

Dear Early Childhood Partner:

I want to provide you with the fourth in a series of updates on the progress we are making in forming the Office of Great Start at the Michigan Department of Education (MDE).

As you likely are aware, an Executive Order was issued on June 29, 2011, creating the Michigan Office of Great Start. The Executive Order officially took effect on August 29, 2011. A Memorandum of Understanding has been executed between the Michigan departments of Education and Human Services regarding the Child Development and Care Program. You may view a copy of this memorandum at the Office of Great Start webpage at <http://www.michigan.gov/greatstart>. Staff from the Child Development and Care Program will transfer to the Michigan Department of Education prior to October 1, 2011. The Office of Great Start will be housed on the fourth floor of the Hannah Building in Lansing.

In May, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced a new \$500 million state-level grant competition, Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge that seeks to “encourage states to develop bold and comprehensive plans for raising the quality of early learning programs across America.” Final guidance for this competition was recently issued; applications are due from states by October 19th. You may view a copy of the application at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/index.html>. Grants will be awarded by December 31, 2011.

Michigan is highly committed to submitting a successful Early Learning Challenge grant. To prepare the highest quality Early Learning Challenge (ELC) application for Michigan, an ELC Application Preparation Team has been formed. Joan Blough, who is leading the transition to the Office of Great Start, will lead the state’s application process. A roster for the Application Preparation Team can be viewed on the Office of Great Start webpage. The purpose of the Application Preparation Team is to:

- Complete a current status assessment of the state’s early learning system, building from the assessment completed by Michigan’s Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)
- Provide content expertise to inform the development of the ELC application
- Assist in the identification and engagement of constituency groups and other key stakeholders in the process of the application development
- Contribute to the development of application materials.

While the timeline to complete the Early Learning Challenge grant is quite short, the Office of Great Start is committed to providing regular updates on our progress as well as offering sections of the application for review and comment. These communications will be posted on the Michigan Department of Education’s Office of Great Start webpage as well as on the Early Childhood Investment Corporation’s website. Please plan to visit either site to check for these updates. You also may submit general questions or comments on the Office of Great Start webpage.

I hope that you have found this update to be helpful, and greatly appreciate your interest in this important transition.

We have tried to share this communication with all of the relevant parties; we may have inadvertently missed someone so please feel free to share this with others if you think they will be interested.

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