



**Early Childhood Iowa
School Ready Funds
Preschool Programming Support for Families
with Low-Income
Tool CC**

Legislative Language

Iowa Code, chapter 256I.9

SCHOOL READY CHILDREN GRANT PROGRAM.

1. The state board shall develop and promote a school ready children grant program which shall provide for all of the following components:
3. A school ready children grant shall, to the extent possible, be used to support programs that meet quality standards identified by the state board. At a minimum, a grant shall be used to provide all of the following:
 - a. Preschool services provided on a voluntary basis to children deemed at-risk.
 - b. Family support services and parent education programs promoted to parents of children from zero through age five. Family support services shall include but are not limited to home visitation. Of the funding from all sources that an area board designates for family support programs, at least sixty percent shall be committed to programs with a home visitation component.

Best Practices for Supporting Preschool Environments

Early Childhood Iowa Area (ECIA) Boards shall not supplant state and federal funds. Examples of state or federal funds that need to be considered include:

- State-administered child care assistance for eligible families;
- State-funded preschool program funded time (Shared Visions, Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children); and
- Early Head Start/Head Start for eligible children.

ECI standard budget templates must include adequate information to ensure all legislative requirements for the funds are met. In addition to the narrative provided, it will be accomplished through the area board's agreement with assurances included in the budget template.

Definition of Quality Preschool Programs

The Early Childhood Iowa State Board strongly recommends that ECIA's support the implementation of evidence-based, quality practices and services with proven positive outcomes for children. Boards are also encouraged to use these funds to help families access high quality preschool services and to support preschool programs that strive to achieve high quality program standards.

Research supports that a high-quality preschool program, especially for children that have at-risk factors, is an effective approach in reducing learning gaps and increasing the achievement of all children.¹ According to NICHHD (2001), "Fewer children living in poverty get to attend high-quality preschool programs than do children from higher-income households."²

The following are recognized in [Iowa Administrative Code chapter 281-16](#) as the three approved preschool program standards that meet the characteristics of quality early childhood programs:

- [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\) Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria](#) - Since 1985, NAEYC's national accreditation system has set professional standards for early childhood education programs, allowing families to find high-quality programs for their children.
- [Head Start Program Performance Standards - Iowa's Head Start programs](#) providing services to children and families must meet the Head Start Program Performance Standards (November 2016).
- [Overview of the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards](#) - The IQPPS and Criteria support the implementation of quality early childhood programs by promoting the use of research-based practices.

The following are additional standards that support quality early childhood programs:

- [National Association for Family Child Care \(NAFCC\)](#).
- Iowa Early Learning Standards (no current monitoring process but many of the above standards align with IELS)

Additional measures of program quality are evidenced by having:

- Achieved an average score of 5 (with no subscale scores under 2) on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale – Revised (ECERSR) or Family Child Care Rating Scale (FCCRS) completed by an outside evaluator with an established 85% inter-rater reliability within six months of the observation, or
- Achieved a Level 3, 4 or 5 on Iowa's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRS).

Highlights from quality early childhood program standards include³:

- Relationships
- Curriculum
- Teaching
- Assessment of Child Progress
- Health
- Teacher Qualifications
- Family Engagement
- Community Relationships
- Physical Environment (including facilities, equipment, and materials to facilitate child and staff learning and development)
- Leadership and Management

Supporting Preschool Programming for Low Income Families

ECIA boards must use funds to assist low income families that have children ages three, four and five to access a quality preschool program and/or provide supportive services to preschools, based on the community plan and priorities. This assistance and support includes:

- Preschool tuition for children whose families are at or below 200% of poverty;
- Preschool tuition for children whose families are above 200% of poverty level using a sliding fee or co-pay option;
- Transportation to and from preschool;
- Curricula enhancing field trips;

- Extension of the preschool day;
- Summer kindergarten preparation program;
- Health services (dental, lead services or mental health services);
- Family support and parent education (*For further information, See Tool FF*);
- Initiatives to meet or maintain quality preschool accreditation or levels/standards (NAEYC, IQPPS, QRIS);
- Preschool coordination (scholarship processing, quality support to programs);
- Personnel (e.g., staff for inclusive settings, to perform screenings, salaries)
- Child care nurse consultants
- Program enhancements to meet, increase or maintain quality preschool accreditation or quality levels/standards (evidence-based curriculum, materials, etc.);
- Professional development targeted toward quality initiatives and standards (evidence-based curriculum, assessment, program standards, EC-PBIS, etc.). Technical assistance and coaching (from a qualified provider) to foster the development of quality initiatives and preschool programming.

Collaboration

ECl is built on a foundation of collaboration in order to make a difference in the lives of young children and their families. With this foundation in mind, ECl areas are encouraged to collaborate with local licensed child care centers, quality preschool programs, child development homes, Head Start agencies, Shared Visions grantees, school districts (tuition, Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children and/or Early Childhood Special Education programs), Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, Iowa State University Extension, Area Education Agencies, local public health agencies, local maternal and child health agencies, community mental health centers, primary care providers, dentists, local transit authority and family support providers.

Technical Assistance Contact

Shanell Wagler, Administrator
 Early Childhood Iowa Office
 Iowa Department of Management
 515-281-4321
Shanell.Wagler@iowa.gov

Resources

- ¹ NAEYC. (2009). NAEYC: *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8*. NAEYC Position Statement. Retrieved from <https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/position%20statement%20Web.pdf>
- ² NICHD (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development). (2001). *Quality of child care and child care outcomes*. Paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development. April 19–22, Minneapolis, MN; Klein, L.G., & J. Knitzer. (2006). *Effective preschool curricula and teaching strategies*. Pathways to Early School Success, Issue Brief No. 2. New York: Columbia University, National Center for Children in Poverty; Schweinhart, L.J., J. Montie, & Z. Xiang, W.S. Barnett, C.R. Belfield, & M. Mores. (2005). *Lifetime effects: The High/Scope Perry preschool study through age 40*. Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, vol. 14. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.