

## CHILD CARE CONTINUUM

### STRENGTHS:

- ❖ Our current system of separate programmatic early childhood initiatives and funding is effective and efficient, allowing each initiative to do what they do best:
  - Subsidy at a local department of social services is focused on supporting parents going to work and supporting our child welfare system. Subsidy is a tool in our work with our Work First Program with the goal of employment and self-sufficiency. Subsidy provides safety for children who are victims of abuse and neglect as child protective services social workers weave community resources together to prevent further maltreatment and support families. Our focus is having the necessary resources to meet these needs – strategically using resources to meet quantity need.
  - NCPK focuses on providing high quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-old children.
  - Smart Start focuses on child care quality, family support, responding to local needs, and blending all of the aforementioned services together for the maximum impact on children and families.
- ❖ While Subsidy has less flexibility, this is compensated for by the nimble nature of local partnerships that allow our state's early childhood infrastructure to evolve with the changing times and challenges. Local partnerships can be much more fluid in the execution of programs and services. They can amend and update those approaches to continually address the most pressing local needs.
  - Local example: Federal government shutdown

### OPPORTUNITIES:

- ❖ Increased access: As funding is capped for all of these initiatives, not every community currently has adequate resources to meet these targeted goals. Increasing subsidies, especially for infant and toddler care, expanding both the number of available child care slots as well as improving access to and affordability of higher quality care is important for long term impacts.
- ❖ Increased Emphasis on Early Childhood:
  - We need data to drive our decision making. We need to establish shared early childhood indicators to track across state agencies.
  - Increased screening for social/emotional health of children and the development of Evidence Based interventions for children 0-5.
    - Evidence gathered from Kindergarten teachers tell us that about 20% of children entering school do not yet have the necessary social/emotional skills to be “ready” for school (Brighttots.com).
    - A kindergartener with strong social/emotional skills is 4 times more likely to graduate from college (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation)
  - Armed with our current knowledge about early brain development we should allocate sufficient funding for statewide WAGE\$ salary supplement program to encourage higher education levels of child care teachers and directors. Funding should also support targeted resources and technical assistance for the workforce in order to improve early education quality.

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