

FORUMS

Introduction to the Early Childhood Issue

Guest editors Leslie A. Forstadt and Sheryl Peavey introduce the articles in this special issue on early childhood by highlighting the myriad of programs and policies affecting Maine’s young children and their families.

by Leslie A. Forstadt, Sheryl Peavey 10

INVESTING EARLY

There is compelling evidence for the importance of early investment in young children, for the children themselves, for the economy, and for society. Philip Trostel presents research on the economic and social value of investing in early childhood development, noting that such investment is also the “right thing to do.” Dana F. Connors looks at investing early from a business point of view; he stresses that high-quality early care and education are vital for both individual and statewide economic security. Judy Reidt-Parker discusses the need for improvement in Maine’s data collection systems to better understand the outcomes of investments in early childhood.

The Dynamics of Investments in Young Children
by Philip A. Trostel 18

Investing in Maine’s Youngest Children Has Great Returns for Business
by Dana F. Connors 26

Data Collection in Maine: Assessing the Return on Public Investment in Maine’s Early Childhood System
by Judy Reidt-Parker 30

Family Economic Security

Family economic insecurity when children are very young can have lifelong effects. Ann Acheson gives an overview of poverty and economic insecurity in Maine, key benefits and programs to support families, and current and recommended policies to improve family economic security.

by Ann Acheson 34

Early Childhood Health

Dora Anne Mills presents a portrait of early childhood health in Maine. Among the many topics covered are prenatal care, early development, infectious diseases, oral, mental, and environmental health, and physical activity and nutrition. She notes policy successes and describes some of the remaining challenges.

by Dora Anne Mills 46

Maine’s High-Risk Infants and Maternal Health and Wellbeing: The Maine Infant Follow-Up Project

The authors describe the Maine Infant Follow-up Project, a research-based effort to accelerate early identification of developmental risk for infants whose mothers use drugs or alcohol. Early identification can enable early targeted intervention for infants with a high risk of neurodevelopmental disorders.

by Beth A. Logan, Marie J. Hayes, Mark S. Brown,
Paul Tisher, Jonathan A. Paul, Ramesh Krishnan 60

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SPECIAL POPULATIONS

In Maine there are an increasing number of young children in special populations. Alan B. Cobo-Lewis describes the state's system of services for young children with disabilities and makes recommendations for improving interdepartmental coordination to better serve the children. Helen D. Ward, Julie A. Atkins and Erin E. Oldham present their research about the problems faced by parents of children with special needs in finding and keeping child care and in coordinating therapy with child care programs. In another article, the same authors (Oldham, Atkins, Ward) discuss the needs of preschool English language learners and describe an Early Reading First Program in Portland that enhanced school-readiness for this population.

Interdepartmental Coordination for Maine's Young Children with Disabilities

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Child Care and Work Challenges for Maine's Parents of Children with Special Needs

by Helen D. Ward, Julie A. Atkins, Erin E. Oldham 82

English Language Learners in the State of Maine: Early Education Policy That Can Make a Difference

by Erin E. Oldham, Julie A. Atkins, Helen D. Ward 88

Parent Education: "Prepare the Child for the Path, Not the Path for the Child"

Candace J. Eaton explains why parent education is so important and describes a number of approaches and programs in Maine. She suggests that Maine needs to increase access to research-supported programs, parent-education classes, and support groups to all populations and all parts of the state.

by Candace J. Eaton 116

The Community Caring Collaborative: Case Study of a Grassroots Collaboration to Create a System of Care for At-risk Infants, Young Children, and Their Families in Washington County, Maine

Marjorie Withers presents a case study of a successful and innovative community-agency partnership, the Community Caring Collaborative, in Washington County, Maine, which is increasing services for community members and their children affected by exposure to drugs, alcohol, and other risk factors.

by Marjorie Withers 126

CHILD CARE

Because early childhood experiences are so crucial to later-life success, the quality of child care is a critical policy concern. Michael Lahti, Rachel Connelly, Georgia N. Nigro and Rebecca Fraser-Thill report on findings from three studies on child care arrangements and quality in Maine and nationally. They describe the development of a new quality rating system in Maine for child care facilities, which can play a role in improving care and in helping parents choose quality care. Julie DellaMattera discusses current patterns of educational preparation and poor compensation for early educators and offers recommendations for improvement in this all-important profession.

Working Parents and Child Care: Charting a New Course for Quality

by Michel Lahti, Rachel Connelly, Georgia N. Nigro,
Rebecca Fraser-Thill 94

The Early Childhood Workforce

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