



**SUCCESS  
BY 6**

2012-2015

---

# **SCHOOL READINESS ACTION PLAN**

**For Austin/Travis County**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>01: Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>02: Statements of Support</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>03: Early Childhood Development is Critical</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>04: Community Needs</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>05: Action Plan</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>06: Appendix</b>	<b>29</b>

01



# INTRODUCTION

Travis County has been a national trailblazer in quality of life and economic strength. Our residents are well-educated and our unemployment rate is amongst the lowest in the nation.<sup>1</sup> Kiplinger named Austin the number-one “Best City for the Next Decade” in 2010, and Sperling’s Best Places reported that Austin is one of the best cities in the U.S. for relocation. It is no wonder that we love our community and have hope and optimism for the future.

Our continued prosperity depends on a strong educational system that prepares individuals for the future, yet in the critical learning period before the age of 6, many Central Texas children are not receiving the support they need. Currently, only one of two students in Travis County enters kindergarten prepared for success.<sup>2</sup> More striking, in neighborhoods with many disadvantaged families, as few as 13 percent of children are ready for kindergarten,<sup>20</sup> and current birth records show that these neighborhoods are growing more rapidly than more prosperous ones.<sup>11</sup>

Over the past year, a strong coalition of early childhood advocates, experts, parents, service providers, and business leaders have worked collaboratively under the banner of United Way to transform the early childhood system in Travis County through a strategic 3-year plan. Built through two decades of advocacy work by local early childhood champions, the plan was informed by the science of early childhood development and by the emergence of strong programs with demonstrated long-term and meaningful impact on children and families. It includes measures of progress, accountability systems, and continuous evaluation so that improvements are made in a timely way and successes are recognized, disseminated and celebrated.

The plan is built on a clear framework:

<b>Ready Families</b>
<b>+ Ready Early Education Services</b>
<b>+ Ready Health and Mental Health Services</b>
<b>+ Ready Communities</b>
<b>= Children Ready for School Success</b>

As this equation suggests, the success and future of our community’s children depends on a strong system of adult supports during the earliest years of a child’s life. No part of the equation can stand alone – nor can we succeed if one element of the equation is missing.<sup>3</sup>

It is our hope that this plan will inspire and guide community leaders, advocates, parents, service providers, and educators to participate in a movement that will allow Travis County to be the best place to prosper and raise a family for decades to come.

## Our Vision

*Public and private sectors in Austin/Travis County will work together to ensure that school readiness becomes and remains a top priority. By the time children enter kindergarten, they will have the cognitive, physical, social, emotional and language skills needed to thrive in the educational setting.*



02

# STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT

Dear Reader,

United Way for Greater Austin is pleased to present the 2012–2015 School Readiness Action Plan for Austin/Travis County. I believe that inside every young child is a wellspring of great potential. As a community that values young children, it is our job to make sure every child has an opportunity to fulfill his or her promise.

This ambitious plan will guide the work of an incredibly dedicated coalition of parents, early childhood professionals, community planners and child advocates—all of whom are dedicated to making our community's early learning system second-to-none. The plan not only spells out the services most critical for our success, but also sets the standards to which we will be held accountable.

I offer special thanks to the members of the Results Based Planning Committee that provided leadership and commitment to the creation of an inclusive and effective plan. The members of the committee, along with their institutional affiliation, are listed in the back of this document. Special thanks to Anna Lisa Fahrenholdt and Brook Son, Travis County planners, and Ron Hubbard, City of Austin, who provided top-notch input on every segment of the process. Finally, thanks to Sue Carpenter and Leah Meunier from the United Way for Greater Austin Success By 6 team, who led the process from beginning to end.

I look forward to working with you to make our vision for children and families a reality.

Best,



Debbie Bresette



**Debbie Bresette**  
*President*  
*United Way for Greater Austin*

As a father, grandfather, and Mayor of the City of Austin, I am proud to endorse the School Readiness Action Plan for the City of Austin and Travis County. This plan builds on our great city's strengths and more than a decade of successful groundwork in early care and education throughout Greater Austin.

Our youngest citizens give me hope and inspiration for the future of Austin. As a native Austinite and proud graduate of our public school system, I know that our children are our greatest asset and responsibility. They will continue the economic and cultural legacy which has been entrusted to us.

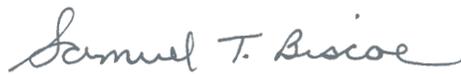
Our community's leaders, public and private, are proud and excited to work together to remove barriers to achieving the goals in the School Readiness Action Plan. Together, we can create a community that is strong in education and rich in possibility.



**Mayor Lee Leffingwell**  
City of Austin

I enthusiastically support the ambitious, yet realistic, agenda set in the School Readiness Action Plan for Austin/Travis County. As a child advocate; I know that children will succeed when their families are able to assist in their learning and development, when early childhood professionals provide high quality services, and when the community makes children a top priority.

As a public official, I also know that investing in our youngest makes financial sense. Research shows that early childhood investments yield the greatest financial return of all of our critical health and human service investments. As a steward fo public dollars, I am proud to stand behind the strategic priorities detailed in the School Readiness Action Plan. I urge my fellow leaders, in government and private industry alike, to join me in creating a movement that will reap long-term benefits for our children and our entire community. Together, we can achieve a meaningful change in Travis County.

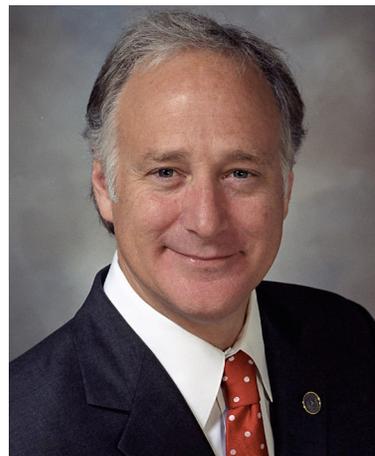


**Judge Samuel T. Biscoe**  
Travis County



I am proud to endorse the School Readiness Action Plan for Austin/Travis County. I commend United Way for Greater Austin for its leadership in creating this strategic plan to invest in our children and our future.

United Way led a robust coalition of community members, service providers, issue area experts and both public and private funders through a rigorous planning process. The resulting Action Plan represents the voice of our community and will guide our collective efforts as we build a stronger and better educated Central Texas.



**Senator Kirk Watson**

*Texas State Senate*

As a public servant, I have dedicated my career to improving the public education system in Central Texas. Without a well-educated, highly skilled workforce, our economy cannot continue to thrive. Investments in early childhood education are critical to the success of our K-12 system. I am proud to endorse the School Readiness Action Plan and invite my fellow elected officials to join me by lending their support.



**Rep. Larry Gonzales**

*Texas State House of Representatives*

03



# EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IS CRITICAL

## ***Babies' Brains Develop Rapidly and Early Experience Matters***

The human brain is the only organ not mature at birth. In the first few years of life, brains grow the fastest and are most capable of change, so these years set the stage for future learning.

Over the past decade, the science of brain development has demonstrated the importance of the early years in shaping a child's mind. Brain circuitry is wired as children process experiences with caregivers and the environment, and richer experiences lead to more neural connections. Responsive, predictable and warm relationships with parents and caregivers build stronger neural connections, while abusive, inconsistent, or indifferent responses significantly inhibit optimal brain development. The first few years create either a strong or fragile foundation for future learning, health and behavior.<sup>12</sup>

Brains are also the most malleable in the first few years, meaning that creating environments that support healthy brain development during the first five years is more effective

than treating problems at a later age.<sup>14</sup> For example, one recent study demonstrated that providing weekly play sessions with mothers to children who suffer from stunted growth (caused by poor nutrition and poverty) repaired the damage to the children's brain activity. This allowed children to reach about the same stage of development as a control group of low-risk children.<sup>18</sup> These discoveries about the brain's function and malleability in healthful environments offer not only hope, but also compelling evidence that highly vulnerable children can overcome glaring deficits in their early years when they participate in evidence-based programs.

*The first few years create either a strong or fragile foundation for future learning, health, and behavior.*<sup>12</sup>

## Investing in Quality Early Childhood Programs Produces Economic Benefits

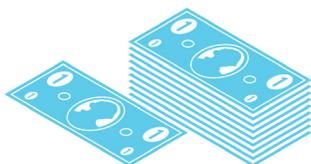
Optimal child development is the foundation of community and economic development. Strong local economies require adults with marketable workforce skills who contribute to their communities and produce revenue. To thrive, local economies must also keep costs low, including criminal justice, welfare and other programs that can burden the system. As James Heckman, a Nobel Laureate economist, has shown, these ends are best achieved through investments in the very young. According to his economic analysis, such investments yield the highest returns among education and workforce interventions. Vulnerable individuals who begin early learning programs during their first five years of life are not only more successful in school than their peers, but eventually earn higher wages and make more valuable contributions to society.<sup>4</sup>

In 2007, the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) released a report stating that high-quality early education would have an enormous impact on local, state, and federal budgets by reducing child abuse, welfare costs, crime, and remedial education. The EPI estimates that these annual benefits would surpass the program costs within six years, and ultimately, exceed the costs of the program by a ratio of 12 to 1.<sup>17</sup> Depending on the intervention, the return on investment (ROI) for early childhood interventions ranges from \$4.10 to \$9.20.

Every \$1 investment in early childhood yields a

### RETURN ON INVESTMENT

\$4.10 to \$9.20<sup>17</sup>



The availability of early education services also drives local economic activity. In a 2008 Economic Impact Study commissioned by United Way for Greater Austin (then called United Way Capital Area), local economist Jon Hockenjos concluded

that just one aspect of early intervention, licensed child care, generated more than \$2 billion in economic activity and more than 20,000 jobs in Travis County.<sup>15</sup>

With the overwhelming evidence of the returns that early childhood development programs drive, it is surprising that for every dollar spent on K-12 education, only 13.7 cents is spent on our youngest children. Even worse, investments in the first three years of life represent a modest 1 percent of this funding.<sup>10</sup>

## Funding Differences

For every \$1 spent on K-12 education, only 13.7 cents are spent on services for children before they enter kindergarten.



Investments in the first three years of life represent a modest 1 percent of this funding.<sup>10</sup>

## Early Education is not just ABCs

To succeed in school and life, people need both cognitive skills and also social-emotional skills, physical and mental health, and attributes like perseverance, motivation, and attention. Advantaged children surpass those from disadvantaged families in all of these, largely because of differences in family environments and access to services. Early interventions, such as parent education, home visiting, and early education, positively affect all areas of children's development, but the greatest long-term effects have been found in improved social/emotional skills. It is not the number of letters or numbers a child learns in preschool, but rather a child's abilities to avoid risky behaviors, to attend to classroom instruction, and to persevere in tasks, that predict long-term academic success, earnings and community economic return.<sup>4</sup>

## A Focus on Risk Factors

Researchers have identified key factors that put children's early learning and health at risk:

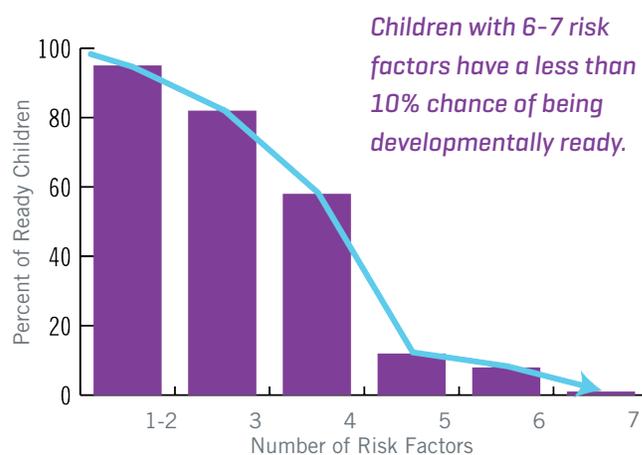
- Poverty or low-income conditions
- Disparities because of race, ethnicity or language
- A mother's low education level
- Under- or unemployed parents
- Exposure to violence in the home or neighborhood

Having more than one risk factor compounds the likelihood of poor health and low education. Unfortunately, these risk factors often "cluster," so that many vulnerable children begin to show difficulties as early as 18 months of age. While the School Readiness Action Plan addresses goals for all Travis County children, the priority strategies focus on children with multiple risk factors.

*Social and emotional development matters: It is not the number of letters or numbers a child learns in preschool that predict long-term success- it's the ability to avoid risky behaviors, attend classes and persevere in tasks.*

## Risk Factors and Readiness

*With more risk factors, children are less likely to be school ready.<sup>13</sup>*





04

# COMMUNITY NEEDS

## Demographics

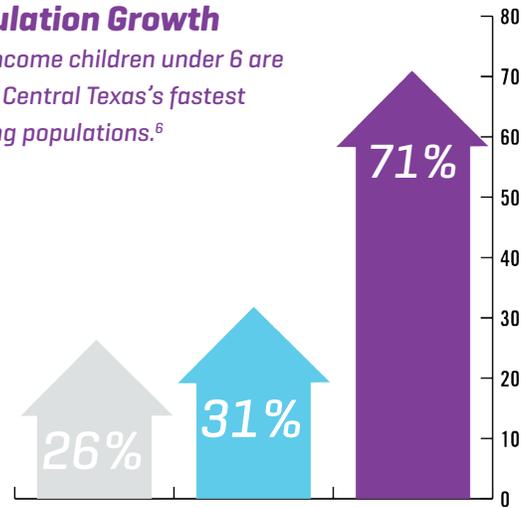
Travis County is home to more than 90,000 children under the age of 6. These children are diverse—economically, racially, culturally—and their numbers are growing. Travis County has one of the nation’s fastest growing populations of young children, growing 31 percent over the past 10 years and at 1.5 times the state rate.

In Travis County, approximately one in three households include children under 6. Married couples head most households (64%), followed by single females (27%) and single males (8%).<sup>5</sup> While it has been proven that single parent families are more likely to experience hardships associated with financial insecurity, researchers note that unmarried status is more often a result of living in poverty and is not itself the source of economic hardship. Rather, broader measures of economic well being, such as asset poverty, financial literacy and the ability to draw on resources of family and friends, must be considered.<sup>16</sup>

As the child population grows, Travis County is also becoming more diverse. In the latest Census, more than half of the adult population in Travis County identified as White compared to 35 percent of children under 5. Among children under 5, more than 50 percent are Hispanic or Latino.<sup>5</sup>

### Population Growth

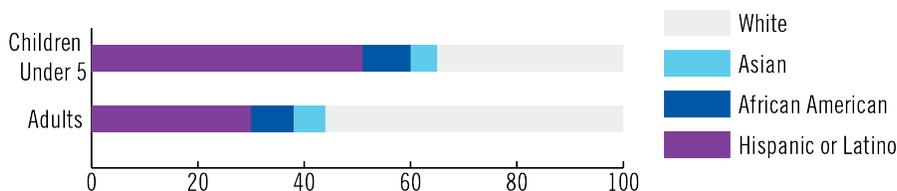
Low-income children under 6 are one of Central Texas’s fastest growing populations.<sup>6</sup>



	Total Population	Children Under 6	Low-Income Children
2000	793,476	68,336	25,703
2010	1,102,212	89,422	43,836

## Racial Diversity in Travis County

More than half of children under 5 are Hispanic or Latino, while most adults are white.<sup>5</sup>



Low-income is defined as at or below 200 percent of the poverty threshold,<sup>6</sup> or a family of four living on \$46,100 annually.<sup>7</sup> The School Readiness Action Plan focuses on the outcomes of low-income children. It is worth noting that there are also a significant number of very vulnerable children—those living in poverty or \$23,050 annually for a family of four.<sup>7</sup> In Travis County, more than one in four (27%) children under 6 live in poverty and this proportion is growing at a faster rate than the child population overall.<sup>6</sup>

Parents' education is one of the most accurate predictors of successful child outcomes, because it influences the academic and occupational expectations set for children. According to the most recent data available, more than one in three women who gave birth in Travis County in 2007 had less than a high school diploma.<sup>9</sup>

### School Readiness in Travis County

Over the past few years, our community has developed effective and validated ways to measure school readiness across all areas of a child's development. From 2008 to 2010, Education Service Center Region XIII, San Marcos Consolidated Independant School district, and leaders from the United Way Success By 6 program chaired the taskforce that developed the framework for defining school readiness, known as the Central Texas Guide to School Readiness. The E3 Alliance has used this framework to collect regional data on the readiness of our Central Texas kindergarten students. In 2011, more than 850 students from 10 school districts and one charter school were assessed using the CTGSR kindergarten readiness assessment. Four competency domains, or types of skills, were assessed: social-emotional development, language and communications, emerging literacy, and mathematics. Overall, 50 percent of Central Texas children were school-ready when they entered kindergarten. Only 19 percent of low-income children who did not attend Pre-K were ready, but the number is more than twice as high (42%) for children who attended Pre-K. Children designated as English language learners showed a similar level of kindergarten readiness as their English-speaking peers across the board.<sup>2</sup>

Travis County is home to more than 90,000 children under the age of 6. This means that approximately one in three households include young children.<sup>5</sup>

### Poverty Among Children

Today, 49% of children under 6 in Travis County are low-income.<sup>7</sup>



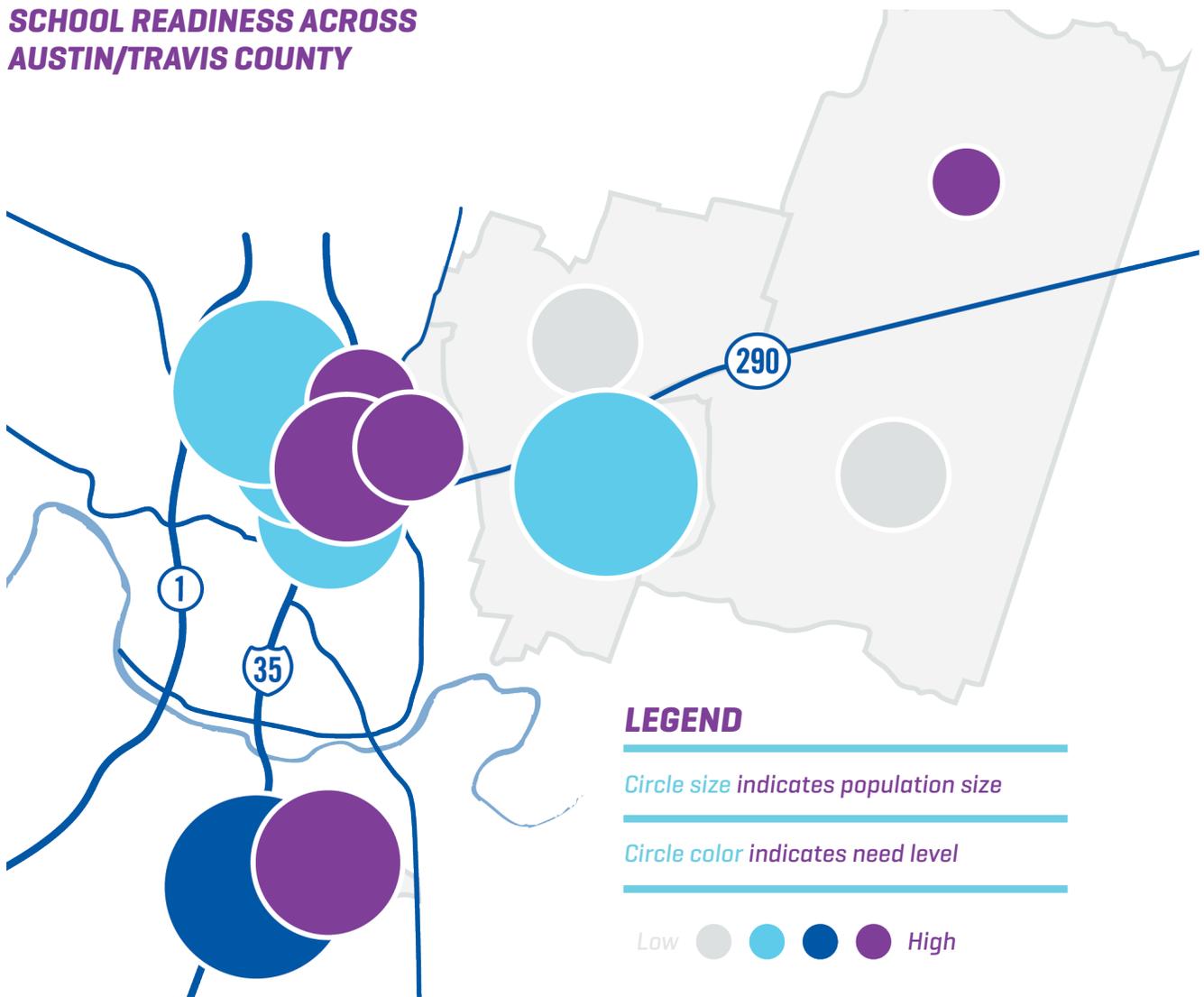
### Percentage of Kindergarteners who are not ready for school<sup>20</sup>



In 2011, United Way for Greater Austin entered into a partnership with UCLA's Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities and United Way Worldwide to measure and map detailed information about children's developmental progress in four of Travis County's most vulnerable neighborhoods. All kindergarten teachers in seven Austin Independent School District and seven Manor Independent School District schools completed the EDI (Early Development Instrument), a highly validated and predictive tool, for the children in their classrooms. The results were carefully analyzed and mapped, providing snapshots of children's

vulnerabilities and strengths in each of the neighborhoods. While all neighborhoods had areas of relative strength, the stunning result shows that only 13 percent of children in these neighborhoods are entering kindergarten ready for success, and conversely, a very high percentage of children are considered "developmentally vulnerable" in two or more areas of their development.<sup>20</sup> Increasing numbers of vulnerabilities across the five EDI domains predict an increasing probability of failure to achieve basic competencies by fourth grade.<sup>19</sup>

### SCHOOL READINESS ACROSS AUSTIN/TRAVIS COUNTY



## Parents Detail their Needs in Community Conversations

In 2011, 120 families with young children in Northeast Austin, Dove Springs and Manor were invited to come together to discuss their aspirations for their children and to uncover barriers to achieving these goals. The series of conversations was conceived and funded by United Way through the Success By 6 program.

The groups met over a number of weeks and were facilitated in English and Spanish. Across the communities, the participants spoke with surprising consistency when it came to identifying barriers to their children's success. Namely, parents identified:

- A lack of high-quality affordable child care
- Few educational opportunities for children and parents
- Long waiting lists for desired programs such as Head Start
- A poor relationship with institutions charged with protecting and educating the community
- A lack of transportation infrastructure to support the mobility of their families

Many parents felt a lack of respect and deep concern from the community at large for the barriers their families confront. However, the participants also voiced a sense of optimism for the future and a commitment to helping to implement positive changes in their neighborhoods.





United Way for Greater Austin



05

# THE ACTION PLAN

## **Goals, Strategies and Indicators of Progress**

The Action Plan consists of goals, strategies and indicators of progress for 2012–2015—all of which were widely vetted and carefully prioritized during the planning process. Key road markers are printed in this section, but the Action Plan also consists of a clear set of tactics that delineate time lines and accountable parties. The tactical section is in a separate document because of its intentionally dynamic nature. The tactics will always be aimed at the overall goals and strategies, but the list will change as items are completed and evaluated, and new tactics are identified over the three years of this plan. Yearly reports to the community will detail the collective activities of the stakeholders as well as progress to the goals.

United Way for Greater Austin will coordinate activities and monitor progress on the Action Plan, meeting regularly with the Results Based Planning Committee. Hundreds of early childhood service providers, educators, advocates and planners have committed to work together to address emerging issues and make progress on the plan. It is our collective hope that this Action Plan will spur a broad movement that makes our vision for young children a reality.

## READY FAMILIES

### Goals

Parents have a secure attachment to their infants and young children. Parents respond appropriately to their children’s cues. Families provide stimulating learning experiences for their children prior to school entry. Families are financially stable.

### Strategies

1. Improve access to research-based home visiting and parent education services to families with children under the age of 5.
2. Improve access to neighborhood-based early childhood services.
3. Distribute culturally and linguistically relevant information to parents about school readiness.
4. Increase awareness of and access to adult literacy services for parents of young children.
5. Increase access to family financial literacy information with a goal of increasing their financial stability.
6. Provide professional development opportunities for family support professionals.

### Measurements

Current

Target

Percent of children under 3 with parents who have completed at least one year of evidence-based home-visiting services

4

15

Percent of children ages 3 to 5 years with parents who have completed evidence-based parent education services or Play To Learn

9

30

Percent of low-income families with 3-year-old children who receive culturally and linguistically relevant information about school readiness

\*

30

Percent of low-income families with 4-year-old children who receive culturally and linguistically relevant information about school readiness

\*

100

Number of adults who need a literacy program who receive instruction annually

11K

+500

Percent of families in poverty with young children who participate in one or more vetted training or technical assistance sessions with financial literacy specialists

\*

20

\* Current data are not available, but the Action Plan includes developing research around these specific measurements.

## READY SERVICES: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

### Goals

Affordable, accessible early education services are available for all families. Available early education services are culturally relevant, healthful, engaging, rigorous, and are of sufficient quality to measurably impact school readiness outcomes.

### Strategies

1. Increase availability of very high quality early care and education centers for low-income families in underserved neighborhoods.
2. Maximize the impact of Head Start funding for the local community.
3. Improve early care and education centers' quality by supporting and strengthening proven interventions that raise center quality standards as measured by Quality Rating System or accreditation.
4. Improve the education qualifications of the early care and education workforce in centers that serve a minimum of 25 percent low-income families—or at least 25 low-income children.
5. Advocate for full-day public school Pre-K slots for eligible families in all Travis County Independent School Districts.
6. Develop and implement an assessment process to measure quality in public school Pre-K programs in Travis County.
7. Expand availability of two-generation education programs for vulnerable families.
8. Provide easily accessible information to parents about available early childhood services.

### Measurements

	Current	Target
Percentage of local Head Start slots dedicated to 3-year-olds**	20	50
Percent of eligible children enrolled in Public School Pre-K	*	95
Percent of Travis County school-based Pre-K programs that are full-day	33	75
Percent of full-day early care and education centers that meet quality standards as measured in a community accepted Quality Rating System	62	75
Percent of lead teachers in full-day early care and education centers with at least an Associate degree.	39	50
Number of families that participate in two-generation education programs for vulnerable families	250	500
Percent of public Pre-K programs meeting quality standards [Texas School Ready or Central Texas Guide to School Readiness]	*	75

\*\* We will also track percent of eligible children participating in Head Start

## READY SERVICES: PREVENTATIVE PRIMARY CARE & MENTAL HEALTH

### Goals

Children and family members are linked to preventative physical and mental health services and treatment as needed. Children with developmental delays are referred to appropriate services.

### Strategies

1. Increase access to free or affordable health and mental health services for children and their family members.
2. Integrate research-based early childhood developmental and mental health screenings into health care settings that serve low-income families.
3. After needs are identified through developmental screening, support families' successful enrollment into appropriate mental health and/or family support services.
4. Increase early care and education centers' access to high-quality intensive mental health consultation and support.

### Measurements

	Current	Target
Percent of insured children in Travis County	93	95
Percent of children who have a medical home with a primary care health provider	*	+10%
Percent of health care settings that provide developmental screenings of young children using a validated screening tool	95	100
Percent of community health clinics with pediatric services that provide referrals to early childhood service providers based on needs detected during primary care visits	*	50
Percent of health clinics with large pediatric Medicaid practices that offer evidence-based Reach Out and Read programs	78	100
Percent of full-day early care and education centers serving at least 20% low-income children that have received support from mental health consultants	15	20
Percent of early care and education centers that use an evidence-based social emotional curriculum with their 3-to 5-year old children	7	20

\* Current data are not available, but the Action Plan includes developing research around these specific measurements.

## READY COMMUNITIES

### Goals

Public and private sectors in Austin/Travis County work together to ensure children’s school readiness becomes and remains a top priority. Progress on all components of the action plan is measured and results are reported to the community annually.

### Strategies

1. Coordinate and monitor progress on the Action Plan.
2. Enhance shared systems for measurement and accountability for short and long-term results.
3. Increase community and public participation in planning activities.
4. Increase public awareness of the importance of the early years by implementing targeted and unified public awareness messages and activities.
5. Connect early childhood issues to other related community issues such as family financial stability, health, workforce development and housing.
6. Educate elected and public officials about early childhood issues.
7. Enhance public/private partnerships to increase capacity and leverage additional resources.

### Measurements

	Current	Target
<i>Per capita City and County spending on early learning</i>	\$2.77	+20%
<i>Number of briefing visits to local elected officials</i>	*	+10%
<i>Number of briefing visits to City Commissions of related community issues</i>	*	100
<i>Percent of action items in the tactical section of the plan that are completed according to the agreed upon time frame</i>	*	90

## READY CHILDREN

### Goals

Low-income Travis County children ages 0–5 are happy, healthy and prepared for school success.

### Strategy

Measure and report children’s developmental status on multiple domains using developmentally appropriate tools. The purpose is the improvement of programmatic and community efforts, not to evaluate individual children or teachers.

### Measurements

Current

Target

Percent of children who enter kindergarten school ready

50

70

Percent of low-income children who enter kindergarten school ready

13

60

Percent of children receiving services through this plan who show improvement

\*

90

\* Current data are not available, but the Action Plan includes developing research around these specific measurements.

---

**MAKES  
AUSTIN  
GREATER**

*Fill in what  
you think makes  
Austin greater!*



06



# APPENDIX

## **Results Based Planning Committee** [Success By 6 Early Childhood Stakeholders]

The Results Based Planning Committee (RBPC) is comprised of early childhood planners and funders that focus on Travis County. The committee's primary functions are to oversee and monitor the cyclical School Readiness Action Plan process, coordinate resources across entities, generate and monitor agreements at respective entities to invest in the shared plan, and align policy and funding decisions when possible.

Members also meet one or more of the following specific criteria: significant funder of early childhood programming; taxing entity; sole designee of federal funding (i.e. Child, Inc.); collect and/or provide data and analysis; influential in policy and/or research.

**Mary Alice Appleman**, KLRU

**Sue Carpenter**, United Way for Greater Austin

**Elaine Clark**, Capital Area Workforce Solutions Board

**Cindy Gamez**, Capital Area Workforce Solutions

**Cathy Doggett**, Region XIII Education Service Center

**Anna Lisa Fahrenthold**, Travis County Health and Human Services

**Kyle Holder**, City of Austin Early Childhood Council

**Ron Hubbard**, City of Austin Health and Human Services

**Dr. Aletha Huston**, City of Austin Early Childhood Council

**Laura Koenig**, E3 Alliance

**Dr. Ben Kramer**, KLRU

**Dr. Leah Meunier**, United Way for Greater Austin

**Larry Meyers**, Child, Inc.

**Dr. Susan Millea**, Children's Optimal Health

**Meg Poag**, Central Texas Literacy Coalition

**Jacquie Porter**, Austin Independent School District

**Brook Son**, Travis County Health and Human Services

**Jessica Son**, Capital Area Workforce Solutions Board

**Dr. Linda Welsh**, Austin Community College

**Judy Willgren**, NACCRA

**Chantel Bottoms**, Community Action Network

### **Coalition Endorsers:**

One Voice Austin  
 Literacy Coalition of Central Texas  
 Austin Association for the Education of Young Children  
 City of Austin Early Childhood Council  
 City of Austin Women's Commission  
 Children and Youth Mental Health Planning Partnership  
 Texas Early Care and Education Coalition (TECEC)

### **Parents who contributed:**

Christopher Hernandez  
 Joe Angel Moreno  
 Adelaida Jaimes  
 Gustavo Aguilar  
 Martha Diaz  
 Marta Tello  
 Mayela Vazquez  
 Consuelo Robinson  
 Maria Soria

### **Members of the Early Childhood Council (2012)**

Kyle Holder, Chair	Laura Koenig
Albert Black	Dr. Leah Meunier
Robert Borowski	Rhonda Paver
Lawrence Elsner	Jacqueline Porter
Anna Lisa Fahrenthold	Cindy Rojas-Rodriguez
Dr. Aletha Huston	Avis Wallace
Debra Keith-Thompson	

### **The Planning Cycle**

The Results Based Planning Committee agreed to initiate an ongoing cycle of planning using four basic stages as an overarching guide for a shared process.

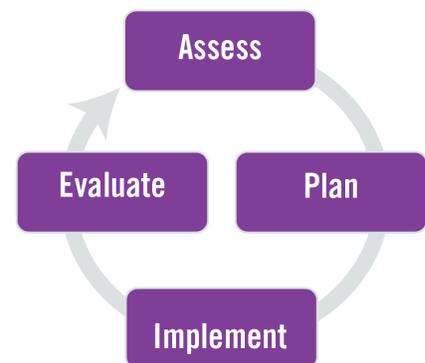
**Assess:** Develop a data-driven understanding of the current environment. Include qualitative and quantitative data. Identify critical issues and assets presented in the data.

**Plan:** Identify big picture targets that correlate to issues. Set goals and targets according to accessible resources. Establish evaluation methods.

**Implement:** Develop specific strategies in focused work groups. Implement strategies over a set period of time.

**Evaluate:** Conduct evaluation over the course of the implementation period. Take evaluation data forward to subsequent assessment and planning.

The 2011 cross-sector, multi-step planning process included more than 50 early childhood service providers, higher education experts in child development, local government planners, more than 100 parents, and various early advocates including selected business leaders to produce the 2012- 2015 Travis County School Readiness Action Plan.



## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### ***United Way Success By 6 [with Travis County Health and Human Services support]***

Role: Neutral Convener / Coordinator

Function: Convene stakeholders; document processes and products; ensure transparency, inclusivity and representation of larger stakeholder group.

### ***Results Based Planning Committee***

Role: Advisor / Resources / Oversight

Function: Oversee and monitor cyclical planning process; plan for coordination of resources across entities; generate and monitor agreements at respective entities to invest in shared plan; align policy and funding decision when possible.

Membership Criteria: In general, members are planners and funders of early childhood programming in Travis County. Specific criteria includes: funding agency, sole designee of federal funding (e.g. Workforce Solutions, Child Inc.), collector/source of data and analysis with no funding conflict (e.g. Children's Optimal Health), taxing entity, influence in policy and research.

Capacities: Data expertise; access to resource-allocation decision makers; planning and process expertise.

### ***SB6 Early Childhood Stakeholders***

Role: Comprehensive representation of all stakeholders

Function: Represent individual organizations; provide input necessary to implement a shared plan; implement strategies that promote shared goals; understand value of role and participation.

Membership Criteria: All early childhood stakeholders = providers, leaders, collaboratives, residents, etc.

### ***Ongoing workgroups***

Function: Collaborate, connect, coordinate in alignment with the School Readiness Action Plan.

Note: Includes existing groups (i.e. Social Emotional Learning) and fluid, flexible or ad hoc groups.

## **Key Historical Dates in Travis County Early Childhood Planning**

**1985** – City of Austin Mayor Frank Cooksey appoints 80 members to the Mayor’s Task Force on Childcare. Chaired by Jeannette Watson, this group completed an assessment and created recommendations including one to create the “Commission for Child Care,” which evolved into the Early Childhood Council.

**1988** – The Child Care Council (renamed the Early Childhood Council in 2009) recommends the creation of a City staff position - the Child Care Coordinator (currently Early Childhood Coordinator). City Council approves and the position is established.

In addition, two positions on the Child Care Council are established – one person each appointed respectively by Austin ISD and Travis County Commissioners Court.

**1998** – Child Care Council releases planning document, “Affordable, Accessible, Quality Child Care for Austin,” which recommends ongoing investments to improve the affordability, accessibility and quality of child care and encourages the city to be a model employer with policies that support working families with children. City funding as a result of the recommendations started the Watson Fellowships and the Teacher TRAC programs in 2000.

(Before 1999, the City of Austin and Travis County Human Services were the same entity. When the county created its own Health and Human Services department, some early childhood investments and staff were moved from the joint department. This structure is still in place, and the city and county continue to work closely together.)

**2001-2002** – Community Action Network and the Austin Equity Commission identifies early care and education as critical issues in separate reports. The Early Child Care Council builds on this work and releases, “A Comprehensive Early Care and Education System,” which explores the ideal early care and education system.

**2004** – A yearlong planning effort reviewing childcare quality contracts was conducted. The results were contract requirements for coordination between the contractors and agreement on service delivery. This coordination set the stage for the Quality Child Care Collaborative (QC3), which is currently a program at Workforce Solutions.

**2005 to 2007** – Community stakeholders at a multi-day planning retreat identify United Way Capital Area as the convener for the early childhood sector of Travis County. An assessment of community needs, service delivery strategies and priorities are compiled in the, “Business Plan for Success By 6.” Early childhood stakeholders begin to meet regularly in task groups convened by United Way.

**2008 and ongoing** – United Way, the City of Austin and Travis County join efforts to convene community-wide quarterly Early Childhood Stakeholders summits. Stakeholders work to focus efforts, continue alignment of community-wide work with the “Business Plan for Success By 6,” and build upon successes.

**2010 and ongoing** – A cross-organizational leadership body to the Early Childhood Stakeholders is created and named, “Results Based Planning Committee.” Convened and facilitated by United Way, this group coordinates the next community-wide early childhood planning cycle.

## Sources

1. <http://www.austinchamber.com/index.php>
2. <http://e3alliance.org/pdfs/kinder-ready-042011.pdf>
3. <http://thrivein5boston.org/>
4. <http://www.heckmanequation.org/>
5. <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data/>
6. <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>
7. <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/12poverty.shtml>
8. <http://nieer.org/>
9. <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/vs/field/default.shtm>
10. Bruner, C. (1999). *The myth of the first three years: A new understanding of early brain development and life-long learning*. New York.
11. Children's Optimal Health (2011). *Young children volume II - United Way Capital Area Success by 6 partnership: Are there neighborhoods where very young children are identified with developmental vulnerabilities?*
12. Harvard University Center on the Developing Child. (2007). *The science of early childhood development: Closing the gap between what we know and what we do*.
13. Harvard University Center on the Developing Child. (2008). *The science of early childhood development and the Future of Early Childhood Policy*.
14. Harvard University Center on the Developing Child. (2007). *A science-based framework for early childhood policy*.
15. Hockenyos, J. (2008). *The economic impact of child care in Travis county*. Unpublished manuscript, United Way Capital Area.
16. Lerman, R. I. (2002). *How do marriage, cohabitation, and single parenthood affect the material hardships of families with Children?* The Urban Institute.
17. Lynch, R. (2007). *Enriching children, enriching the nation*. Economic Policy Institute.
18. Neuman, S. B. (2009). *Changing the odds for children at risk*. Westport.
19. Offord Centre for Child Studies. (2007). *The early development instrument: A population-based measure for communities*.
20. UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities (2011). *Early development instrument (EDI): Community profile for Austin, Texas*.

## Photography

All photos courtesy of Lauren Lesley Photography: [laurenlesleyphotography.com](http://laurenlesleyphotography.com)





For a digital copy of this plan or a complete description of how we plan to achieve these results, please visit: [unitedwayaustin.org/sb6](https://unitedwayaustin.org/sb6)

