



Networks Northwest Regional Child Care Coalition | 14 Impactful Solutions

Regional Child Care Plan

“If the region wants to be desirable to young families there has to be a change.”—LEELANAU COUNTY PARENT

Solution
11

[DOWNLOAD THE FULL PLAN HERE](#)

Introduction to the 14 Solutions

The following 14 Solutions arise from more than 100 distinct ideas generated by the Regional Child Care Planning Coalition

The following Child Care Solution module is one of 14 Solutions that comprise the Regional Child Care Plan of the Networks Northwest Regional Child Care Planning Coalition. The 49-member Coalition represents regional and community partners in the northwest-lower Michigan counties of Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee and Wexford.

The work of the Coalition is funded by a Regional Child Care Planning grant awarded and supported by Michigan's Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) Child Care Innovation Fund in order to understand and address the child care crisis and to expand equitable access to high-quality, affordable child care for working families. Grants were issued to 16 regional coalitions covering every part of Michigan.

Regional Child Care Planning grants were issued to ECIC by the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential (MILEAP), utilizing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Each Solution Module:

Meets several criteria:

- **Impactful** – in the opinion of the Coalition, directly addresses one or more of the Root Causes impacting the regional child care system and will improve access, affordability and/or quality.
- **Vetted** – have proven to be successful regionally or elsewhere
- **Sponsored** – one or more regional entities or groups is presently committed to or leading implementation

Consists of five components::

- **Primary Root Cause** addressed
- **An introductory paragraph** summarizing the solution, why it can be beneficial and how it can be implemented
- **Background and Context** – relates why the solution may be needed or beneficial, along with some historical context where applicable
- **Examples and Priorities** – showcases examples of comparable approaches implemented within the region or elsewhere and then highlights implied priorities for implementation
- **Potential Near-Term Actions** – calls out near term actions that different groups of stakeholders can take in order to move toward implementation

The 14 Solutions are:

1. State Investment
2. Local Public Funding
3. Policy Changes
4. Local Planning & Zoning
5. Provider Incubation
6. Community Facility Investments
7. Micro-Centers
8. Credential Pathways
9. Substitute Pools
10. Universal Preschool
11. Home-Based Universal Preschool Option 
12. Employer Policies & Actions
13. Enhanced Family Navigation
14. Peer-to-peer & Community Collaboration

Home-Based Universal Preschool

Implement a home-based component of universal preschool

SOLUTION

11

Michigan's PreK for All program currently provides a tuition-free option for four-year-old children in school-based and center-based settings only. A quality home-based PreK for All program option would support parents who prefer home-based settings for their children while also supporting home-based providers with tuition reimbursement and quality improvement.

Background & Context

PreK for All is envisioned as a pathway to ensure that all Michigan's children are prepared to enter kindergarten, ready and eager to learn (see Solution 10: Universal Preschool). PreK for All promises families access to free, high quality preschool experiences for four-year-olds, no matter where they live or the socio-economic barriers they face.

In Michigan's well-established mixed-delivery child care system, families choose the type of licensed care that works best for them: home-based child care, tuition-based child care centers, or publicly funded preschool programs.

Families choose home-based child care for a variety of reasons.¹ For some, these are the providers that are closest to where they live. Other families prefer a setting that is intimate and that more closely resembles their own homes. Most home-based programs offer essential year-round, full-day and wrap-around care which is crucial for working parents.

If PreK for All is available only in school- and center-based programs, families who prefer the home-based setting or require full-

day care will have to choose between forgoing tuition-free care or choosing a child care setting different from their first choice.

Research indicates that excluding home-based providers from PreK expansion can perpetuate systemic inequities. These home-based providers often serve underserved communities, including families of color and those in rural areas. By not including them in formal preK systems, these families are further marginalized, and the disparities in access to quality early education are widened.²

Finally, a net loss of 4-year-old children in care can put even more pressure on the challenged business model for home-based providers, potentially driving some providers to close their operations and potentially eroding capacity that serves 0- to 3-year-olds.

On the other hand, including home-based providers in a PreK for All expansion will preserve family choice, support home-based child care business sustainability and help improve home-based child care quality.

The quality of many home-based programs is already high and can support the type of curriculum envisioned under PreK for All. Other states and systems have demonstrated that this type of model can be successful.

PRIMARY ROOT CAUSE
ADDRESSED:

**Few Affordable
& High-Quality
Options
for Families**

¹ Parent Interviews and Focus Groups

² J. Barshay, The Hechinger Report, "PROOF POINTS: In two places, researchers find problems with expansion of free pre-K," June 6 2022

“In this region, the Head Start program operated by Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency has supported high quality preschool slots in home-based settings.”



Examples & Priorities

The States of Vermont and Colorado are two examples of publicly funded preschool programs offering home-based care choice to parents. The Vermont program is detailed at right.

Vermont Universal Prekindergarten Program

Vermont's universal prekindergarten program, established under Act 166 of 2014, provides publicly funded universal prekindergarten education for children aged 3 to 5 with programs in public schools or community-based settings (center-based or home-based), in accordance with parents' choice.³

³ Agency of Education, State of Vermont, <https://education.vermont.gov/student-support/early-education/universal-prekindergarten-act-166/families-of-prekindergarten-students>, 2024.

Vermont's universal prekindergarten program has shown significant success in providing early education access to young children across the state. The state ranks 6th nationally for preschool enrollment of four-year-olds, with 64 percent of this age group served. "Vermont is one of only a handful of states nationally committed to universal preschool and close to achieving it for both 3- and 4-year-olds," said W. Steven Barnett, Ph.D., senior co-director and founder. "Vermont ranks second nationally in serving three-year-olds, which is critically important since research finds that two years of preschool have a greater impact than one."

Vermont's prekindergarten program also has demonstrated a commitment to maintaining high-quality standards, meeting 7 of 10 research-based quality standards benchmarks for minimum quality recommendations. This is true across all settings.

Vermont has been able to develop and expand a high-quality universal prekindergarten program while preserving family choice.

Head Start

The Head Start program operated by Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency has supported high quality preschool slots in home-based settings. While this required some additional coordination to provide support, Head Start leaders report that the approach and the model can be successful in north-west lower Michigan.⁴

⁴ Regional Child Care Planning Coalition notes and minutes

“Providers should prepare for the possibility that Michigan will introduce a home-based option under PreK For All by learning more about program requirements, curriculum and planning ways to adapt their programs to meet these needs.”

Implementation

Creating a model for engaging home-based child care businesses in PreK for All will have significant benefits for owner/operators, for families, and for Michigan's mixed-delivery child care system.

Owner/operators should be involved in designing this component of the overall PreK for All program to:

- Share leadership with providers throughout the process
- Respect providers as both small business owners and child development professionals
- Work “on the ground” with providers to implement and innovate in ways that fit the home-based business model
- Adapt and modify PreK For All programming to fit the multi-age setting
- Support implementation of new teaching strategies
- Fund home-based PreK fairly in a way that reflects the true cost of child care

To assure high quality programs, a home-based model would permit PreK for All to be offered only in licensed Group Child Care Homes that were in good standing, had enrollment of three or more four-year-old children, and was participating in the Great Start to Quality (GSQ),⁵ demonstrating quality levels in all

required indicators. In addition, the owner/operator would need to commit to a professional development program leading to minimum required credentials, if they do not already possess credentials that meet or exceed program standards.

The quality-improvement components of PreK for All expansion should be offered to home-based providers participating in the program. This may require cooperation among 1) Great Start to Quality Resource Center staff, who are knowledgeable and familiar with the home-based model, 2) the program specialists who are ultimately responsible for PreK for All program implementation and 3) potentially other partners.

Potential Near-Term Actions

Policy makers should fund creation of a home-based option as part of the PreK for All program.

Providers should prepare for the possibility that Michigan will introduce a home-based option under PreK For All by learning more about PreK For All program requirements and curriculum and planning ways to adapt their programs to meet these needs.



⁵ Michigan's Great Start to Quality program was introduced in 2011 utilizing quality ratings to help families find high quality early learning and care programs.

Networks Northwest Coalition

Regional Child Care Plan 2024