The first five years of a child’s life are a time of great opportunity. The young child’s early experiences and environments directly impact the developing architecture of his or her brain. Everything children see, every word they hear, everything they do…from their first breath, shapes the rapidly developing architecture of their brains. We now know that by age four, 90 percent of this architecture will be built and the foundation for language, social behavior, problem solving ability and emotional health will be mostly created…or not.

Community leaders in Ingham County who understand the vital importance of investing in young children have come together to form our Great Start Collaborative, working in partnership with the Early Childhood Investment Corporation, to prepare and implement the Ingham Early Childhood Action Agenda. To be successful in school and in life, our young children must grow up in an environment that develops self-confidence, positive social and emotional skills, and a love for learning. Our Early Childhood Action Agenda will lay out the actions we need to take to ensure that every child enters kindergarten healthy and eager to learn.

For our community to make wise decisions about the future of our young children, we need to know what the current status of young children is in Ingham County. This report presents current community data in several areas which make a critical contribution to the optimal brain development, health and early learning of young children.

In 2004 Ingham County was home to 280,093 people. There were 20,137 children under age five (59% White, 25% Black, 14% Hispanic, and 2% other). In 2004 the number of live births to Ingham County residents was 3,656.
Healthy children are more able to engage in the full range of life experiences that promote early learning. A lack of health care or delays in treating children’s health problems can negatively affect their development, sometimes with lifelong consequences.

Young children and families with health insurance are more likely to go to the doctor and get help for health conditions before they require emergency services. Young children who have a regular health care provider (medical home), are more likely to get the high quality preventative care they need to identify and address the common health needs and concerns of early childhood, such as immunizations and screenings for lead poisoning, developmental, hearing and vision problems. The number of Ingham children 19-35 months of age, who are fully immunized, has increased each of the last several years.

In 2005 in Ingham County, 22.2% of the children ages one to two years were tested for lead. The average for the State of Michigan was 28.1%. Ingham ranked 60 out of 83 counties.

Healthy children result when pregnant mothers are healthy and receive good prenatal care. Recent data indicates that deaths for Black babies are more than three times the rate of deaths for White babies. Certain conditions impact infant deaths and have lifelong implications for babies who survive. Risk factors include late or no prenatal care, smoking during pregnancy, preterm births and low-birthweight babies. According to Right Start, Ingham County experienced substantial worsening trends in preterm births and smoking during pregnancy. The County ranks 79 out of 82 counties regarding preterm births.

Head Start data also show rising concern in inadequate or no preventative oral health care. According to USA Weekend 6-24-07, a Centers for Disease Control study found that 28% of children ages 2-5 years nationally, have tooth decay, which is up from 24% in an earlier report, but 40% of our local Head Start children needed dental treatment.

RESOURCES
Capital Area Safe Sleep Coalition - the “Back to Sleep” campaign to combat Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and promoting Keeping Infants Sleeping Safely (KISS) contact Mary Adkins at (517) 485-7437 or madkins@tomorrowschildmi.org.
Infant Health Disparities Coalition (IHDC) - developing plans to address health disparities and infant mortality contact Lisa Chambers at (517) 272-4122 or LChambers@ingham.org.
**Social and Emotional Health**

Every infant needs a warm, nurturing and stable relationship with his or her parents and other caregivers to grow into a trusting, curious and confident toddler. Young children who are socially and emotionally healthy are self-confident and enjoy exploring their worlds. Healthy young children can more easily cope with their emotions, control their impulses and form friendships. They have learned through nurturing relationships that they can trust adults and look to them for guidance. Success in school requires that children get along well with their classmates, listen and respond to their teachers, and demonstrate an eagerness for learning.

Infants, toddlers and young children, like adults, can develop mental health problems, such as depression or traumatic stress disorder, which hurt their healthy social and emotional development. Early diagnosis and treatment of mental health problems are vital.

Health and well being are more than physical health, social emotional health is also crucial in a child’s development. Children need a caring and nurturing environment to grow and thrive. Unfortunately, a significant number of children in Ingham County are victims of child abuse and neglect. In fact, child abuse and neglect in Ingham County have been occurring at a higher rate than the State averages. KIDS COUNT IN MICHIGAN 2005 shows the rate in Ingham County for confirmed victims of abuse and neglect was 12.8 per 1,000 children compared to 11.1 per 1,000 children in Michigan.

The first five years of a child’s life are precious. In that time, their brain architecture is formed to shape the foundation of their very being.

**RESOURCES**

Child Abuse Prevention Services (CAPS) - Family Growth Centers, HOPE Parent Support Group, Capital Area Parent Aide, and Circle of Parents (517) 484-8444

Clinton-Eaton-Ingham - Community Mental Health, Children’s Services Division - Parent Infant Program, Parent Young Child Program, KEEP (Keeping Early Education Positive) child care expulsion prevention program. (517) 346-8000
Early Care and Education

Parents are their children’s primary caregivers and first teachers. With the demands of today’s work world, many young children are cared for by someone other than one of their parents prior to entering kindergarten. The quality of early care and education – whether it is provided by grandma, a neighbor, the church or a childcare center – matters. High quality early care and education provides a safe, healthy and nurturing environment for infants and young children. Children, who receive high quality early care and education, have stronger learning, language and social skills when they enter school.

Children who attend a high quality preschool program in the year or two before kindergarten are better prepared – academically, socially and emotionally. High quality preschool programs have well-trained staff, small group sizes, and language rich environments and actively engage parents in their children’s learning.

Parents who are involved in their children’s early care and education programs benefit not only their own child, but the others who attend as well. Parents, who get involved, meet other parents, learn about how their children spend their days, and can build on these relationships and activities at home.

Young children with developmental delays or disabilities usually have special health, developmental and learning needs which are most effectively addressed when they are identified early. Individualized early intervention services and special educational supports provide crucial developmental guidance for parents and are designed to help every child reach his or her full potential.

The number of regulated childcare programs in Ingham County that are nationally accredited (meeting national standards of quality) is: 11 out of 160 centers are accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and one out of 438 family and group homes is accredited through the National Association for Family Child Care Providers (NAFCCP).

Ingham County has 14,259 early care and education spaces including licensed child care centers, family child care homes, and group child care homes, as well as Department of Human Services paid relative and day care aides. Of the 160 licensed child care centers, only 48 accept infants.

Ingham County Early Care and Education Spaces (14,259)

RESOURCES
Early Childhood Literacy Coalition - Capital area literacy, education and early childhood advocates who network, share resources and discuss ways to promote literacy among our youngest citizens and their families, contact Beany Tomber at beany@wkar.org or (517) 432-3120, x 406
Early On - provides intervention services for families who have a child (birth to three years old) with a developmental delay and/or chronic health problems offering a variety of individualized services including developmental assessments, home visits, and support services, (517) 244-4514
Kindergarten Transition Committee - community agencies and families working to ensure that children and families are provided with information and tools to successfully enter school; prepare schools for children and families; and align community resources to support children, families and schools, contact Beverly Phillips at (517) 325-6183 or Beverly.Phillips@lansingschools.net
Office for Young Children (OYC) - child care resource and referral, training, promotion and improvement for the availability, affordability, and accessibility of quality early education and child care for children, (517) 887-4319, and outside the Lansing calling area toll-free at (800) 234-6996
Project Find - developmental assessments and referrals for services for children ages three and older, suspected of having a developmental delay or disability, (517) 244-4514
Quality Initiatives Workgroup - a collaborative alliance of early childhood providers and programs to promote and provide high-quality learning environments for young children from birth to age five, contact Michelle Nicholson at mnicols@inghamisd.org or (517) 244-1384
**Family Economic Security and Child Safety**

Young children need a stable, safe and secure family environment in order to flourish. A lack of sufficient family economic resources can place young children’s health and development at risk. When parents have to focus their full attention on just meeting their family’s basic needs, daily reading or play can take a back seat to keeping a home and feeding a family.

According to Child Trends Data Bank, “Very young children living in poverty are much less likely to be able to recognize letters of the alphabet, count to 20 or higher, write their name, read or pretend to read.” Research also shows that once a child falls behind in these basic skills it is difficult, if not impossible, to catch up.

KIDS COUNT IN MICHIGAN 2005 data shows one in every five children lives in poverty in Ingham County. As an indicator of poverty, 47% of all live births in Ingham County and 60% in the City of Lansing were paid for by Medicaid. In 2006, out of 3,350 live births 1,798 infants (53%) were enrolled in WIC (Women, Infants, and Children program).

**Family Support and Parenting Education**

Raising young children is challenging for every family, regardless of education or income. Parents have so many roles that they are called on to play in the lives of their young children. Parents must be caregivers, educators, playmates, role models, providers and protectors. Knowing what to do in each role can be a difficult and stressful task. Parents greatly benefit from easily accessible parenting information, community resources and supports.

Parents are their children’s first teachers and need access to a variety of education, support, and services that encourage the vital role families play in their children’s development. Education level, especially the mother’s, is very predictive of healthy child development, school readiness and student achievement. In a 10 year comparison, Ingham County had one of the highest rates of change (28%) of births to mothers with less than 12 years of education ranking it 79 out of 82 counties. In 2005 the County rate of births to mothers with less than 12 years of education was 16.5% compared to the State average of 16.9%. The data for Lansing residents shows that in 2005 the City rate of births to mothers with less than 12 years of education was much higher at 23.1%.

**RESOURCES**

- Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program - lead screening, follow-up, education, prevention, and outreach (517) 335-8885 or (517) 887-4661
- Healthy Homes University Project - home inspections and products to reduce asthma and allergies triggers and prevent injuries (517) 335-9390
- Lansing Area Safety Council - information on household safety measures for children (517) 394-4614
- WIC - Women, Infants, and Children food and nutrition education to low-income women and children under the age of 5 (517) 887-4326

- CAPS - Family Growth Centers, HOPE Parent Support Group, Capital Area Parent Aide, and Circle of Parents (517) 484-8444
- Early Head Start - home visits and classrooms (517) 372-9411, x1
- Great Parents, Great Start - playgroups and home visits. Contact Wendy Moncada at (517) 372-9411, x 207 or wmoncada@inghamisd.org
- Jump Start - home visits (517) 272-4122
- Nurturing Fathers Support Groups - Parent Support Group for Fathers (517) 482-1504, x 120
This report makes it clear that Ingham County has significant work to do on behalf of our young children. With your help and these data as a starting point, the Ingham Great Start Collaborative will lead the development of the Ingham Early Childhood Action Agenda.

To assure that every young child arrives at kindergarten healthy, safe and eager to succeed in school, Ingham Great Start Collaborative is initiating Community Conversations with members of our community to discuss these questions:

- Are we, as a community, okay with the trends that these data represent?
- What community goals/strategies do we need to help our youngest citizens?
- What assets in our community do we have that can help?
- What gaps do we need to address?
- What partnerships need to be built?
- What systems changes are needed to help?

We need you to be involved in developing the Early Childhood Action Agenda, which includes measurable goals, strategies and resources needed for the next three to five years, to make sure these issues are addressed. The future of our youngest citizens is in our hands; remember that early experiences last a lifetime. We urge you to become involved in making a real difference. Only by working together can we assure a sturdy foundation and a Great Start for every child in Ingham County.

Please Contact Us Today!

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Ingham Great Start Collaborative Members

68th District State Representative Office  
Capital Area United Way  
Capital Area Youth Alliance  
CACS Early Head Start/Head Start  
C-E-I Community Mental Health  
Child Abuse Prevention Services  
City of Lansing  
Department of Human Services - Ingham County  
Ingham County Family Court  
Ingham County Health Department  
Ingham Intermediate School District  
Ingham Regional Medical Center  
Jump Start  
Lansing Community College  
Lansing Pediatric Associates  
Lansing School District  
Mayor’s Office of Community and Faith Based Initiatives  
Michigan State University  
MSU Extension - Ingham County  
Office for Young Children  
Parents  
Power of We Consortium  
Sparrow Hospital  
Stockbridge Community Schools  
WKAR - Michigan State University

Data Sources: Community Level Information on Kids (CLIKS), American Community Survey (ACS), ECIC Data Template, Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH), Kids Count in Michigan and Right Start.

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