

THE TEXAS PLAN FOR A STATEWIDE EARLY EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM (Texas SEEDS) Edition 2

A. BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

POLICY AREA I. GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATION, AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES

OBJECTIVE: To establish statewide governance, administration, and technical resource service structures that are accessible and accountable to all stakeholders to oversee and manage the development, operation, assessment, and improvement of a system to ensure that all children in Texas are well prepared to begin school.

Guiding Principles:

- **All Children Ages Birth to 5.** The goal of The Texas Plan is to support both child development and working parents. Its vision is one of high-quality early childhood education and development services available to all very young children in Texas prior to their entry into kindergarten regardless of parents' socioeconomic status.
- **Public-Private Partnership.** Public and private providers will work together on all aspects of the system.
- **Standards and Quality.** Standards are expectations and quality levels to be adopted to guide teacher training, facility design, curriculum selection, as well as outcomes. A system for regular assessment of how well the standards are being met should be developed as a mechanism for continuous quality improvement.
- **Broad Stakeholder Input.** A broad constituency will be engaged in the governance and accountability processes.
- **Nonpartisan Governance.** The state's ECED governing entity shall be nonpartisan, objective, and dedicated above all to the well-being of children.
- **All Diverse Providers Included.** Inclusion of diverse forms of early care and education providers will be a central principle in the operating system.
- **Connection to Comprehensive Child-Family Services.** The state ECED administration entity shall develop mechanisms that connect both children and parents to services that will enhance family well-being.
- **Local District Orientation.** Although the administration of the statewide program should be centralized in a single Administration accountable to the Governing Body, substantial devolution of authority to the district and community level should be incorporated into the plan.
- **Parental Choice and Provider Needs.** Parent selection of the form and site for early childhood education is a key feature of this plan. At the same time, the system has to be developed so that it provides some security to the provider to prevent wide swings in enrollment, revenues, and expenditures.

- **Competition.** The competition should be driven by parents' choice of site-program for their child, based on assessed quality of the program, responsiveness to family preferences, location preference, and capacity.

SPECIFIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Policy Recommendation I-1. **A COMMISSION.** Recommend that the principal governing body of a Texas statewide early childhood education and development system (Texas SEEDS) should be a state-chartered but independently functioning commission.

Policy Recommendation I-2. **THE ADMINISTRATION.** Recommend that the principal administrative organization of a Texas statewide early childhood education and development system (Texas SEEDS) should be an administrator and a senior administrative staff approved by and accountable to the Governing Commission.

Policy Recommendation I-3. **TECHNICAL RESOURCES.** Recommend that a Technical Resource Center be established for the following purposes: to develop learning, professional development, and facility standards; to provide guidance on application of the standards; to continually update the standards; to conduct research and assessments; and to provide technical assistance to the administration, the districts, individual programs and perhaps the supportive components at the community level.

Policy Recommendation I-4. **DISTRICTS.** Recommend that the day-to-day responsibility for provision of services directly to children, parents, teachers, and the communities shall devolve into 10 or more districts and from the districts to communities.

Policy Recommendation I-5. **FINANCING.** Recommend that funds for a Texas statewide early childhood education and development system should be derived by collecting all available current revenues from federal, state, and other sources, supplemented substantially by family resources contributed on a sliding scale basis and from a substantial infusion of additional funds appropriated by the state.

POLICY AREA II. FINANCING

OBJECTIVE: To provide adequate and stable financial resources for a system to make quality early education and development services widely available to all children in Texas.

While all of the existing financing mechanisms are required, clearly the Texas state government must make the largest new investment beyond the amount the state already provides. Due to the magnitude of the funds required to support a high-quality,

widely available early childhood education and development system in Texas, it is our view that the confluence of six funding streams will be necessary:

1. Existing State and Federal Allocations
2. Family Self-pay: on a sliding scale of affordability
3. New Sources of State Revenue
4. Additional Philanthropic Funds
5. New Public–Private Partnerships at the Local Level
6. Employment-Related Resources

Guiding Principles:

- **Comprehensive Early Childhood Education.** Comprehensive, high quality, early childhood education should be available for full work days, Monday through Friday, 52 weeks per year for all children ages birth to school age in Texas.
- **Public–Private Funding Partnership.** This should include pooling family payments, state funds, federal appropriations, corporate money, charitable donations, and philanthropic foundation grants.
- **The State’s Role.** A widely available early education system will require an overhaul of both the structure and the financial support system for education.
- **Maximizing Allowable Federal Funds.** The state should aim to draw upon federal dollars to the maximum extent permissible, including funds from the following programs, and from others:
- **Models of Care and Parity of Reimbursement.** All systems of early care and education should be included in the Texas Statewide Early Education and Development System (Texas SEEDS). All providers should be required to meet the same standards for licensure and rated by a single quality assessment system.
- **Financial Arrangements at the Family and Provider Level.** a) The early childhood education opportunity is voluntary. Parents should have the option to enroll their child, or not. b) A family “co-pay,” or contribution to the tuition, will be on a sliding scale.
- **Texas SEEDS Administration.** A state-chartered, but Commission-appointed authority, with broad and diverse representation to be established incrementally over time is envisioned (see Section 1, Governance). The Commission will be connected to districts that include collaborative arrangements among public and private provider systems.
- **The Development Period.** The financing mechanisms and governance system envisioned may develop naturally over time through an evolutionary process or purposefully based upon analysis, planning, and incremental steps.

SPECIFIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Policy Recommendation II-1. **STATE REVENUES.** **Recommend that the full day–full year, high quality early education system available to all Texas children be financed by a substantial infusion of State General Revenue funds.**

Policy Recommendation II-2. **FEDERAL FUNDS.** **Recommend that a systematic analysis and subsequent actions be undertaken to maximize the flow into the State of all potential federal funds for ECED.**

Policy Recommendation II-3. **PRIVATE FUNDS.** Recommend that encouragement be given to local efforts to raise funds from private, foundation, and corporate sources for specific additional innovations to enrich children's education and development.

Policy Recommendation II-4. **PUBLIC FUNDS.** Recommend that the state provide matching funds to stimulate efforts and success in local fundraising.

Policy Recommendation II-5. **SLIDING SCALE FEES.** Recommend that a family "co-pay" or contribution to the tuition be on a sliding scale related to family income.

Policy Recommendation II-6. **A SPECIAL STUDY OF FINANCING.** Recommend that a special blue-ribbon committee be appointed to study financing options and to make recommendations on every aspect of Financing in Policy Area II. The blue-ribbon committee's report shall be made to the Legislature and to the public.

POLICY AREA III. FACILITIES AND PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENT OF SPACE

OBJECTIVE: To undertake long-range planning of facility needs including remodeling of existing space, new construction, and maintenance, and to formulate and promulgate standards for the physical arrangement of space that promote positive early childhood outcomes.

Guiding Principles:

- **A Statewide Assessment of Facility Needs.** A study should be performed to assure that the structures effectively and efficiently serve the functions required and the enrollment size anticipated and should include specific interior design, remodeling, new construction, and maintenance requirements
- **Design of the Learning Space.** The following principles summarize knowledge relating to the design of the learning space.
 - **Environment.** The early childhood education classroom environment is all-important to childhood learning.
 - **The physical arrangement of space.** Room layout can promote development.
 - **The organization and routinization of activities.** The structuring of activities as they are related to physical spaces can promote development.
 - **Ambience.** The atmosphere generated principally by the teacher, and teacher-directed displays, is important to learning.
- **Children with Special Needs.** Differences should be attended to, although generally these children should be assimilated into the everyday activities of the whole group whenever feasible.

- **Locales that Are Underserved.** Those areas that are lacking with respect to early childhood education facilities should receive high priority attention for program and facility development.
- **Periodic Quality Assessment.** Formal review of the design of learning places, with continuous improvement, should become routine.

SPECIFIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Policy Recommendation III-1. **FACILITY NEEDS.** Recommend that the proposed Texas SEEDS Governance Commission be authorized to conduct (by contract) a comprehensive assessment of short-term and long-term facility requirements to meet anticipated enrollment needs and to provide information for financial and property planning.

Policy Recommendation III-2. **INTERIOR DESIGN OF FACILITIES.** Recommend that the proposed Texas SEEDS Technical Resource Center convene an advisory panel on facility design to research and prepare recommendations for providers that cover various issues including optimal floor plans, room and furniture design, and other important elements of spatial arrangements and the learning environment.

B. BUILDING STANDARDS: TEACHERS, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SITES, AND CHILDREN

POLICY AREA IV. TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS: PROFESSIONALIZATION AND COMPENSATION

OBJECTIVE: To adopt a research-supported set of uniform standards that defines the optimum formal education and continuing training and professional development of teachers of early childhood education and development for all public and private early childhood education centers, and to adopt salary and benefit structures and other features of employment that elevate early childhood teachers to a level of professionalization and pride worthy of the great importance and skill requirement of their work for children, families and for society as a whole.

Guiding Principles:

- **Professional Development Standards.** A set of professional development standards predicated on sound research should be ratified and applied to direct the training of teachers and the delivery of the education and development services provided in public and private early education centers.
- **Current Teachers and New Teachers Over the Near Term.** Current teachers having demonstrated over a three-year period, effective skills in the classroom, but without the four-year bachelors degree requirement, should be allowed to stand for certification. In addition, selected new employees entering the teaching workforce over the next five years should be allowed to enter the certification

- qualification process through a combination of courses, experience, and supervised mentoring in the classroom.
- **Compensation Schedules.** Compensation for all teachers trained to the level of the adopted standards, or who by length of experience or on-the-job training have demonstrated the high-skill capacity envisioned in this document, should be at a level suitable to the high ideals of a skilled profession.
 - **Accreditation of Teacher Training Program.** All training programs for teachers, whether a certified program in a community college or a baccalaureate program in a university, must be evaluated at regular intervals.
 - **Additional Support for Teacher Retention.** Additional actions intended to enhance professional satisfaction and pride should be taken to promote teacher retention. For example, mentoring has been shown to be an excellent, cost-effective means of investing teachers in their profession.

SPECIFIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Policy Recommendation IV-1. **STANDARDS FOR TEACHER TRAINING AND PROFESSIONALIZATION, AND COMPENSATION**

Recommend that the proposed Technical Resource Center (Recommendation I-3) propose standards for the training, professionalization, and compensation of ECED teachers, and a plan for the systematic administration, monitoring and enforcement of the standards. The finished proposal should be submitted to the Texas SEEDS Commission for deliberation, possible modification, and ultimate adoption into the system.

Policy Recommendation IV-2. **ACCREDITATION AND CERTIFICATION.**

Recommend that the Technical Resource Center propose, to the Texas SEEDS Commission, systems for formal periodic accreditation of qualified ECED training programs and certification of the skill levels of the teachers of early childhood teachers.

Policy Recommendation IV-3. **EXPAND ECED TEACHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING CAPACITY.**

Recommend that the capacity of community colleges and universities to educate and offer continuing training for teachers be substantially increased.

Policy Recommendation IV-4. **EXPERIENCE-GAINED CORE COMPETENCIES.**

Recommend that acquisition of core competencies earned through years of experience or on-the-job training should under certain circumstances (examination or other forms of credible evidence) qualify an ECED teacher to become formally certified.

Policy Recommendation IV-5. **TEACHER COMPENSATION.**

Recommend that teacher compensation be adequate to professionalize and retain qualified teachers, and be supplemented by public and private funds for special purposes related to standards and quality.

Policy Recommendation IV-6. **TEACHER BENEFITS.** Recommend that subsidized health insurance and retirement plans be made available to attract, reward and retain qualified teachers.

Policy Recommendation IV-7. **ADMINISTRATORS: PROFESSIONALIZATION AND COMPENSATION.** Recommend that the above standards related to teachers for training, professionalization and compensation also apply to administrators.

POLICY AREA V. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SITES: STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS

OBJECTIVE: To establish a statewide, transparent, consumer-oriented, quality assessment system to monitor progress of every early childhood education center toward reaching/exceeding standards in all dimensions of the program including the classroom ambience and facilities, professionalization of staff, teaching practices, curriculum and materials, parent and community participation, child access to nutrition, physical health and mental health services, and family support services. Routine quality assessment should become a principal tool for continuous improvement, for gauging a program's effectiveness in reaching the standards, and for specifying the technical assistance from which an early education center might benefit.

Guiding Principles:

- **Purposes.** A properly financed and effective Standards and Assessment System for the sites is essential to assure high quality expectations and attainment, assure that all aspects of the program are satisfactorily implemented, support continuous quality enhancement, provide information to parents for selecting a facility for their child, and to facilitate and promote parent involvement in the affairs of the center.
- **Universal Application.** The system's standards and assessments must be equitably and fairly applied to all ECED facilities regardless of their auspices, ownership, affiliation and location. This inclusionary principle must also apply to all other components of quality assurance including training, accreditation, certification, and licensure.
- **Comprehensiveness.** Standards must be established, and assessments made, for all components of the early childhood education and development program including those factors outside the educational system setting that can influence children's progress.
- **Building Independence and Integrity into the Assessment System.** An entity that is independent of the influence of stakeholders who have a material or partisan interest in the assessments should be designated to oversee the development of the standards and assessment of performance.
- **Financial Support for Assessments.** The cost of operating the standards and assessment system should be borne centrally from the Commission's budget.

- **Parent Access to Quality Assessments.** The assessment ratings for each site should be formatted and simplified into information that can be distributed to and easily understood by parents

SPECIFIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Policy Recommendation V-1. **DEVELOP A QUALITY ASSESSMENT SYSTEM.** Recommend that the Texas SEEDS Commission charge its Technical Resource Center or another entity with the responsibility to oversee integration and coherence of all standards and to establish additional standards to make the set complete and unifying and develop, test, modify, implement, and maintain a quality assessment system built on those standards.

Policy Recommendation V-2. **INCLUSIONARY, ALL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SITES.** Recommend that the standards and assessments for the early childhood education and development sites described herein be equitably and fairly applied to ALL ECED sites regardless of their auspices, ownership, affiliation and location.

Policy Recommendation V-3. **COSTS OF THE STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENT SYSTEM.** Recommend that the Texas SEEDS Commission underwrite the full cost of development, implementation, application, interpretation, improvement of, and reporting relative to the standards and assessment systems for the early childhood education sites.

Policy Recommendation V-4. **SUPPORTIVE PROGRAM COMPONENTS.** Recommend that additional program components, collateral to the ordinary direct curriculum but nonetheless important for the child's learning and development, be assessed. These components include parental roles during the child's early education experience; parental education including literacy; nutritional, medical, and mental health services for the child; special needs; cultural awareness; dual language capacity; community roles; and so forth.

Policy Recommendation V-5. **INDIVIDUAL SITE INNOVATIONS.** Recommend that, while a single system with uniform high standards that are equally applied be put in place, ample opportunity must be preserved for individual innovation.

POLICY AREA VI. THE CHILD: STANDARDS & ASSESSMENTS FOR EDUCATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES

OBJECTIVES: To establish officially approved: 1) health standards including health status monitoring, health services, nutrition, healthy lifestyle learning and adoption; 2) learning standards for ECED (expected child outcomes in each of the

five dimensions of school readiness— physical health, social and emotional development, learning skills and habits, literacy, and cognition and knowledge);¹⁴ and 3) outcomes assessment system.

Guiding Principles:

- **Birth to Age 18 Continuum.** We should never lose sight that education and development should be regarded as a lifelong continuum. The overall scope of The Texas Plan is on children age birth to 5. Due to the current policy and political landscape, the initial focus is on 3 and 4-year-olds. Such an initial emphasis, however, in no way signifies any less commitment to infants and toddlers.
- **All Inclusionary.** Standards and assessments should be applied equitably across all systems of providers.
- **Reliable Standards and Assessments.** Standards and assessments should be based solidly on knowledge derived from research and from critically evaluated best practices.
- **Health.** Standards and assessments must be set for health screenings to identify children in need of health and special services, to provide services that: mitigate the effects of health-related impairments; immunize and take other preventive measures; offer healthcare when illness occurs; and provide health education.
- **Parents as First Teachers.** Information and support for parents as a child’s first teacher will be incorporated into the learning standards and assessment guidelines.
- **Validation for Diversity.** Standards and assessment tools should be validated on a diverse population of children, including children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to substantiate the appropriateness of their use in the populations of Texas.
- **Validation for Children with Special Needs.** Standards and assessment tools should be validated on a diverse population of children, including children with disabilities and other special needs to substantiate the appropriateness of their use in the populations of Texas.
- **Learning Materials.** Educational materials and resources should be widely available for home-based providers, family caregivers and stay at home parents to promote favorable outcomes for these children.
- **Child Assessment Data Collection System—Preparedness for Kindergarten.** The establishment of an effective data collection system is required to support the necessary functions of a consolidated system and to enable accurate evaluation of its impact. The data collection system should collect information on health indices as well as learning outcomes for children.
- **Sensitivity and Confidentiality.** Interpretation of individual assessment scores must be sensitive to wide inter-site variations in learning experiences and development of children prior to enrollment in an early education program enrollment. Data from such assessments shall be used by parents and teachers to monitor a child’s progress and to guide the learning plans and activities for that child. The individual child data, however, must not be used for any other purposes.

SPECIFIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Policy Recommendation VI-1. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS.

Recommend that the Technical Resource Center develop and apply learning and instructional standards and assessments and health screening guidelines appropriate to the child's age and developmental stage. The standards should cover a full spectrum of educational and developmental processes, e.g., cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, behavioral and physical.

Policy Recommendation VI-2. TRAIN TEACHERS IN USE OF STANDARDS.

Recommend that the Technical Resource Center, working in collaboration with universities and community colleges, develop courses and training curriculum to prepare ECED teachers to use learning and development standards.

Policy Recommendation VI-3. HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT SCREENING.

Recommend that funds and mechanisms be provided so that all children undergo health screenings, and be referred for treatment when indicated, upon entry into early education programs and again upon entry to kindergarten.

Policy Recommendation VI-4. LEARNING ASSESSMENT. The use of instructional assessments to monitor the progress of individual children, introduced over time, should be mandatory for all programs.

Policy Recommendation VI-5. CHILD ASSESSMENT. Recommend that individual child assessments related to standards of preparedness for kindergarten be performed on every child early in the kindergarten year and perhaps a second and third time later in that year.

Policy Recommendation VI-6. CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS. Recommend that a task force, or the proposed Technical Resource Center, be convened to develop a report and recommendations on the relationship between the standards being applied generally in the early education system and their suitability for children in special circumstances including those with disabilities.

Policy Recommendation VI-7. CHILDREN WHOSE PRIMARY LANGUAGE IN THE HOME IS NOT ENGLISH. Recommend that a task force be convened to develop a report and recommendations on the relationship between the standards being applied generally in the early education system and their suitability for children whose primary language in the home is not English.

Policy Recommendation VI-8. **COMPREHENSIVE STATE ECED DATA MONITORING SYSTEM.** Recommend that the State of Texas develop and operate a system to collect, analyze and disseminate data and information on a continuing basis relative to the state of early childhood education and development, and progress made toward goals.

C. STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

POLICY AREA VII. PARENTAL ROLES

OBJECTIVE: To adopt policies that facilitate direct parental involvement in their child's early care and education experiences in centers and assists parents in acquiring knowledge and skills of early childhood learning and parenting that can be carried over into the home environment.

Guiding Principles:

- **Parent involvement.** Roles for parents should be built into the expectations of the ECED centers. Parent involvement in the early education center, even brief involvement on a regular basis, improves the early and later outcomes for the child.
- **Parental education.** Services and programs for parents should fall into three different categories including a) education on parenting; b) empowerment and advocacy; and c) material and social support to stabilize or improve family functioning.
- **Financing.** Programs that educate parents and help improve family functioning should be supported with public and private funds.
- **Mutual respect.** Each family is distinctive, and parents, teachers, and other service providers should work closely as a team based on equality and respect.
- **Advocacy.** Parents have a vested interest in improving services that assist their children and can be mobilized as a powerful force to advocate for such efforts.
- **Support.** Some families may require extra assistance and financial support.

SPECIFIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Policy Recommendation VII-1. **PARENT AS TEACHER.** Recommend that policies and incentives be developed in early education systems and at the place of parental employment to make possible parent participation in their child's education and development in the classroom.

Policy Recommendation VII-2. **PARENT AS LEARNER.** Recommend that all early childhood centers provide access to programs and materials that help parents acquire knowledge and skills to facilitate effective participation in their child's education and development both in the early childhood center and at home. Further recommend that all parents have access to other

training opportunities to enhance their capacities in areas such as family nutrition, accessing medical services, improved literacy, family financial management, and so forth.

Policy Recommendation VII-3. **PARENT AS ADVOCATE.** **Recommend that encouragement and incentives be developed for early education centers to provide opportunities for parents to become active advocates for the emerging early childhood education and development movements in their community and nationwide.**

POLICY AREA VIII. FAMILY INCOME SUPPORT

OBJECTIVE: To eliminate poverty or ameliorate inadequate incomes in all families having a child or children below the age of five.

Guiding Principles:

- **Earliest Years.** Research has demonstrated that meeting a child's developmental needs is more critical in the years from birth to 5 than at any other time of life.
- **Home Environment.** In generating school readiness, the well-being of parents and/or guardians including the adequacy of family financial resources is important.
- **Family Friendly Work Policies.** Employment policies must be family friendly in order to avoid severe economic hardship in the early years of a child's life.
- **Family Economic Well-being.** Family economic literacy plus the ability of working age adults to earn enough pay and benefits to provide for their basic needs and to accrue long-term assets like homes and other resources plays an important role in promoting the positive development of a child and avoiding outcomes that are costly to society and the individual.
- **Poverty and Child Development.** The harmful effects of family impoverishment on a child's learning and development can be and must be prevented in all societies, but especially in those having advanced economies and mature democracies such as ours.

SPECIFIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Policy Recommendation VIII-1. **WAGE AND TAX POLICIES.** **Recommend that wage policies or tax policies or other initiatives be adopted so that a full-time employed parent receives an income at a multiple of the federally determined poverty level sufficient to support a household that promotes child development.**

Policy Recommendation VIII-2. **WELFARE WORK EXEMPTION.** **Recommend that Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) work exemptions allowed at the federal level be provided for households in which there is a child less than six months old or alternatively that full-day, full-year early education be provided.**

Policy Recommendation VIII-3. **INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNTS.** Recommend that a large scale public–private demonstration project be funded to explore the benefits to families with young children of something similar to Individual Development Accounts (IDA).

Policy Recommendation VIII-4. **FINANCIAL LITERACY.** Recommend that early childhood education programs at the local level be provided incentives to offer instruction in family financial literacy (family income management and savings) to families with young children.

POLICY AREA IX. PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

OBJECTIVE: To protect the physical and mental health of very young children by strengthening the capacity of early education programs to promote prevention, early detection, and curative treatment of disorders that, if undetected or ignored, could interfere with learning and development.

Guiding Principles:

- **Impact of Health.** The physical and mental well-being of children is an important factor affecting the child’s learning in school and a family’s economic success.
- **Early Identification.** Early identification and intervention in children having physical or mental health illnesses, or a disability, can prevent loss of time in school and developmental delays.
- **Children with Special Needs.** Children having developmental delays or disabilities, and their families, must be provided with resources, services, and skills for early detection and appropriate treatment to help them develop the skills needed for independence and success and for avoidance of disadvantage.
- **Least Restrictive Environments.** To facilitate the child’s development of cognitive and behavioral skills, all children, including those with developmental delays or an identified disability, should be served in the least restrictive environment depending on the child’s needs. This requires teacher training, education of fellow students, materials, and emotional support.

SPECIFIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Policy Recommendation IX-1. **HEALTH SCREENING AND REFERRALS.** Recommend that financing and capacity should be developed to perform a health screening and referral to a health professional when needed for every child upon earliest entry into early education and/or kindergarten (cross-listed as VI-3).

Policy Recommendation IX-2. **CHILD HEALTH CONSULTANTS.** Recommend that child health consultants be linked to each early childhood education and development site.

Policy Recommendation IX-3. **PARTNERSHIP WITH AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS.** Recommend that a State of Texas Advisory Committee be formed to develop a long-range partnership among state education and health officials and a health professional group (such as the American Academy of Pediatrics) having a well-established expertise and interest in early childhood health and child development. The Committee's charge shall be to develop recommendations for an educator-parent-child-health professional system to provide at a high quality level physical, mental, and developmental health screening, early detection, treatment, referral and teacher training.

Policy Recommendation IX-4. **HEALTHCARE INSURANCE FOR ALL CHILDREN.** Recommend that healthcare insurance be provided to all children aged birth to 5 and to their parents or guardians and to all pregnant women having incomes less than 300% of the federal poverty level.

Policy Recommendation IX-5. **SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.** Recommend that the level of understanding and capacity to use services for disabled children such as through the Early Childhood Intervention program and through the public school system, be sharply improved among the interacting parties, i.e., children, parents, teachers, administrators and disability professionals.

POLICY AREA X. COMMUNITY ROLES

OBJECTIVE: To expand the community's ideals about and engagement with, and development of services for, early childhood education and development so that every child's well-being becomes the public concern of the entire community in addition to a private issue for parents and families.

Guiding Principles:

- **Community Education and Understanding.** Key sectors of the community—business, policymaking, faith-based organizations, schools, financial institutions, the general public—should understand the goals of early childhood education and development and its importance to the social, economic and civic future of the community.
- **Collaboration.** Private and community initiatives and partnerships involving various sectors of the community can be beneficial in building a system that supports and links various provider groups, social services and parents.

SPECIFIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Policy Recommendation X-1. **PUBLIC EDUCATION.** Apart from current parenting campaigns, a statewide public awareness and education program should be developed and sustained as a means of ordering public priorities toward

child and youth development. A combination of public and private funds (auspices) and participation could be useful for this endeavor.

Policy Recommendation X-2. **SINGLE POINT OF ACCESS FOR FAMILIES. Recommend that local communities be encouraged to create an accessible virtual or physical system or mechanism to link families to early education programs.**

Policy Recommendation X-3. **COMMUNITY-BASED ECED RESOURCE AND REFERRAL AGENCIES. Recommend that local community initiatives be expanded to develop agencies to provide advice and referrals to parents of children for needed services.**

Policy Recommendation X-4. **HOME-BASED EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION. Recommend that local community initiatives be undertaken to support early childhood home care providers (usually neighbors and family members).**

Policy Recommendation X-5. **CHILD IMPACT ASSESSMENT. Recommend that the state provide funds for the early and limited trial development of a Child Impact Assessment methodology that will assess the likely impact on children's development of public policies enacted for a variety of purposes not necessarily all related to child development.**