



# The Research Base for a Birth through Age Eight State Policy Framework

## About the Alliance for Early Success

- Catalyst supports and creates powerful partnerships
- Advance state policies and smart funding that lead to improved outcomes for young children B-8
- Invest in 3 areas: leadership, advocacy, and knowledge
- Range of supports: TA, networking, idea exchange, research, communications, grants

# Birth Through Age 8 State Policy Framework

- Developed with 150 leading experts
- Health, Family Support, Learning essential areas
- Standards, Assessments, Accountability
- 38 proven policy options

## Key Messages of the Framework

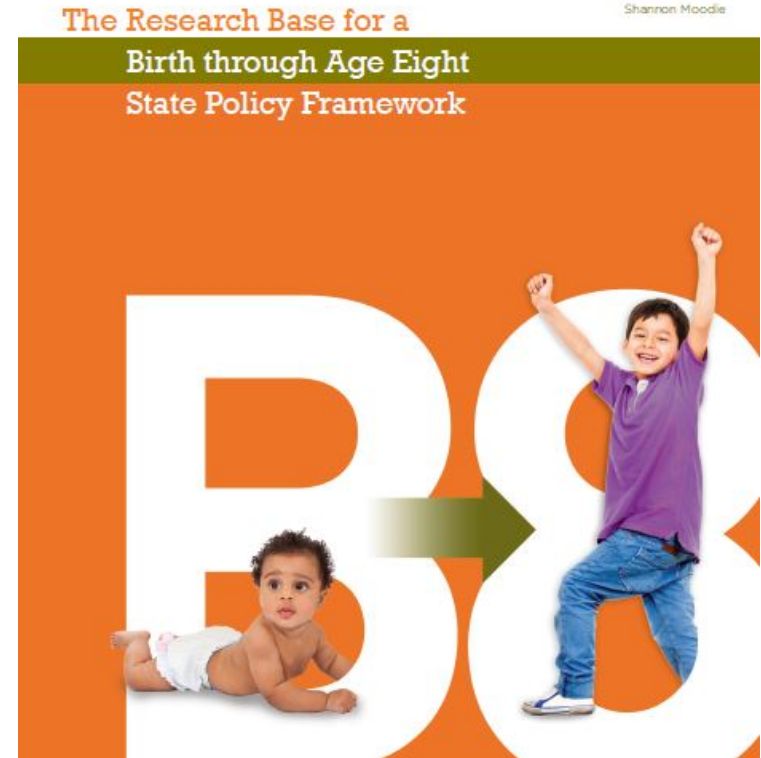
- Strong evidence base for effective policies
- Critical time for the healthy growth and development of children
- Early experiences and supports have a cumulative effect – each influences what comes after and sustains what came before

# How to Use the Framework

- Road map of what kids need to start and continue to be successful
- Tool to help make decisions about policies to pursue
- Research reference that backs up each policy choice



Kathryn Tout  
Tamara Halle  
Sarah Dally  
Lidia Albertson-Jenkins  
Shannon Moodie



# A Developmental Perspective

## Development is...

- a dynamic, interactive process
- not predetermined, but occurs in the context of relationships, experiences and environments
- influenced by contexts
- created over time through transactions with the world and other actors
- cumulative

# Policy Areas



HEALTH



FAMILY SUPPORT



LEARNING





## Health

- Poor health in utero leads to poor pregnancy outcomes
- Poor pregnancy outcomes increases risk for poor health in early childhood
- Young children in poor health are at higher risk for adulthood obesity and cardiovascular disease
- Chronic health conditions (both mental and physical) have serious consequences in the short-term (e.g., missing school) and long-term (e.g., economic well-being)
- Health risks experienced early in life do not necessarily lead to poor health in adulthood, unless there are *consistent and cumulative experiences* that contribute to such a trajectory





## A Sample of Health Policy Choices

- Timely and ongoing prenatal, pediatric, and oral health care
- Access to affordable health insurance for children and families
- Community-based programs targeting sources of toxic stress such as violence, crime, substance abuse, and mental illness, combined with supports for parents and caregivers who need them



## Family Support

- Families support children's development, starting with:
  - adequate prenatal care
  - ensuring young children receive adequate food, shelter, and medical attention
  - living in safe and stimulating environments
- Lack of warm, positive relationships with parents/caregivers increases risk of later substance abuse, anti-social behavior, and juvenile crime



## A Sample of Family Support Policy Choices

- Access to child care assistance for eligible families with provisions for quality and continuity of care
- Effective outreach for and enrollment in programs that promote family economic stability and parent participation in higher education
- Prevention programs and services for children at risk of abuse and neglect and their families



## Learning

- Birth through age eight is a critical span for:
  - physical health and motor development
  - cognitive development
  - language development
  - social-emotional development
  - motivational and regulatory skills
- Gaps in skill development between advantaged and disadvantaged children emerge early and predict developmental trajectories



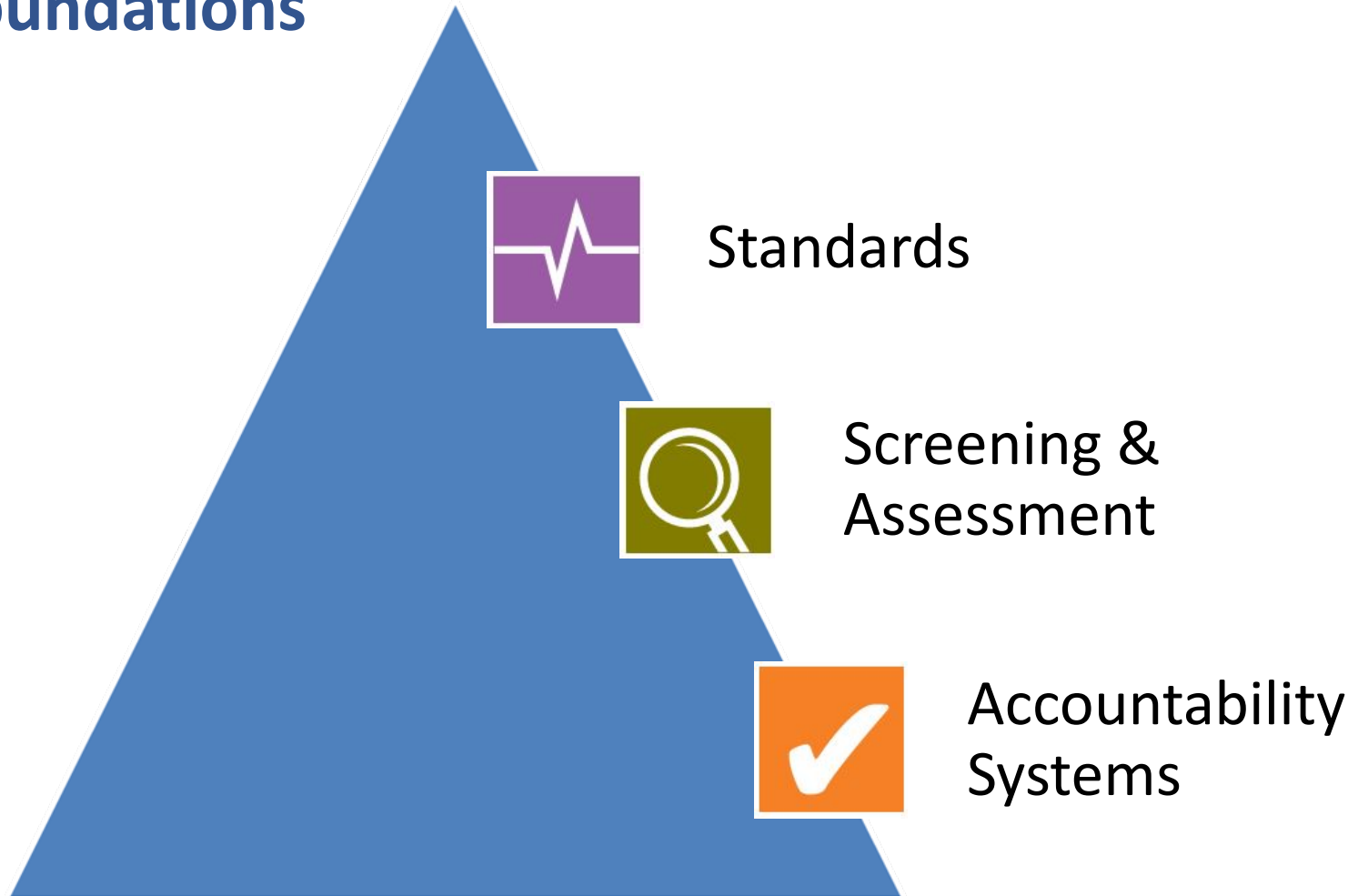
## A Sample of Learning Policy Choices

- Access to high-quality care and learning programs for infants and toddlers with educational, health, and development components; high-quality child care; voluntary, full-day preschool for all low-income 3- and 4-year-olds; and full-day kindergarten
- Transition planning from early care, to preschool, to K-12 learning environments
- Access to effective professional development: pre-service education, training, and onsite support for applying knowledge to practice

## Policy Foundations – A Focus on Implementation

- **Positive outcomes for young children and families are achieved when programs and services ...**
  - Are well-defined and evidence-based
  - Are enacted by a skilled workforce
  - Have adequate material and economic resources and administrative support
  - Are monitored for fidelity and use data for continuous improvement
  - Have strong leadership

# Policy Foundations





## Standards

- Establish expectations for quality and practice in the field
- Guide expectations for children's developmental progress
- Sample policy choices include:
  - Early Learning Standards
  - Quality Rating and Improvement Systems





## Screening and Assessment Practices

- **Screenings** help determine whether further, in-depth diagnostic assessment is needed to identify special needs or developmental delays
- **Assessments** measure children's progress towards meeting specified standards and developmental benchmarks
- Sample policy choices include:
  - Screenings and assessments for hearing, vision, metabolic disorders, and developmental delays with appropriate follow-up
  - Child assessment tools that are formative, as well as developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate



## Accountability Systems

- Help define important benchmarks and outcomes for programs, children and families
- Measure progress towards identified goals
- Inform continuous program improvement
- Well-designed, longitudinal (or linked) data systems are the backbone of effective accountability systems
- Sample policy choices include:
  - Clear indicators of child, family, and program effectiveness that include health, family support, and learning objectives
  - Early warning systems to identify problems such as chronic absence and allow for timely intervention

# Resources at [earlysuccess.org](http://earlysuccess.org)



Kathryn Tout  
 Tamara Halle  
 Sarah Daily  
 Ladia Albertson-Jenkins  
 Shannon Moodie

RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

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OCTOBER 2013

### OVERVIEW

Early experiences in childhood lay the foundation for later success. The relationships, environments, and supports that children experience have a profound impact on their development because critical neurological and biological systems grow most rapidly in these earliest years. Throughout early childhood, from birth through age eight, children need early, consistent, high-quality supports to promote and sustain their developmental gains.

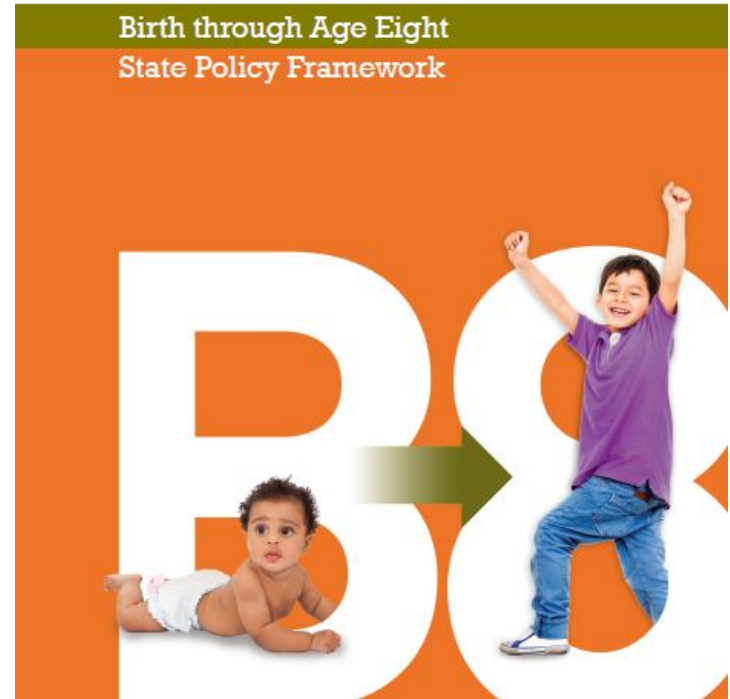
State policies can help build a strong foundation that puts young children, particularly vulnerable<sup>1</sup> young children, on a path to success. The Alliance for Early Success developed the Birth Through Age Eight State Policy Framework as a tool, or roadmap, that can inform decision-making and guide policy choices. It focuses attention on what is critical within and across different aspects of early childhood development to address the physical, social, and cognitive needs of young children within various contexts. The framework is the collective work of more than 150 experts, including leaders in the fields of early childhood and K-12 education, advocates, researchers, policymakers, and foundation officers. Building on decades of research and theory identifying the essential supports for children's development, the framework emphasizes *health, family support, and learning* as critical policy areas, and *standards, assessment practices, and accountability systems* as critical foundations to implement the policies.

<sup>1</sup> "Vulnerable" is defined as having one or more of the following risk factors, which increase the likelihood of poor health, learning, and economic outcomes: poverty, low parental education, single or teenage parent, homelessness, and/or high residential mobility.



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 Publication #2013-20  
 May be reprinted with citation.

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## Discussion, Comments & Questions

- **Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director,  
Rhode Island Kids Count**

### **Submit your comment or questions for:**

- Lisa Klein, Alliance for Early Success
- Tamara Halle, Child Trends
- Kathryn Tout, Child Trends

Thank you!