



A MILESTONE YEAR OF **EXPANSION & PERSEVERANCE**

2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

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LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

Since its founding in 1982, Start Early has been committed to advancing quality early learning for families with children, before birth through their earliest years, to help close the opportunity gap.

While the early childhood field has accomplished a great deal over four decades, the past few years stand out as especially inspiring testaments to the dedication of families and those who care for them.

For Start Early, our milestone 40th anniversary year was one of transformative expansion and unwavering perseverance.

Through innovative and comprehensive work at local, state and federal levels, Start Early impacted nearly every facet of the early education system, with a **deliberate focus on reaching more young children** through quality early learning and care experiences that can set them up for a lifetime of health and success.

Nationwide, **we expanded and scaled our presence** to connect more families with our services and to better support those caring for young children, a profession that continues to persist in the face of unprecedented challenges.

In Chicago, Start Early doubled the number of young children and families served in our Early/Head Start Network, **bringing quality early learning and care opportunities to 19 additional under-resourced communities throughout the city.**

Building on lessons learned from years of on-the-ground policy collaboration, we launched a nationwide consulting practice to support the **expansion of comprehensive early childhood systems.**

The Early Learning Lab's **human-centered design and technology product development** approaches have been embedded in initiatives across the organization since joining our team in early 2021.

The National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, which Start Early has led since 2020, continued its work with partners to support **family well-being and engagement practices.**

Today, the early childhood system is being challenged more than ever. Start Early is committed to advancing the solutions that prioritize our youngest learners, and we are grateful for the ongoing, generous contributions of our supporters.

Every child deserves to reach their full potential. **Together with champions for early learning across the country, we will continue to stand strong for children, promote resilient, thriving families and create transformational change for generations.**

All the best,

Diana Mendley Rauner, Ph.D.
President, Start Early

Diana Sands
Chair of the Board, Start Early



MISSION

Start Early advances quality early learning for families with children, before birth through their earliest years, to close the opportunity gap.

VISION

Every child has equitable opportunity to reach their full potential to thrive in school and in life.



OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

In the last year, Start Early:

13,000

Reached more than **13,000 children** through direct early learning and care services.

18,720

Provided **18,720 home visits** to **1,494 families** through our Home Visiting & Doula Network.

6.5 MILLION

Enabled public sector leaders and advocates in **17 states** to build more equitable systems for over **6.5 million young children** through intensive policy and advocacy consultation.

298,486

Reached **298,486 professionals** through our professional development programs and by leading the Head Start National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement to improve early learning practices for **1.5 million children**.

NEXT GENERATION QUALITY

Building a foundation for children, families & caregivers to grow and succeed, today and in the future.

Research consistently demonstrates that quality matters when it comes to early care and learning programs and services. For families experiencing quality early childhood that are grounded in parent voice and are culturally, linguistically and ability responsive, the impact can be transformative.

Last year, our robust infrastructure and systems allowed early learning and care providers to implement procedures to keep staff, families and children safe. As a result, we were able to keep classrooms open and continue providing quality services to our families amidst an ongoing pandemic.

EDUCARE LEARNING NETWORK

The Educare Learning Network, a partner program of Start Early comprising of **25 schools and their parent organizations** across the country, provided strong infrastructure and support, continued to transform its programming and responded in real time to local challenges brought on by the ongoing pandemic. The Network convened and connected with school leaders and staff, offering supportive communities of practice and other peer learning opportunities.

The Network served **20,000 children and their families** – both at its Educare schools and through 21 partner organizations' Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships and early childhood programming.



An intentional focus on **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB)** infuses the Network's programming. As part of efforts to implement virtual learning experiences that are relevant and user-friendly, we revised training experiences to be more accessible and DEIB-centered. These trainings now provide a richer experience and allow for a deeper connection to staff members and the early childhood community.

In addition to revising all trainings to be more accessible and DEIB-focused, the Network partnered with Research Director and Fellow Dr. Iheoma Iruka from

the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina. Dr. Iruka reviewed disaggregated child data and explored African-centered, culturally responsive practices to improve outcomes at eight Educare schools, with majority Black student populations.

During the 2021-2022 school year, the staff at **Educare Chicago** – Start Early's birth-to-age 5 school on Chicago's South Side – continued to persevere through the challenges of the pandemic and early childhood workforce shortages, effectively engaging and building meaningful, goal-oriented relationships with families. Parents expressed appreciation for the teachers, who ask for their opinions, share the same goals for their children and provide positive feedback about parenting.

More than 75% of Educare Chicago families reported that the school provided them with an opportunity to engage with the school and influence their child's development, an impressive outcome of the continued commitments the team has taken to reinforce parent empowerment and engagement.

EARLY LEARNING & CARE PROGRAMS

Since Start Early's inception four decades ago, we've directly provided programs and services to expecting parents, families and our youngest learners with supports and care that help ensure children enter kindergarten ready to learn.

Through our **Early/Head Start Network**, we partner with community-based agencies across Illinois to deliver quality early learning and care programs. An expanded federal award in 2021 allowed us to double the reach of our Early/Head Start programming and increase the footprint of early learning in Chicago.

This expanded grant allowed us to direct additional program, research and administrative support to improve the quality of services across all sites and advance innovation and learning. The network now provides access to quality programs and services for **2,155 children in 19 under-resourced communities** across Chicago and the surrounding suburbs.



In **Washington state**, we partnered with **65 home visiting programs**, facilitated over **1,218 technical assistance sessions** and supported **4,635 children and families**.

We also worked diligently with more than **350 home visitors**, supervisors and community-based program leaders to develop home visitor and supervisor core competencies that lead with equity as the core value.

Starting at home and supporting families from pregnancy into the earliest years of a child's life is vital. Home visitors support healthy parent-child relationships, promote child development and encourage family health and well-being, laying a strong foundation for a child's learning and future success in life.

Our on-the-ground home visiting and doula services in Illinois and Washington state connect families to the critical supports and services they need to thrive.

Start Early's **Home Visiting & Doula Network** currently supports **28 home visiting programs** across Illinois. These programs provide support to parents so that they can support healthy developmental trajectories for their children. To ensure that programs reach the families who need them the most, Home Visiting & Doula Network programs make special efforts to target families affected by poverty, homelessness and involvement in the carceral system.

Last year, our home visitors and doulas provided **18,720 home visits** to **1,494 of the hardest-to-reach families**.



"With the support of her home visitor ... her son is now receiving the help he needs. As a result, he is currently receiving speech, occupational therapy and physical therapy services. He is making great strides in his growth and development!"

Home Visiting & Doula Network
Representative

Unfortunately, children living in under-resourced communities are more likely to experience adverse childhood experiences – or ACEs – which can cause significant developmental disruptions. The people most capable of reducing adversities for children are their parents. While a healthy parent-child relationship strengthens a child's resilience and builds their sense of safety in the world, parents are often isolated, overwhelmed and lack access to the support, tools and resources they need themselves.

That's why Start Early is focused on expanding access to the **NEAR@Home (Neuroscience, Epigenetics, ACEs, Resilience)** program. NEAR is an innovative learning model that embeds ACEs as a primary framework for how to address trauma safely and respectfully with families. In addition to our complimentary NEAR@Home Toolkit, we also developed a training program that guides home visitors and supervisors through the experience of delivering a NEAR@Home visit.

Building on the success of our four-state NEAR@Home pilot, our goal is to dramatically increase the number of home visitors who are trained in trauma-informed care over the next five years and ultimately reach **20,000 home visitors** nationwide with this critical, trauma-informed training.



In the U.S., **one in 10 children experience three or more adverse events**, placing them in a category of especially high risk.

Racism and continued disinvestment make this likelihood even greater for children of color.



CRITICAL SUPPORTS FOR CAREGIVERS

Taking a thorough and creative approach to professional development opportunities for early learning and care providers.

From doulas and early intervention specialists to center-based preschool teachers and in-home care providers, the early childhood workforce has a powerful, direct impact on a child's life trajectory. That's why we consistently create opportunities for caregivers to connect and engage in skill building learning opportunities.

When early childhood professionals are well-trained and consistently applying new knowledge and skills, they create a more stimulating and effective learning environment.

Our unique portfolio of evidence-based, **professional development solutions** focuses on organizationwide conditions that research shows are most important in driving positive child outcomes. Through our professional development solutions, last year, we reached **7,052 professionals**.

Our local and state relationships remained strong and enabled us to expand our partnerships and implementation to **25 states**. We embedded our professional development approach in hundreds of communities, including statewide work in Illinois, Massachusetts, Oregon, Texas and Washington state.

To prepare for the advancement of virtual learning, we're collaborating with a technology company to identify more effective and accessible professional development tools for the future. We have also translated several training opportunities into Spanish to reach a broader, more diverse audience.

OUR FAMILY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS



The Essential 0-5 Survey

A measurement system for program improvement



The Essential Fellowship

Leadership development for early education



The Essential Practices of Educare

Proven strategies for early childhood teams



The Essential of Home Visiting

High-quality learning to advance family-focused professionals



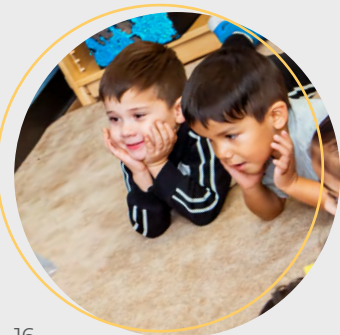
INFORMING & LEADING

Start Early conducts rigorous research and evaluation to elevate the expertise of early childhood professionals and support better learning environments for all young children and their families. By sharing our findings and best practices with policymakers, partners and advocates, we help local leaders improve the quality of early learning and care in states and communities across the country.

As the **National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (NCPFCE)** lead, Start Early has supported 12 Head Start regions and 1,600 Head Start grantees since 2020. Together, with a consortium of partners, we focused our efforts on the following:

- Enhancing systemic Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE)
- Advancing equity, culture, and linguistic responsiveness
- Prioritizing and implementing Family Services Professional Development
- Partnering with families for greater economic mobility
- Promoting best practices in virtual PFCE
- Strengthening Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) practices through a PFCE Lens

The NCPFCE's three-day virtual conference, ERSEA Institute 2022, offered over 5,000 participants professional development, networking, and resources to help Head Start programs assess the needs of their communities and connect and recruit children and families most in need of Head Start services.



"I have not felt this supported in quite some time. These last few days, but especially today, have helped me to fill my cup and remember why we do what we do!"

Participant,
ERSEA
Institute 2022

In summer 2021, a cross-divisional group of Start Early experts set out to answer the question "how can Illinois child care providers serve more infants and toddlers?" The team conducted a literature review, researched approaches from other states, and engaged child care professionals directly. Their goal was to gain insight into the challenges and potential solutions for delivering infant-toddler care.

The **Infant & Toddler Child Care Roadmap** provides a detailed summary of the team's findings and raises seven recommendations for increasing access to infant and toddler care. The following recommendations are reflective of the need for an intentional focus on infants and toddlers and are centered on the professionals who deliver child care services.

- 1 Strengthen the perception and reputation of infant-toddler teachers and other professionals working with children under age 3.
- 2 Strengthen the workforce.
- 3 Increase engagement with local communities.
- 4 Improve the Child Care Assistance Program.
- 5 Increase supports for children with disabilities, and early childhood staff and families struggling with mental health and social emotional challenges.
- 7 Increase business and operational supports to child care programs.
- 8 Improve availability of data on infants and toddlers.



"We always joke that we didn't get into the field for the money. It's about what we do..."

Infant & Toddler Child Care Roadmap
Survey Participant

TRANSFORMATIONAL SYSTEMS



Advancing meaningful change in our communities that increases access to high-quality, affordable early childhood education.

Connected, comprehensive early childhood systems provide families with equitable access to an uninterrupted continuum of high-quality services from before birth through age 5. Strong early childhood systems are reflective of the full spectrum of a child's development, inclusive of health care, nutrition and mental health services, early learning and family supports.

Through legislative, administrative and grassroots advocacy, collaboration across the field and consultation and thought leadership, we aim to improve early childhood experiences for all young children.



LEADING NATIONWIDE POLICY CHANGE

The federal early childhood system can act as a facilitator of strong, equitable systems and infrastructure at the state and community levels. To support improvement of the country's federal system, Start Early works with parents, providers, state administrators, federal and state agencies and members of Congress to promote equitable, systems-level change for pregnant people, young children and families.

Despite the disappointing stagnation of a transformational federal funding package, we pushed forward to reach more children and families nationwide, indirectly serving over **6.5 million children in 17 states** through policy, advocacy and systems consultation.

Through continued amplification and implementation of **Start Early's National Policy Agenda**, we grounded our work into the issues that matter most to families and those who serve them. This included advocating for increases to early care and learning and home visiting funding and expanding eligibility and accessibility of public benefits, especially for families from historically under-served communities.



Start Early's National Policy Agenda

1

Next Generation Program Quality

2

Building Connected, Comprehensive & Equitable Systems

3

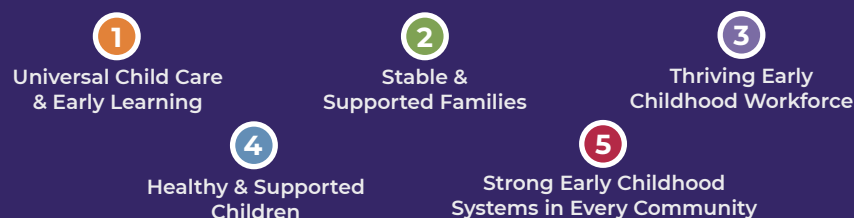
Elevating Family Voice & the Role of Families

Informed by the Educare Learning Network's five policy priorities, **The Educare 5**, school leaders guided policy and advocacy efforts and initiatives among seven Educare school communities across the country.

By leveraging the strengths and geographic diversity of the Network, this work deepened the reach and impact of its policy priorities and helped ensure that staff and parent perspectives are placed at the center of the Network and schools' advocacy efforts. For example, the Network's Educare Parent Ambassadors program provided peer-to-peer learning, coaching and intensive mentoring opportunities to engage families in policy and advocacy work.



The Educare 5



Through extensive policy, government relations and communications expertise, our partner **First Five Years Fund (FFYF)** works with federal policymakers to garner support for investments and policies that increase access to high-quality, affordable early learning and care.

Over the past year, FFYF played a leading role in discussions concerning the possible inclusion of child care in the Democratic reconciliation package utilizing strategic avenues of advocacy to push for long-term legislative solutions to the child care crisis.



While reconciliation failed to include the needed investments, FFYF has been working diligently to secure increases to annual funding through the appropriations process, including the reauthorization of and increased funding for the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting program. FFYF has continued to push early learning and care forward as a national, bipartisan priority and are preparing for a new Congress in 2023 through a variety of targeted campaigns.



KEY DATA: VOTERS NATIONWIDE & EARLY CHILDHOOD IMPACT

Swing state polling of registered voters in five key Senate states and 40 Congressional districts showed broad, bipartisan support for early childhood education proposals. **Ahead of the 2022 midterm elections, the vast majority of voters understand the severity of child care challenges facing working families and want Congress to help address them with policies and investments aimed at access, affordability and quality.**



One in three voters say they know someone who has had to cut work hours or forgo work entirely due to child care challenges. **42% of African American voters** and **49% of Latino voters** say the same.



By a **two-to-one margin**, voters believe that public programs should help working parents afford the high cost of child care, rejecting the idea that parents alone should have full responsibility.



80% of young voters, 78% of women and 77% of independent voters believe it is extremely or very important for working parents to be able to find and afford quality child care.

IMPACT AT STATE & LOCAL LEVELS

Start Early works on-the-ground in Illinois and Washington state to secure robust, equitable and sustainable state and local policies and funding that prioritize equitable access to quality services for young children and their families.

During last year's legislative sessions, our efforts in both states targeted funding increases to better supporting the early learning workforce, respond to worsening challenges brought on by the ongoing pandemic and promote avenues for expanding services to more children living in under-served communities.

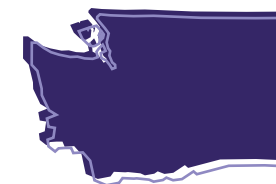
In **Illinois**, Start Early's policy experts led the successful passage of several historic bills that will expand and enhance support services for young children and their families living in under-resourced communities and experiencing challenges that leave them without access to such services. Informed by our policy recommendations, research and expertise, the state's latest budget included a \$54.4 million increase to

ILLINOIS



the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) and a \$6 million increase in Early Intervention programs, erasing a previous cut to the program and ensuring a 3% rate increase for therapists. We also led successful efforts to include a \$1 million increase in the final budget for home visiting programs funded by the Department of Human Services, including Start Early's Healthy Parents & Babies programs, which is the first new investment in these programs in nearly two decades.

WASHINGTON



In **Washington state**, Start Early supported the continued implementation of the transformational 2021 Fair Start for Kids Act, an unprecedented \$1.1 billion investment approved the previous year to grow and strengthen the state's early learning system – by ensuring access and affordability among all families – with a central focus on racial equity. In partnership with advocates across the state, we also proudly secured \$49.6 million to provide a 16% rate increase for child care centers and \$29.98 million in capital funding for early learning facility grants and loans as part of the state's latest budget.

In its second year, the **Raising Illinois** coalition made robust progress across its five-year agenda, which aims to create an equitable and cohesive system of supports for Illinois' expecting families, infants, toddlers and the communities in which they live. As the backbone organization of the coalition, Start Early leads the strategic and comprehensive management of the coalition's more than 800 members and ensures alignment with the larger national movement of 19 states to advance prenatal-to-age 3 efforts.

In 2022, Raising Illinois' members focused their work on the coalition's goals to:

- 1 Advocating and helping secure a \$1 million increase for home visiting programs funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services.
- 2 Promote high-quality early learning, guided by the Illinois Infant & Toddler Child Care Roadmap.
- 3 Build a stronger system to facilitate growth of the Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Database, which today includes 107 consultants in all 102 counties in Illinois.
- 4 Support policy changes to improve the economic health, well-being and success of Illinois' infants, toddlers and their families.

COLLABORATION FOR LARGE SCALE IMPACT

Start Early continued to grow our services and outreach campaigns to reach early childhood communities and promote collaboration more effectively.

Through the growth of the Early Childhood Connector platform and the innovative evolution of the Early Learning Lab, we continued to put the experiences of our children and families at the forefront of our product development and drive sustainable change.

Through the **Early Childhood Connector** online community, we furthered our efforts to support early childhood leaders by providing a platform to share knowledge, scale expertise and fuel innovation in real time. Last year, we launched four place-based community pilots with more than 65 partners, yielding user research that has helped refine our short- and long-term strategies for the platform's future.

The Connector provided its nearly **3,000 members** with a space to collaborate with one another and collectively work to strengthen programs and policies that support young children, their families and those who care for them.

The **Early Learning Lab**, based in Oakland, California, took another step forward in its second year as part Start Early. The Lab worked with divisions across the organization to bring human-centered design (HCD) and technology product development to several initiatives, including:

- 1 Family-centered systems building consultation for communities in California's El Dorado and Yolo counties
- 2 Research with families in Chicago to improve recruitment and enrollment in Head Start programs
- 3 Using HCD and co-design with pilot users to create a more focused product vision for the Early Childhood Connector

DRIVING SYSTEMS-CHANGE

In its first full year of operation, Start Early's new **consulting practice** consulted in 16 states and eight communities to support **237 public sector leaders and advocates** in building high-quality, equitable and comprehensive early learning and care systems.

This new hands-on consulting model offers field-leading expertise and strategy and planning guidance to state and community leaders and advocates to help drive ambitious change of early childhood systems.

Services range from leadership advising, policy analysis and development, systems assessment and mapping, advocacy strategy and implementation support.

"Start Early facilitation and consultation helped Wisconsin develop a robust and equitable policy agenda focused on supporting families with infants and toddlers."

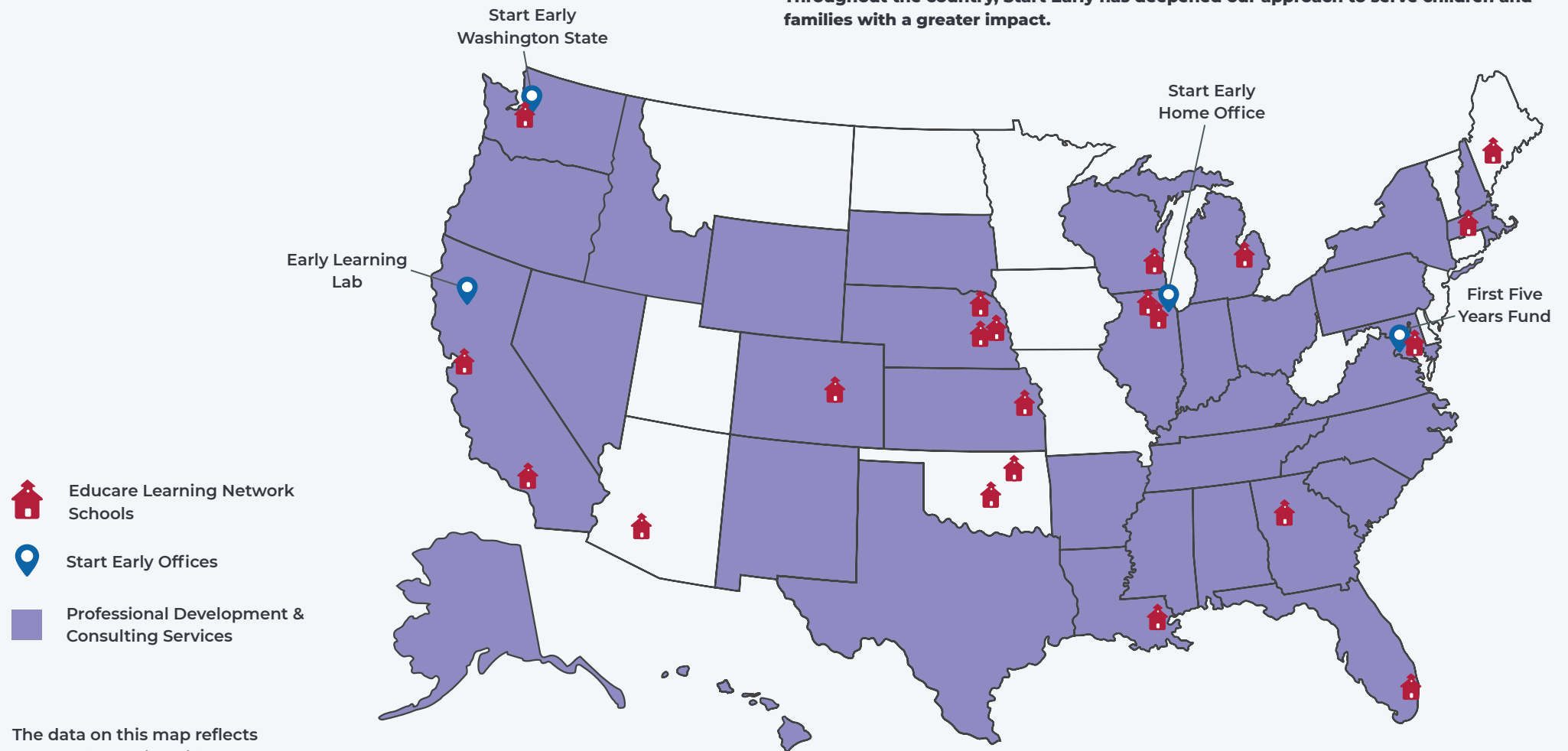
Wisconsin Department
of Children & Families
Representative



NATIONWIDE CHANGE

Taking our programs and services from coast-to-coast has allowed us to reach more than **13,000 children** through direct early learning and care services. Additionally, we worked in **nearly every state across the country** to build more equitable early learning and care systems for **millions of young children** through professional development offerings and policy and advocacy consultation.

Throughout the country, Start Early has deepened our approach to serve children and families with a greater impact.



The data on this map reflects Start Early's nationwide presence from July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022.

OUR GENEROUS DONORS

LIFETIME GIVING

Start Early honors its Lifetime Giving donors who have committed to multi-year and single-time gifts.

\$10,000,000 & Above

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What will your legacy be?

As a Start Early supporter, you want all children to have an equitable chance in life. The **Irving B. Harris Legacy Community** at Start Early can help you align your values with long-term legacy. If you have already included us in your estate plans, or to request a conversation to learn how to make a legacy gift to Start Early, please contact us at Giving@StartEarly.org or 312-922-3863.



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\$500,000 to \$999,999

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\$100,000 to \$249,999

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ANNUAL GIVING

Start Early honors all our donors for their generous gifts, pledges and payments last fiscal year (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022).

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Ballmer Group
 Leslie Bluhm & David Helfand +
 Buffett Early Childhood Fund +
 Comic Relief US
 Crown Family Philanthropies
 Heising-Simons Foundation
 W.K. Kellogg Foundation
 The David & Lucile Packard Foundation
 Diana & Bruce Rauner, Rauner Family Foundation +
 Catherine Siegel +
 Saul Zaentz Charitable Foundation
 Helen & Sam Zell, Zell Family Foundation +

\$500,000 To \$999,999

Marilyn & Larry Fields +
 Finnegan Family Foundation
 Frechette Family Foundation
 Irving Harris Foundation
 Pritzker Children's Initiative
 Diana & Michael Sands +
 The John & Kathleen Schreiber Foundation
 Glen Tullman
 Sam Yagan & Jessica Droste Yagan

\$100,000 To \$499,999

Anonymous (3)
 Anonymous +
 Curt & Lisa Bailey
 Susan & Stephen Baird
 BMO Harris Bank +
 David & Jane Casper +

∞ Deceased + Annual Luncheon Sponsor

CME Group Foundation
 DRW Foundation +
 Vicki Escarra +
 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
 Tom Gimbel, LaSalle Network +
 Richard W. Goldman Family Foundation
 Mr. and Mrs. Rodney L. Goldstein +
 Harris Family Foundation +
 Linda & Bill Friend
 Caryn & King Harris
 Stephanie & John Harris
 Toni & Dr. Ronald Paul
 Pam Friend Szokol
 The Hasten Foundation +
 Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation
 Howard Ellsworth Jessen
 George Kaiser Family Foundation
 Malott Family Foundation
 Robert R. McCormick Foundation +
 Marcelle McVay & Dennis Zacek
 Perigee Fund
 Pivotal Ventures
 Karen Rudolph & David Donnini
 Steans Family Foundation
 W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation
 Coleman Tuggle & Deborah Daro
 Vivo Foundation
\$50,000 To \$99,999
 Allstate Insurance Company +
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 The Coleman Foundation
 Nancy & Steven Crown +
 James P. & Brenda S. Grusecki Family Foundation

We would like to specially recognize our **Champions Circle donors**, a mission-driven group of individuals working to advance Start Early's efforts with **gifts of \$1,000 or more** throughout the year.

Thank you!

Hunter Family Foundation
 Charles & Brunetta Matthews
 Doug & Diane Oberhelman & Cullinan
 Properties +
 Barbara & Dan O'Keefe +
 Rainwater Charitable Foundation
 Related +
 Rothkopf Family Charitable Foundation +
 Lee Shapiro
 Stolte Family Foundation
 Trust for Learning
 Valor Equity Partners +
 WhyNot Initiative
 Wintrust Financial Corporation +

\$25,000 To \$99,999

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