre4Cle, UPK, CEOGC, and NAEYC, Ohio Healthy Programs) require early care and education facilities to hold family engagement activities. Providers report that these events have varying levels of attendance.

- Engaging families in early childhood learning and health has shown to improve kindergarten readiness. However, in the United States only one half of children from low income households begin kindergarten, “ready to succeed in school” (Bierman, 2017).
- 1-2 years of center-based early childhood education is shown to improve early language, literacy, and mathematic skills (Yoshikawa, 2017).
- Low-supportive and deprived environments in early childhood can have irreversible consequences for brain development (Hackman, Farah, and Meaney, 2010).

Early Ages Healthy Stages Coalition will utilize the following evidence base to promote strategies to increase family engagement in early childhood health in Cuyahoga County:

- Consistent, quality communication and relationship building between parents and early care and education providers has been shown to predict kindergarten readiness and provide a foundation for future parent engagement and improve academic and social development (Bierman, 2017).
- Early care and education programs that may include social support services are recommended ways to increase health equity within low income communities (CPST, 2015).
- Use of online portals, social media, and automatic reminders of events via text message or email can help improve communication about opportunities for school-based involvement (Daugherty, 2014).
- Programs and events that focus on family engagement in early childhood within the communities and context that the families come from reduce biases and strengthen relationships between parents and providers (Stark, 2009).
- Evidence-based programs that provide learning materials for families and have teacher support on how to use them have been shown to increase readiness (Bierman, 2017).

**By December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020, Early Ages Healthy Stages Coalition will:**

- Encourage and empower early care and education providers as well as organizations that work with young children to institute parent support programs.**
  - Collect information about wrap around resources and ensure that providers have the information and expertise in supporting parents.
  - Modify and/or develop a checklist/toolkit for providers to feel more comfortable engaging with parents.
  - Recruit providers to hold parent meetings either in person or online as a means for group support.
  - Connect families to transportation options.
- Engage community resources (schools, churches, parks, recreation centers, agencies) to partner on ongoing events and messaging for family engagement.**
  - Develop single focus, unified messaging for maximum impact and reach within multiple organizations and agencies.
  - All agencies focus on a monthly message, saturating the messaging around that one topic throughout the community at one time.
  - All new themes around healthy living and early childhood wellness are adapted to fit the needs of the community and organizations.
- Modify and/or develop a family engagement toolkit for early childhood education.**
  - Engage parents and families about issues that matter most to them in focus groups and surveys
  - Develop and pilot a series of 4-5 family engagement tool kits that early care and education providers can use that include short trainings, activities, handouts, bulletin boards, and newsletter templates.
  - Develop and pilot toolkits.
  - Make toolkits available to providers.

Context

Current Scope

Consequences

Intervention