



GREAT START PARENT COALITION

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is Great Start?

A: Great Start is an initiative that Governor Granholm started and its' focus is on early childhood (birth-5yrs). The program is administered through ECIC (Early Childhood Investment Corporation) and their role is to

- Advance knowledge through early childhood research
- Build public will and understanding of the crucial importance of the first five years of life
- Increase private and public sector investment in early childhood services
- Fund and support local Great Start Collaboratives (GSCs)

Q: What is a Great Start Collaborative?

A: The GSC of Jackson County is a large group of people who are considered this community's early childhood "stakeholders" (people concerned with the social, emotional, economic, physical, and educational health of children). These are the people who offer programs or services either related to early childhood (like Child Care Network providers, Family Independence Agency, Center for Family Health, or the District Library to name a few) OR have a vested interest in seeing that each child has a high quality early childhood experience (such as the local schools, parents, business leaders, and members of the justice system). The members of the Collaborative gather to ensure Jackson County's early childhood programs/services are coordinated and effective. They also work to educate Jackson citizens of the importance of meeting each child's needs (socially, emotionally, economically, physically, and educationally) during the birth to 5yr period.

Q: What is the GS Parent Coalition?

A: The Great Start Parent Coalition (GSPC) is a member of the GSC, just like any other business or organization. One of its primary roles is to wrap the voice of Jackson County parents around the programs and services that flow through the Great Start system, allowing for immediate feedback regarding their effectiveness as well as additional unmet needs.

The purpose of the GSPC is broken into three main components:

- *To assist in building public support and will for early childhood investment through advocacy and educational activities at the local and state level;*
- *To support and be engaged in supporting the work of the Great Start Collaborative;*
- *To serve as a referent and constituency group for parents on the Great Start Collaborative, giving them a means to better understand the desires and needs of parents in the community*

Q: What does the GS Parent Coalition do?

A: The GSPC is a grass-root volunteer group that helps to develop community leaders who can advance the mission of Great Start. That being said, GSPC members have tremendous flexibility in how this is accomplished and are encouraged to be highly creative. First, a GSPC member has a *passion* to see that each child in Jackson County has a quality early childhood experience. Second, each member wants to represent the voices of other parents/care givers they are connected with through places such as school, work, daycare, church, playgroups, etc. GSPC members, with the support of the Coalition, develop their own action plans for advancing early childhood within the groups they represent; members decide how much, when, and where they will invest their time, choosing activities that specifically interest them and meet GSC goals (social, emotional, physical, educational, economic health of children 0-8 yrs). Some examples of activities parents have engaged in are hosting educational and health/wellness events, talking to local organizations regarding the economic impact of early childhood programs, representing Great Start at community events (Kids Fest, Walk for Babies), engaging local PTO support for pre-school partnerships, or writing letters to local, state, and federal legislators related to early childhood. The purpose of GSPC activities can be for things such as building public will/education, GSPC recruitment, and/or advocating for policy changes.

Q. Who can be a member of the GS Parent Coalition?

A: Any community member with a passion for advancing early childhood in Jackson County can volunteer their time on the GSPC.

Q: Who can officially represent the GS Parent Coalition on the GS Collaborative?

A: The GSPC must be represented on the GS Collaborative with an elected group of parents that make up a minimum of 20% of the GS Collaborative. Individuals who are eligible to sit on this representative group must be parents (birth, adoptive, foster, non-custodial or legal guardian) and currently parenting children age 12 or younger.