

**EQUITY AND ACCESS FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES:
MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF ADMINISTRATORS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND MICHIGAN INTERAGENCY
COORDINATING COUNCIL FISCAL AD HOC: SINGLE TIER PROJECT**

Early Intervention is a federally mandated program that provides supports and services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families throughout all 56 states and jurisdictions in the United States. High-quality early intervention yields a significant return on investment (Garcia, Heckman, Duncan, & Prados, 2016). Due to the rapid brain development occurring during the first three years of life, **early intervention with infants and toddlers is more cost effective and produces greater outcomes** than waiting until a child has reached school age (Harvard Center for the Developing Child, 2018).

MICHIGAN'S EARLY INTERVENTION (EARLY ON) SYSTEM

Unlike all other states throughout the nation that have only one set of eligibility criteria, Michigan has two sets of eligibility criteria for Early On. Specifically, one group of children are eligible for *Early On* only and a second group of children are eligible for both *Early On* and Michigan Mandatory Special Education (MMSE). In Michigan, early intervention for infants and toddlers with disabilities is administered under the federal mandate of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) Part C. Infants and toddlers with disabilities in Michigan qualify for early intervention with a 20% delay in at least one developmental area or with an established condition. Additionally, by law, Michigan provides special education services for infants and toddlers (Michigan School Code Section 1711(1)(f)), if they meet eligibility criteria under the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE). **This bifurcated approach to early intervention has contributed to an inequity in early intervention services and an inability to access federally required personnel.**

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Both the early intervention system and the special education system serving infants and toddlers with disabilities **lack funding to the extent that service areas are unable to meet federally required personnel mandates.** Even more concerning is that without this funding children and families are not accessing the evidence-based services necessary to lead to improved outcomes and significant return on investment. In 2017-2018 from federal funds, ISD's received \$470.06 on average per child served (Federal Award allocated to ISD's: \$9,964,785/Number of Infants and Toddlers: 21,199). Additionally, as outlined in the recent Michigan School Finance Collaborative Report (www.fundmischools.org) 90% of special education services are not supported at an adequate funding level. As a state, we must eliminate the bifurcated approach to early intervention services that is causing inequity and lack of access to federally mandated services. Rather, we recommend funding one aligned and cohesive early intervention system in order to meet federal mandates, allow efficient use of funds, improved equity and access, and ultimately lead to increased outcomes for children and families in Michigan.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

Increase equity and access to early intervention services (Early On) through funding one aligned and cohesive early intervention system in Michigan.

- 1. Increase Equity:** All children are eligible for both *Early On* and special education with a 25% delay in any one developmental domain or with an established condition.
- 2. Improve Access:** Personnel must meet State of Michigan special education personnel standards. Services are determined based on child and family need.