



## The Michigan Division for Early Childhood (MiDEC)

Your Michigan source for information, resources, and guidance related to young children with special needs and their families.

# Michigan Division for Early Childhood

## Mission, Vision, and Governmental Relations Platform

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### **MiDEC Mission:**

MiDEC is dedicated to promoting policies and evidence-based practice to support families and enhance the optimal development of all children. MiDEC shall encourage and promote the professional growth and quality practice to support young children with exceptional needs and their families.

### **MiDEC Vision:**

- To prepare children for life success by increasing the dissemination of quality information, training and support for parents, professionals and communities
- Combined commitment to provide support and outreach in order to make Michigan a great place for ALL kids

### **Governmental Relations Platform**

The Michigan Division for Early Childhood (MiDEC) Governmental Relations Committee has three priorities that they would like to put forward. The first is to support the appropriate personnel preparation and standards of practice for all early childhood professionals that provide support to young children with exceptional needs and their families in the state of Michigan. The second is related to *Early On*, Michigan's early intervention system which provides supports and services to families of eligible infants and toddlers with delays and disabilities. In order to promote optimal education outcomes for Michigan's children, we must fully support our youngest learners, beginning with the infants and toddlers with delays and disabilities who are eligible for *Early On* Michigan and their families. Finally, an additional priority is to support increased funding for high quality preschool programming. GSRP, Michigan's state-funded preschool program has the potential to provide outstanding inclusive preschool education for students with disabilities, however, the program has not received an increase in per-child funding since 2013-14.

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## **MiDEC Platform for Personnel Preparation**

The Michigan Division for Early Childhood (MiDEC) supports the need for appropriate standards of practice and preparation of all early childhood professionals that support young children with exceptional needs and their families in the state of Michigan.

This includes supporting certification that ensures personnel are highly qualified to teach and provide support to young children ages Birth-8.

It is essential that all early intervention providers and teachers have critical knowledge in academic content and whole child development, including what is necessary to support social-emotional development and mental health, as the purpose of early childhood education is to set a strong foundation for the rest of a child's life.

Additionally, as early childhood education (ECE) encompasses the development and education of children with and without disabilities, classroom and field experiences with all children are essential. Having standards that prepare teachers and other personnel to appropriately address the needs of all children, including those eligible for special education, is critical.

It is imperative that all early childhood educators demonstrate knowledge, understanding, and application of research-based strategies and developmentally appropriate practice to create opportunities for all students to develop critical knowledge, skills, and behaviors that contribute to lifelong health.

It is also critical that administrators of early childhood and early intervention programming have strong knowledge that enables them to support the unique needs of children birth-8 with exceptional needs and their families. This includes knowledge of models, theories, evidence-based practices and legal requirements that are pertinent to early childhood programs.

## **MiDEC Platform on *Early On*<sup>®</sup> Michigan**

Established under the federal Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Michigan has been unique in its lack of state appropriation for birth to three. We know that intervening as early as possible in the life of a child is the most efficient and effective strategy for supporting maximum developmental outcomes for young children with delays and disabilities. Services to infants and toddlers who have or are at risk for developmental delays have been shown to positively impact outcomes across developmental domains, including language and communication, cognitive development, social/emotional development, and health. Families benefit from early intervention by being able to better meet their children's unique needs from an early age and throughout their lives.

State funding for 2019-20 for *Early On*, under Section 54d of the School Aid Act, is \$7,150,000, an increase from the previous year's \$5 million. Michigan DEC acknowledges and this important beginning and investment in our infants and toddlers with delays and disabilities and their families. However, it is not enough; it is estimated that adequate early intervention requires a \$68 million investment for Michigan infants and toddlers with delays and disabilities and their families.

Currently Michigan has two systems serving infants and toddlers with delays and disabilities – *Early On* and Michigan Mandatory Special Education (MMSE). The two-system approach has exacerbated inequities, creates duplication and further diminishes inadequate resources by creating:

- two sets of contradictory regulations and rules pertaining to *Early On* and Special Education;
- separate and unnecessarily complex eligibility criteria which requires additional evaluations, causing confusion for families and service providers; and
- disparate services for families across the state, including challenges in accessing qualified personnel.

Michigan Division for Early Childhood endorses the recommendations of the Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education and the *Early On* Michigan Foundation.

### Recommendations for Early On

- Adopt a definition of eligibility for MMSE, birth to three, that aligns with the current eligibility criteria for *Early On*.
- Strengthen *Early On* Standards to include all federally recognized Early Intervention personnel as allowable providers for infants and toddlers currently eligible for MMSE
- Phase in and fund changes over three years, utilizing a three-cohort adoption schedule.

**Incrementally increase state funding and system change until funding is \$68 million, as follows:**

<b>Fiscal Year (FY):</b>	<b>State 54d Allocation:</b>	<b>System Changes:</b>
FY20	\$7.15 million	None (current fiscal year)
FY21	\$28 million	1/3 of ISDs implement single, aligned system
FY22	\$48 million	2/3 of ISDs implement single, aligned system
FY23 and beyond	\$68 million	All ISDs implement single, aligned statewide system

Ultimately, funding a single aligned, cohesive early intervention system will improve equity and access to *Early On* regardless of community, resulting in better outcomes for children and families across the state.

### MiDEC Platform on Great Start Readiness Program

The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) is Michigan’s state-funded preschool program for four-year-old children with factors which may place them at risk for low educational attainment. The program is administered by the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Great Start. Research on preschool programs and specific research on GSRP indicates

that children provided with a high-quality preschool experience show significant positive developmental differences when compared to children from the same backgrounds who did not attend a high-quality preschool program. Students with a diagnosed disability/developmental delay is one of the eligibility factors for GSRP. GSRP has the potential to provide outstanding inclusive preschool education for students with disabilities, however, the program has not received an increase in per-child funding since 2013-14.

**MiDEC supports an increase to the full-day slot allocation for GSRP to match the \$8,111 minimum foundation grant provided to K-12 school districts.** Each GSRP full-day slot is funded at \$7,250, while the minimum foundation grant is \$8,111 for K-12 students. It is important to note that unlike K-12 students, GSRP does not receive additional funding in the form of at-risk funding, federal funds, etc. For example, the minimum foundation grant is \$8,111, while the average spent per student from all sources in Michigan is over \$12,000 per student. Increasing the full-day slot allocation for GSRP to match the minimum foundation grant provided to K-12 school districts would increase equitable learning opportunities for our young students in our state.