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**As States Grapple with How to Prepare Children to Succeed in School,
a New Report Shows How 17 States are Using Indicators to Track Progress**

Washington, DC—Research shows that too many young children enter kindergarten with physical, social, emotional and cognitive deficits that could have been minimized or eliminated through early intervention. A new report entitled *Getting Ready: Findings from the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative*, shows how identifying indicators of school readiness and tracking progress on those measures can lead to more effective policies and investments in early childhood.

The national school readiness report is being released on February 16th at a 2 p.m. briefing at the U.S. Capitol, Room SC-6, Washington, DC. Additional state-based reports are being released in many states concurrent with the release of the national report. The reports, as well as a state contact in each of the 17 participating states, can be obtained on the web site at www.GettingReady.org.

The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative is a multi-state initiative that developed sets of indicators at the state level to track results for children from birth through age eight. The goal is for states to use the school readiness indicators to inform public policy decisions and track progress in meeting key goals for young children. The Initiative is sponsored by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Kauffman Foundation and the Ford Foundation. The 17 state initiative is managed by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, a children's public policy and research organization based in Providence, RI.

There will be an audio press conference to release the national report, Wednesday, February 16, 2005 at 12:30 p.m. (EST). The toll-free dial in number is (800) 289-0494, and the password is "School Readiness." The speakers will be Ross Thompson, Professor, University of California, Davis; Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT; and a State Governor (pending confirmation). **To reserve a line, please call Nancy Bennett at (800) 834-1110.**

"Policies that aim to help preschool children improve their school readiness and long-term outcomes must be based on solid data. Tracking school readiness indicators at the state level can help policy makers know if children are on the right track. The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative provides a set of indicators that policy makers can use to monitor school readiness and early school success," said Ron Haskins, Senior Fellow, Economic Studies Department, Brookings Institution.

The states participating in the Initiative are: Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia and Wisconsin.

“State policy makers play a critical role in allocating resources to support the school readiness of young children. Increasingly, state policy makers are asking for results-based accountability in making their funding decisions. While policy makers may recognize the importance of early learning and school readiness, they also need measurable indicators that enable them to track progress,” according to Lisbeth Schorr, Director of the Project on Effective Interventions at Harvard University.

Each state developed indicators that were based on the child development research and that fit their policy context. The states formed teams made up of representatives from governors’ offices, state legislators, state school officers, heads of departments of education, health, and social services, child advocates, researchers, and business leaders. The Initiative’s web site at www.GettingReady.org highlights the individual state reports on school readiness produced by each of the 17 states. In order to share the information widely among key policy makers, the Initiative partnered with five national organizations: the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, the National Conference of State Legislators, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Education Commission of the States and the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Based on the experience of the 17 states, a core set of common indicators was identified that can be used to measure progress towards school readiness and early school success. The school readiness indicators that are included in this report were selected because they have the power to inform state policy action on behalf of young children. They emphasize the importance of physical health, economic well-being, child development and supports for families. The core set of indicators are attached and address all the domains of child development (physical development, social and emotional, language and literacy, approaches to learning and cognitive development). Indicators are grouped according to key areas that can be affected by policy action, including:

Ready Children: Describe characteristics of children’s health and development.

Ready Families: Describe children’s family context and home environment.

Ready Communities: Describe the community resources and supports available to families with young children.

Ready Services: Describe the availability, quality, and affordability of proven programs that influence child development and school readiness, including health and early education services.

Ready Schools: Describe critical elements of schools that influence child development and school success.

“The regular tracking of school readiness indicators enables policy makers and community leaders to identify areas most in need of intervention, track the results of investments, and monitor trends over time,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “The goal of the School Readiness Indicators Initiative was to develop indicators not just for data’s sake, but to inform and influence policy decisions to improve school readiness.”

Getting Ready: Findings from the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative

CORE INDICATORS

Core Indicators at a Glance

The following chart summarizes the core set of common indicators agreed upon by the 17 states involved in the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative. This core set of common indicators is based on the national research and findings from the state experiences in selecting measurable indicators relating to and defining school readiness.

Ready Children

Physical Well-Being and Motor Development

% of children with age-appropriate fine motor skills

Social and Emotional Development

% of children who often or very often exhibit positive social behaviors when interacting with their peers

Approaches to Learning

% of kindergarten students with moderate to serious difficulty following directions

Language Development

% of children almost always recognizing the relationships between letters and sounds at kindergarten entry

Cognition and General Knowledge

% of children recognizing basic shapes at kindergarten entry

Ready Families

Mother's Education Level

% of births to mothers with less than a 12th grade education

Births to Teens

of births to teens ages 15-17 per 1,000 girls

Child Abuse and Neglect

Rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect among children birth to age 6

Children in Foster Care

% of children birth to age 6 in out-of-home placement (foster care) who have no more than two placements in a 24-month period

Ready Communities

Young Children in Poverty

% of children under age 6 living in families with income below the federal poverty threshold

Supports for Families with Infants and Toddlers

% of infants and toddlers in poverty who are enrolled in Early Head Start

Lead Poisoning

% of children under age 6 with blood lead levels at or above 10 micrograms per deciliter

Ready Services – Health

Health Insurance

% of children under age 6 without health insurance

Low Birthweight Infants

% of infants born weighing under 2,500 grams (5.5 pounds)

Access to Prenatal Care

% of births to women who receive late or no prenatal care

Immunizations

% of children ages 19-35 months who have been fully immunized

Ready Services – Early Care and Education

Children Enrolled in an Early Education Program

% of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in a center-based early childhood care and education program (including child care centers, nursery schools, preschool programs, Head Start programs, and pre-kindergarten programs)

Early Education Teacher Credentials

% of early childhood teachers with a bachelor's degree and specialized training in early childhood

Accredited Child Care Centers

% of child care centers accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Accredited Family Child Care Homes

% of family child care homes accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)

Access to Child Care Subsidies

% of eligible children under age 6 receiving child care subsidies

Ready Schools

Class Size

Average teacher/child ratio in K-1 classrooms

Fourth Grade Reading Scores

% of children with reading proficiency in fourth grade, as measured by the state's proficiency tests