



Smart Start Update --- January 2014

www.SmartStartAlabama.org

Early Care and Education Industry Contributes \$1.03 Billion Impact, More than 24,000 Jobs in Alabama

This summer, the Alabama Partnership for Children (APC) commissioned Auburn University at Montgomery and M. Keivan Deravi, Ph.D., and Professor of Economics, to determine the economic impact of the Early Care and Education (ECE) industry on the economy of the state of Alabama. Findings from the report demonstrate that the ECE industry has a **\$1.03 billion** impact on our state's economy and is responsible for an average of **24,717** full time equivalent jobs. These findings, which were presented at AUM on December 16, 2013, not only demonstrate that the ECE industry in Alabama is a critical sector of our economy in terms of its economic weight, but also its social influence.



"We have known for years what young children need to develop optimally, but we have not fully understood how critical the early care and education industry is to our state's economy", said Gail Piggott, Executive Director of the APC. "Not only do these programs provide employment in

small businesses across the state, but they enable parents to go to work each day. In our state, 65 percent of children under the age of six have all parents in the workforce. Comprehensive early care and education also lays the groundwork for Alabama's future workforce, by preparing upcoming generations for school and work success."

"In terms of the early care and education industry's social influence, M. Keivan Deravi, Ph.D., Professor of Economics at Auburn University at Montgomery, and economic assessment report's author, notes the "unique feature of the early care and education industry is its potential for creating an enormous and long-lasting social economic benefit for society, at large. A well-funded and well-staffed comprehensive early childhood education program can produce significant positive externalities."



The Alabama Partnership for Children has been the state's leading voice for

Zero to Five Matters

*~A newsletter
focused on our most
valuable
investment~*

Follow us:



Don't Forget
to follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). The APC launched a social media campaign in November that targets parents, early childhood professionals, business leaders and our partners in the state. 'A Tweet a Day for Learning and Play' provides early education tips and research, including information on our initiatives and partners.
Check it out today!

January FOCUS
Check out this month's Smart Start FOCUS [Packet](#) on advocacy!

Mark Your Calendars:

[SECA Conference](#)
January 16-18, 2014
Williamsburg, VA

[Doing What Matters for
Alabama's Children
Conference](#)
January 28, 2014
Tuscaloosa, AL

early care and education for over 12 years. It strongly believes that it is important to support strengthening public investment in quality licensed early care and education, and encourages Alabamians to:

- Learn more at www.alabamachildcarefacts.org
- Support efforts to expand [First Class Pre-K](#) to more children in our state.
- Establish and support the [Quality Rating and Improvement Systems \(QRIS\)](#) across the state. QRIS provides early care and education facilities with programmatic, professional development and financial supports. The system also provides parents with a framework to evaluate potential ECE facilities to make the best decision for their family.
- Advocate that **all** early care and education programs are inspected for basic health and safety standards.

To read the full report on the *Economic Impact of the Early Care and Education Industry on the Economy of the State of Alabama*, [click here](#).

To view the executive summary of the report, *Child Care: Keeps Alabama Working*, [click here](#).

Changing the Lives of Alabama's Children Through Advocacy

Melanie R. Bridgeforth, MSW
Executive Director, VOICES for Alabama's Children

First and foremost, thank you to the Alabama Partnership for Children for your tireless efforts to ensure all Alabama children have the opportunity to succeed in life. We at VOICES for Alabama's Children share your vision and truly value the partnership which has been built over the years.

It is both an honor and a privilege to return to my roots of child advocacy. Being able to do so, leading one of the longest-standing and most effective child advocacy organizations in the state, VOICES for Alabama's Children, is nothing short of a dream come true. A native Alabamian, I have dedicated my entire professional career to advocating for vulnerable populations.

Needless to say, I am delighted to be back home and looking forward to what the New Year brings. As I do so, one question plagues me. And that is: "How are the children?". Let us take a moment to consider. In 2011, nearly 500 Alabama babies never saw their first birthday. Nearly one in three of our children live(s) in poverty and over a quarter will go to bed hungry. In 2012, over 2,500 of Alabama's children did not pass the first grade, a known potential set-back for future academic success. Almost 30 percent of Alabama's children did not graduate from high school on time. According to the 2013 *Alabama Kids Count Data Book*, published annually by VOICES for Alabama's Children, Alabama ranked 44th in overall child well-being. Albeit an improvement from years past: our children deserve better.

So, how do we give them better? How do we change the world for our children in a positive and sustained way? The answer is simple. If we want to change the world, we have to change policy. Advocacy - by definition, the application of pressure and influence on the people and institutions that have the power to give you what you want - is one of, if not the most, critical components to

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We would like to thank:

The Alabama Civil Justice Foundation
for their support of our Strengthening Families™ work in Lowndes County through a \$25,000 grant awarded for 2014.

The Alabama Partnership for Children would also like to thank **Publix Super Market Charities** for renewing their investment in young children and families with a \$15,000 grant to the Alabama Partnership for Children.



Special thanks to:

Dr. Keivan Deravi, Professor of Economics, AUM

Jeremy L. Arthur, President, Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama

Dr. Calvin E. Moore, Director, Child Care Services, DHR

Alabama School Readiness Alliance

Alabama Head Start State Collaboration Office

Longleaf Strategies

in support of our launch of the ***Economic Impact of the Early Care and Education Industry on the Economy of the State of Alabama*** report, executive summary and press conference.

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changing the environment and the landscape to give our children a fighting chance.

Children are powerless because they have no voice and have no vote. They are virtual afterthoughts, at best, in the political process. They obviously lack the capability to represent themselves before decision making bodies such as the Alabama Legislature, or the various state agencies that adopt regulations day-in and day-out, which impact their lives. That is where we come in. Through advocacy, each of us can help level the playing field for our children.

My personal charge and my challenge to each of you, is to become even stronger advocates in 2014. If you are a parent, a decision maker, a concerned resident, an educator, a business leader, community leader or the like, one of the simplest ways to advocate for children is attaching your support to organizations speaking on behalf of children such as VOICES for Alabama's Children and the Alabama Partnership for Children. Plug into organizations like ours to stay in the know on current policy priorities and issues facing children.

Secondly, become an expert on the issues that matter most to you and help educate and recruit others. Knowledge is power, and there is also strength in numbers. When we win in these two areas, we win for children.

Thirdly, get to know your local and state elected officials. They would much rather get to know you before you need something. Take a moment to introduce yourself in person, write a personal note, make a quick phone call or email them. If you already have a strong relationship in place, use the influence you have to help organizations like VOICES for Alabama's Children move the needle on our policy agenda and goals. Always, educate your elected officials on the issues impacting children and demonstrate that you are a trusted and credible source of information for them. It will pay dividends.

Lastly, let your elected officials and decision makers know that you will be holding them accountable in 2014 for how they prioritize Alabama's children. Remember, 2014 is an election year and you have the power to do one very important thing that our children cannot - vote!

I personally invite you to join VOICES for Alabama's Children's advocacy network by [clicking here](#). Let us be your source of information on the issues and legislative matters most impacting Alabama's children, as well as support you in becoming the best advocate you can be in 2014!

And remember, the children of today are Alabama's workforce, consumers and leaders of tomorrow. I look forward to continuing the fight for our children alongside you.

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Alabama Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative



The state's *Blueprint for Zero to Five* Advisory Committee was developed through the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant and serves as the state leadership team for several initiatives. With representatives covering all aspects of healthy child development, the committee also includes state and local agencies and service providers. The structure for the *Blueprint* was adapted from the National School Readiness Indicators initiative and helps us focus on indicators and actions that have proven to make a difference in children from pre-birth to age five. Through the years, the group has used the Results-based Accountability framework for identifying indicators of child well-being that are collectively embraced as priorities for funding and policy decisions. Our work is based on the premise of "that which gets measured, gets done" and that a collective impact model is necessary if we are to ensure that every child born in Alabama gets all that they need to develop optimally.

Nine state agency heads serve on the Alabama Partnership for Children's Board of Directors, and each of these leaders have signed onto the premise of the *Blueprint* and embrace their particular agency's contribution to programs and services that impact the priorities identified.

We have also successfully incorporated the work of the advisory committee and *Blueprint* priorities into the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council. Through this body, we can continue to influence the "Ready State" component of the *Blueprint* which requires analysis and recommendations for funding, policy, and accountability processes across systems. This can only be accomplished at the highest level of state leadership.

Listed below are major resources we used in 2013 to identify priorities for the upcoming two years. Using current research and analysis of all data on the well-being of young children, the advisory committee provides direction so that our resources can be collectively directed at what will make a difference.

- [Blueprint Indicators](#)
- [Markers that Matter](#)
- National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) [Alabama State Profile](#)
- [Results Based Accountability \(RBA\) and Indicators](#)

<p>Ready Families in Ready Communities + Ready Services (Health) + Ready Services (Early Education) <u>+ Ready Schools</u> = Ready Children with Bright Futures</p>
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Our Mission: To work in partnership with other public and private entities to maintain an effective state and local system of resources and support that enables parents, families, and others who care for young children to ensure that they are healthy, protected, nurtured, and offered every opportunity to succeed in life.

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