

The Status of Young Children in Jackson County

THE ISSUES:

- 30.6% of children under age 6 are living in poverty (\$44,100 annually for a family of four)
- 14% of Jackson's births are to teens (Kids Count)
- Jackson County has an unemployment rate of 15.2%, compared to the U.S. rate of 10.6% (Department of Labor and Economic Growth)
- 37.6% of entering kindergarteners in Jackson County are not ready to succeed (2009 Jackson County School Readiness Assessment)



In partnership with the Early Childhood Investment Corporation, the Jackson County Great Start Collaborative (GSC) and Great Start Parent Coalition were formed in 2006 to build a comprehensive early childhood system in Jackson County. Community stakeholders have created a comprehensive strategic plan to address the above issues which call for:

Jackson County's Community Plan:

- Build awareness about the importance of Social & Emotional Health and its impact on the development of children from birth to age 5.
- Increase collaboration in the area of Pediatric & Family Health to ensure all young children and their families have access to quality health services and supports.
- Increase training opportunities for parents and child care professionals, resulting in increased school readiness and quality improvement in early childhood settings.
- Continued growth of parent leadership through the Great Start Parent Coalition.
- Expand collaboration with organizations and agencies that provide resources and supports to families and parents of young children, resulting in improved service delivery and reduced duplication of services.

The state's role is critical in helping Jackson County address the needs of young children.

The Jackson County Great Start Collaborative and the Great Start Parent Coalition are the focal point for local early childhood efforts. For more information about early childhood in Jackson County, please contact: Sheri Butters at 517-784-4800, ext. 248, email: sbutters@caailh.org or visit the Great Start website at www.greatstartjackson.org.

The Great Start Collaborative and Great Start Parent Coalition are supported by the Early Childhood Investment Corporation. For more information about the statewide efforts of the Great Start Initiative and the Early Childhood Investment Corporation, visit www.greatstartforkids.org.

What Jackson County Citizens Want from State Leaders:

- *Coordinate funding for state funded programs to improve service delivery for young children and their families;*
- *Restructure overall funding efforts to address comprehensive needs of young children that now are impacting school readiness;*
- *Increased funding for preschool programs to ensure at-risk children are ready to succeed in school;*
- *Additional funding for high quality services such as home visiting, parenting education, and training and consultation for providers;*
- *Support what's been proven to work. Programs such as home visiting, Great Start School Readiness Program (GSRP), parenting education, and many more have proven themselves effective, yet they are the first programs to go on the chopping block. Support programs that show positive results.*

Make early childhood investment a priority.