

SUPPORTING EARLY LEARNING: AN IMPORTANT INVESTMENT FOR EMPLOYERS

Business leadership is a crucial component for a community's future success. The support of business leaders in early learning will help ensure that the young children of today will become our community's future leaders. Action steps that business leaders and employers can take to support early learning follow several separate but equally important paths.

To assist employees, employers can:

- Inform employees about the importance of the first years of life by providing parenting information using communication vehicles such as break room and restroom bulletin boards, lobby and elevator posters, internal newsletters, web-based articles, employee e-mails and paycheck inserts
- Set up break rooms as family education centers with posters, educational information, as well as close circuit monitors running PSA's that provide tips for parents and phone numbers and a guide for local parent resources
- Display information regarding Welcome Baby Baskets (free to all expecting mothers), the Imagination Library (for Battle Creek residents only), Willard Library and other programs for families and children
- Host a family day for your employees to learn more about the tools, programs and support for early childhood education in our community
- Sponsor parenting workshops or parent education seminars with local speakers and parent educators at your workplace during lunch or before and after work hours
- Encourage employees to participate in their Parent/Teacher Association
- Share and promote opportunities to volunteer in a local child care center, preschool, kindergarten, first/second grade classroom or at a community event for young children
- Honor and reward employees who volunteer to provide or improve early childhood programs and services
- Offer employees access to online parenting information and resources through your internal website.
- Model and publicize best practice in workplace flexibility and supports for working parents and caregivers

Within the larger community, employers can:

- Work with media to publicize local programs that offer parent education, family support, early care and education and health services; write a letter to the editor, speak about your support at a community forum or meeting
- Provide in-kind support, such as copying, faxing, meeting space, storage space, language translation services, printing and mailing, to early childhood health, education and care and family support programs within your community
- Inform the community about the importance of the early years in company ads, promotions and products

- Communicate concern about the importance of the early years to policy makers and the media
- Encourage colleagues and leaders at all levels to serve on community early childhood planning and public policy committees; positions are available on Committees within the Great Start Collaborative, Early Childhood Connections and others depending upon interest areas
- Share expertise (such as accounting skills, management training, and public relations) with early care and education programs and health and family support programs. Volunteer to serve on boards of early childhood groups
- Honor state and local leaders and organizations that are making a difference for young children and their families
- Host or sponsor community and legislative forums on early childhood topics, such as early childhood brain development, the relationship between economics and early childhood development, effective parenting programs, improving the quality of child care and expanding access to health care
- Work with community partners to expand and improve health services, early care and education, and family support and parent education programs for families with young children
- Invest in early childhood education initiatives including, but not limited to, the 3 year old Scholarship Fund (providing two years of quality preschool to children), Car Seat Fund, Great Start Collaborative, Early Childhood Connections and other important early learning organizations and initiatives

In their relationship with customers, employers can:

- Inform customers about the importance of the first years of life and provide parenting information using existing communication vehicles, including receipts, bill stuffers, and at check-out
- Create a family/kid friendly play area and/or waiting room within your business that encourages early learning; offer a variety of age appropriate toys, books and materials
- Sponsor community parenting seminars out in the community or at your place of business
- Provide a welcoming environment for parents with young children and be supportive of their unique needs as customers

Still not sure what to do or how to help? Please contact us...



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