



Closing the Gap

An Assessment of Indiana's Early Learning Opportunities

Using the Closing the Gap report, community stakeholders, leaders and early care and education providers can equip themselves with the data needed to make informed and strategic choices to expand access to high-quality child care in their communities.

Approach: Aligning Social Services

Centered on community organizations that understand the impact lack of access to child care has on children and their families, this approach focuses on the alignment of critical social services and early learning opportunities. Using a two-generational focus, organizations can align services like healthcare, mental health, basic needs and emergency relief with early learning opportunities.

These community organizations leverage their resources to build relationships and kickstart projects to benefit the communities they serve. The long-term benefits to children, families and the community go beyond the first five years and engrains itself into the community.

Questions to Consider:



Who should run the early learning program?

An organization can start their own program or partner with a current early education provider.



What local resources can be leveraged?

Community organizations can offer their expertise, space, funding, etc. to support increasing access.

“The challenge is great, but the opportunity to build a system of more equitable access for Hoosier children is even greater.”

Spotlight: Hendricks County

Biggest Challenge: Capacity

Focused on families who are at-risk of or currently experiencing homelessness, Family Promise of Hendricks County has joined forces with TOTally Kids Child Care at St. Marks. Coming together and aligning their services allows them to meet family needs through both designated funds for families served through Family Promise and a sliding scale providing reasonable tuition to all families in the community.



“When families are struggling, they have large barriers made up of things they can’t get past on their own. We knew we needed to hone in on childcare to meet that need. Parents need access to affordable childcare to be able to work, and that’s what we set out to provide.”

Julie Randall, Executive Director, Family Promise of Hendricks County

Spotlight: Boone County

Biggest Challenge: Capacity

Mental Health America of Boone County (MHABC) is creating a new child care center with 28 seats for preschoolers. Through their unique nature-based early learning program, children will spend at least 30% of the day outside. Nature will be infused into all aspects of the program, which will emphasize inquiry-based, self-guided learning through play and hands-on discovery. This approach aligns with their overall mission to address needs of youth and families in their county.



“Our vision to create an environment for the family to thrive starts with the children. The way to break any cycle of dire need is to provide proper and quality education to children first and foremost. Our endeavor into early childhood education seeks to meet those needs in a modern way by bringing in the component of nature.”

Pascal Fettig, President/CEO, Mental Health America of Boone Co.

Early Learning Indiana’s methodology, the Early Learning Access Index, combines the elements of capacity, quality, affordability and choice to offer a more robust assessment of Hoosier families’ ability to access early learning opportunities that suit their needs. Scan the QR Code to learn more about the Closing the Gap report.

