



Early Childhood Iowa
School Ready Funds
Family Support & Parent Education
Tool FF

School Ready Allocation

Iowa law includes requirements for the use of School Ready (SR) funds in order to enhance current efforts to provide family support services and parent education programs for families with children.

Legislation specifically states:

256I.9 SCHOOL READY CHILDREN GRANT PROGRAM.

1. The state board shall develop and promote a school ready children grant program which shall provide for all of the following components:

3. A school ready children grant shall, to the extent possible, be used to support programs that meet quality standards identified by the state board. At a minimum, a grant shall be used to provide all of the following:

b. (1) Family support services and parent education programs promoted to parents of children from zero through age five. Family support services shall include but are not limited to home visitation and parent education. Of the state funding that an area board designates for family support programs, at least sixty percent shall be committed to programs with a home visitation component.

(2) It is the intent of the general assembly that priority for family support funding be given to programs using evidence-based or promising models for family support.

Definitions:

“Evidence-based program” means a program that is based on scientific evidence demonstrating that the program model is effective. An evidence-based program shall be reviewed onsite and compared to program model standards by the model developer or the developer’s designee at least every five years to ensure that the program continues to maintain fidelity with the program model. The program model shall have had demonstrated significant and sustained positive outcomes in an evaluation utilizing a well-designed and rigorous randomized controlled research design or a quasi-experimental research design, and the evaluation results shall have been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

“Family support programs” includes group-based parent education or home visiting programs that are designed to strengthen protective factors, including parenting skills, increasing parental knowledge of child development, and increasing family functioning and problem solving skills. A family support program may be used as an early intervention strategy to improve birth outcomes, parental knowledge, family economic success, the home learning environment, family and child involvement with others, and coordination with other community resources. A family support program may have a specific focus on preventing child maltreatment or ensuring children are safe, healthy, and ready to succeed in school.

“Family support professionals” includes group-based parent education facilitators, home visitors, parent educators, family support workers, family assessment workers, nurse home visitors and others that are providing direct service services to enrolled families and their supervisors.

“Home visitation” is a strategy to deliver family support or parent education services. A home visit is a face-to-face visit with a family in their home, or other alternate location, to facilitate meeting the

family's goals. An alternate location includes the use of video conferencing technology, such as, but not limited to, webex or google hangouts. Video conferencing includes both visual and audio connectivity.

Temporary use of an alternate location may happen when:

- meeting in the family home presents safety concerns for the worker or the family
- weather impacts the ability of the home visitor to travel to the family home
- a child or other family member has a contagious illness,
- or on occasions to facilitate meeting the program's outcomes such as medical appointments or school staffing.

Home Visits are calculated based on the number of times you meet with the family. They are NOT multiplied by the number of children present. A home visit typically lasts one hour and is provided in person. The use of telephone talk or text to communicate with the family supplements services but does not typically take the place of a home visit.

A ***"home visitation component"*** is defined as a family support service that uses home visitation as the primary method for service delivery. Home visits are provided at regular intervals throughout the entire fiscal year and meets the definition of home visitation provided in this guidance.

"Parent education" programs implement organized and planned meetings designed to support parents' efforts to enhance their children's health and development.

Parent education programs have the following characteristics:

- Provides parents' with information, skills, support systems and confidence in their parental role in order to support, nurture and promote children's health and development;
- Strengthens positive relationships between parent and children;
- Builds on parents' strengths and utilizes their experiences, ideas and knowledge;
- Provides information that meets the needs of parents for specific content and shared in a manner that is responsive to parents' learning style, education and culture.

NOTE: Parent education may be provided in a group setting or one on one in a family's home or alternate location. Refer to the definition of home visitation for additional information about the use of an alternate location. Parent education is limited in scope and duration, lasting a minimum of six weeks and utilizes standardized curricula. Some home visiting programs also offer a group parent education component as an enhancement to their home visiting services. The group services are not considered a separate, stand-alone program.

"Promising program" means a program that meets all of the following requirements:

- (a) The program conforms to a clear, consistent family support model that has been in existence for at least three years;
- (b) The program is grounded in relevant empirically-based knowledge;
- (c) The program is linked to program-determined outcomes;
- (d) The program is associated with a national or state organization that either has comprehensive program standards that ensure high-quality service delivery and continuous program quality improvement or the program model has demonstrated through the program's benchmark outcomes that the program has achieved significant positive outcomes equivalent to those achieved by program models with published significant and sustained results in a peer-reviewed journal; and
- (e) The program has been awarded the Iowa family support credential and has been reviewed onsite at least every five years to ensure the program's adherence to the Iowa family support standards approved

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by the early childhood Iowa state board created in section 256I.3 or a comparable set of standards. The onsite review is completed by an independent review team that is not associated with the program or the organization administering the program.

Outcomes of Family Support and Parent Education:

Family Support and Parent Education services promote the following outcomes:

1. Improve family functioning, problem solving and communication;
2. Increase social support for families;
3. Connect families to additional concrete supports;
4. Increase knowledge about child development and parenting; and
5. Improve nurturing and attachment between parent and child.

Types of Family Support Programs:

Family support programs are classified into three categories:

- Long-Term Home Visitation – program is designed to provide weekly or at a minimum of twice monthly, home visits to participating families. Services are designed to be provided over a period of at least one year or longer;
- Short-term Home Visitation – program is designed to provide services to participating families for less than one year. Typically, short-term home visitation programs have a singular focus which includes assessments to determine referrals to long-term or intensive home visitation programs; and
- Group-based parent education – program is designed to provide a standardized curricula in a group setting. A core function of a group-based parent education program is to facilitate peer support. Group-based parent education may last a minimum of six sessions or be provided through-out the year.

Additional Requirements

Developmental Screening: Beginning July 1, 2019, all age-eligible children enrolled in a long-term home visiting program shall be screened for developmental progress using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) 3rd Edition. Screening may be completed by parents, another provider or the home visiting program staff. Programs shall follow the intervals for screening as outlined in the DAISEY Data Dictionary. Screening results shall be entered into the state administered internet-based data collection system (DAISEY FSSD.)

Age-eligible children enrolled in short term and group based parent education programs may also be screened using the ASQ by program staff or they may be referred to an external partner for developmental screening.

Staffing Requirement: Iowa Code and the Early Childhood Iowa State board require:

- Criminal and child abuse record checks be completed for all direct service family support professionals and supervisors of family support programs funded through the early childhood Iowa initiative,
- Achieve the National Family Support Certification by the successful completion of the national family support certification exam. Beginning January 1, 2022 all direct service family support professionals (FSP) must be certified if they were employed on or before January 1, 2021. Direct service FSPs that are hired after January 1, 2021 will have one year to earn their certification. For more information on the national family support certification exam: institute.fsp.org. The

national family support certification can only be awarded by the Institute for the Advancement of Family Support Professionals.

Electronic Data Collection: All family support programs funded through the early childhood Iowa initiative are required to participate in the state administered internet-based data collection system. Programs are required to use the system as intended and as the official data reporting system.

Coordinated Intake: Early Childhood Iowa Area boards shall require all family support programs in their community to register and maintain updated program information in the statewide coordinated intake system (iafamilysupportnetwork.org). If a local coordinated intake system is available, it shall link to the statewide system and funded programs will fully cooperate to ensure operational success. The purpose of the coordinated intake system is to ensure:

- Families are matched with the most appropriate service available
- Elimination of duplication
- Maximized referrals
- Outreach, promotion and awareness of family support services
- Coordination

Evidence-based/Promising Practice Priority: In order to implement the legislative intent stated in sections 135.106 and 256I.9, that priority for family support program funding be given to programs using evidenced-based or promising models for home visitation, it is the intent of the general assembly that 90 percent of state funds expended for home visiting programs are for evidence-based or promising program models. The remaining 10 percent of funds may be used for innovative program models that do not yet meet the definition of evidence-based or promising programs. An innovative model is a family support program that has not been funded by the ECI area in the past. An innovative model will have one year in which to implement the program prior to beginning the process to meet the definition of an evidence-based or promising program. If a program chooses to earn the Iowa Family Support Credential that process allows programs to receive three years of technical assistance.

Each ECI area will be required to meet the target as defined above. The ECI Office will review each budget to ensure that the ECI area is meeting the target. The ECI Office will then confirm that the target is met during the review of each ECI Area's annual report.

Use of Funds for Family Support and Parent Education:

The school ready funds used for family support services and parent education programs must be used to directly support individuals who function in the role of parents.

Sixty percent of state funds that the local board expends on family support programming must include a home visitation component.

Budgets must include adequate information to document if the program has a home visitation component (refer to definition.)

Family support programs must plan for technology upgrades at regular intervals. Technology includes software, hardware and connectivity plans.

Include costs associated with program operations in total program costs. Examples are:

- Training
- Supervision
- Supplies
- Technology, Data Collection and Documentation (may include mobile data collection device and data plans)
- Program Promotion and Outreach
- Service Brokering and Coordination

Eligibility Criteria:

75% of the families enrolling in a long-term home visitation program during the course of the fiscal year (July 1 – June 30) must meet one of the following criteria in addition to having a child between the ages of 0 through 5:

- Have an income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level
- Have a parent that has achieved a high school diploma or less education
- Have a child that has a current Iowa Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)

Age eligibility is a child between the age of zero through age five. The age of zero includes the prenatal period. Programs are encouraged to focus on the prenatal through age three or preschool entry.

There are no eligibility criteria (other than having a child that is age eligible) for families enrolling in a group-based parent education program or a short-term home visitation program.

Income or educational eligibility may be self-declared at enrollment by the enrolling parent(s.) Third party verification of income or education is not necessary.

Seventy-five percent (75%) is calculated for each long-term home visitation program funded by the ECI Area board. Each long-term home visitation program must meet the eligibility criteria for 75% of the families newly enrolled each fiscal year.

Accountability System:

School Ready Budget Form

- Document projected expenditures on the SR budget forms to support family support services and parent education programs for families with children zero through age 5 years old.

ECIA Annual Report – Performance Measures School Ready Funds

- Document through input, output, quality/efficiency and outcome data adopted by the Early Childhood Iowa State Board, the required performance measures of family support services and parent education programs.
 - Input Measures: Funds required to administer the program. Programs may include funding from all sources in this measure. If programs only report ECI funds then the other performance measures should reflect only the families that were served with ECI funds. Do not include in-kind donations in this report.
 - Output Measures: Number of Children (0 – 5) served during the fiscal year
 - Number of Families served during the fiscal year

- Number of home visits completed during the fiscal year
- Number of group-based parent education meetings attended
- Demographics on enrolled families:
 - Race of primary caregiver
 - Ethnicity of primary caregiver
 - Marital Status of primary caregiver
 - Educational attainment of primary caregiver
 - Household size
 - Household income
- Quality/Efficiency Measures:
 - Age-eligible children that are screened for developmental delays
 - Of those screened, the number that were referred to early intervention services
- Outcome Measures:
 - % of participating families that improve or maintain healthy family functioning, problem solving and communication –
 - % of participating families that increase or maintain social supports
 - % of participating families that are connected to additional concrete supports-
 - % of participating families that Increase knowledge about child development and parenting
 - % of participating families that improve nurturing and attachment between parent(s) and child(ren)

*Please refer to the reporting instructions for more information on the performance measures.

- Report all program funding sources and data to correspond with the total funding reported.

Failure to report annually the state required performance measures, or comply with the guidance provided in Tool FF may jeopardize the Early Childhood Iowa Area’s designation and may trigger the Early Childhood Iowa State Board to enact the Expenditures and Reporting Policy.

Required Assessment Tools - All programs shall use the following approved assessment tool to report on the required performance measures:

- Long-Term home visitation services must use the selected questions on the Life Skills Progression Instrument;
- Long-Term home visitation services must use the ASQ 3rd Edition for developmental screening;
- Short term home visitation and group-based parent education programs must use the Protective Factors Survey.

Contractual Agreements with Programs:

The Early Childhood Area board will determine the contractual agreements at a local level with program providers. They may also require additional local performance measures to be reported.

Suggested Minimum Program Elements to include in Contracts

- Planned Family Service Capacity – How many families will your program serve at any given time?
- Minimum Dosage – How many home visits will be provided? How many group parent education meetings will be offered?

- Direct Service Staffing Plan - How many direct service staff will you employ under this contract? What is their individual Full-time Equivalency (FTE)? Who will be responsible for background checks? Who will be responsible for the national family support certification exam fee?
- Family Eligibility – Does the ECI Area have additional eligibility criteria? Examples: priority will be serving prenatal to age 3, the family support program must discharge the family when the child enters kindergarten.
- Curricula – What is the curricula the program will use? Please note this is different than a home visiting model. A family support program may use more than one curricula to meet the varied needs of the families they serve.
- Staff Vacancy Plan – How will the services be provided in the event there is a staff absence?
- Supervision Frequency and Availability – How often will the organization provide one on one supervision to each family support professional? How often will documentation be reviewed as part of supervision? How often will the supervisor observe the family support professional performing their work?
- Linguistic Needs of Participants – How will the contractor provide services to English Language Learners?

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