



New Jersey First Steps

A State-wide Infant/Toddler Initiative



*Funded by the
New Jersey Department of Human Services,
Division of Family Development*



What is the New Jersey First Steps Infant/Toddler Initiative?

Approximately 400,000 children in the State of New Jersey are under the age of three. Their development relies on parents as their first teachers and early educators, specifically primary caregivers, who they are often entrusted to at an early age. Research shows that 90% of a child's brain is developed by the age of 2 years. Studies also show that the quality of early care makes a difference for children by laying a foundation for social/emotional, cognitive, language and early literacy development, which enhances school readiness and future academic success.



The New Jersey First Steps Infant/Toddler Initiative has two predominant goals:

- **To improve the quality of Infant/Toddler early care across the state**
- **To increase the availability of quality early care programs for families with infants and toddlers.**

The New Jersey First Steps Infant/Toddler Initiative was created to assist early educators in offering the very best possible care for New Jersey's youngest citizens. Three regional agencies, **Programs for Parents, Inc.** (northern), **Community Coordinated Child Care of Union County** (central), and the **Southern Regional Child Care Resource Center, EIRC** (southern) will serve as lead agencies for the 16 child care resource and referral agencies across the state. The agencies will employ Infant/Toddler Specialists who will partner with early care providers and their directors, by providing professional development, technical assistance, consultation services, program assessment and resources.

What services does the First Steps Infant/Toddler Initiative provide?

Professional Development

- Professional development opportunities will be offered on-site for participating programs.
- Professional development opportunities for the early care provider will be offered in the community with topics tailored to their needs.
- Professional development opportunities will be offered by specialized trainers, to present best practice standards that address infant and toddler brain development and reflective practice for early care providers.
- Professional development opportunities are planned to assist early care providers in achieving the NJ Infant/Toddler Credential.

Technical Assistance and Consultation

Infant/Toddler Specialists will serve as mentors and provide resources to new and experienced early educators. Consultation services will be provided to early educators on-site or via telephone. Technical assistance also includes: site observations, pre and post ITERS/FCCERS assessments, development of a program improvement plan and access to a lending library.

The program improvement plan will delineate specific roles for the director, provider, infant/toddler specialist and consultants and will be customized based on the identified program needs. The program improvement plan will assist programs in the following ways:

- Implementing best practices in infant and toddler care
- Demonstrating improvement in the ITERS/FCCERS assessment scores
- Demonstrating sustainable improvement in the overall quality of the program.



Additional technical assistance will be offered to individuals or programs interested in establishing or expanding services to Infants and Toddlers, upon request.

Resources and Materials

Your local Child Care and Resource and Referral Agency has a resource library where early care providers can access Infant and Toddler specific materials such as children's books, training materials (videos and DVDs) for staff development, curriculum guides and equipment for lending.

Community Partnerships

The Infant/Toddler network consists of community and statewide organizations that are stakeholders committed to improving the quality of life and early education for young children. These groups include New Jersey Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NJACCRRA), Coalition of Infant/Toddler Educators (CITE), Professional Impact of New Jersey (PINJ), early intervention, health care organizations, higher education, government, business, local school districts, child care programs, parents and others. Participation with these organizations fosters increased awareness of the needs of infants and toddlers, blending of available resources, collaboration and advocacy for young children.



ACHIEVING AND MAINTAINING HIGHER QUALITY

New Jersey's Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies are committed to developing a program that supports excellence in early care and education. Ongoing assessment and tracking of the activities associated with this initiative will enable the Infant/Toddler Specialists to redesign and customize services offered, to focus on specific needs of infant and toddler early educators and to ensure high quality infant/toddler care sustainability.

NJACCRRRA MEMBER AGENCIES

Atlantic County

Atlantic County Women's Center

Phone: (609) 601-9925, ext. 210

Fax: (609) 601-2975

Bergen County

Bergen County Office for Children

Phone: (201) 336-7150

Fax: (201) 336-7155

Burlington County

Burlington County CAP

Phone: (609) 261-6834

Fax: (609) 261-1030

Camden County

Camden County Department of Children Services— DiPiero Center

Phone: (856) 374-6376

Fax: (856) 374-6384

Cape May County

EIRC—Southern Regional Child Care Resource Center

Phone: (609) 886-5164

Fax: (609) 886-6549

Cumberland County

Tri-County Community Action Partnership

Phone: 856-451-6330

Fax: (856) 455-7288

Essex County

Programs for Parents, Inc.

Phone: (973) 744-4050, ext. 1016

Fax: (973) 744-4613

Gloucester County

EIRC-Southern Regional Child Care Resource Center

Phone: (856) 582-8282

Fax: (856) 582-4714

Hudson County

Urban League of Hudson County

Phone: (201) 451-8888, ext. 122/141

Fax: (201) 451-4158

(201) 433-4665

Hunterdon County

NORWESCAP Child & Family Resource Services

Phone: (908) 782-8183

Fax: (908) 782-3498

Mercer County

Child Care Connection

Phone: (609) 989-7770, ext. 138/144

Fax: (609) 989-8060

Middlesex County

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Metuchen

Phone: (732) 324-4357

Fax: (732) 826-4136

Monmouth County

Child Care Resources

Phone: (732) 918-9901

Fax: (732) 918-9902

Morris County

Child & Family Resources

Phone: (973) 398-1730

Fax: (973) 398-0319

Ocean County

The Children's Home Society of New Jersey

Phone: (732) 557-9633

Fax: (732) 557-0588

Passaic County

North Jersey Community Coordinated Child Care Agency, Inc.

Phone: (973) 684-1904

Fax: (973) 684-0468

Salem County

Tri-County Community Action Partnership

Phone: (856) 935-0944, ext. 220
or ext. 221

Fax: (856) 935-0920

Somerset County

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Metuchen

Phone: (908) 927-0869

Fax: (908) 927-9653

Sussex County

NORWESCAP Child & Family Resource Services

Phone: (973) 383-3461

Fax: (973) 383-8222

Union County

Community Coordinated Child Care of Union County

Phone: (973) 923-1433

Fax: (973) 923-1311

Warren County

NORWESCAP Child & Family Resource Services

Phone: (908) 454-1078

Fax: (908) 454-3117





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