



Ideas
into
Action



CONTACT:
Amy Katzel

Amy.Katzel@finnpartners.com
Phone: 646-213-7246

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS FORM JOINT EFFORT TO IMPROVE KINDERGARTEN READINESS FOR CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO AGE 3

Working together, organizations will launch coordinated effort to advance programs and policies focused on early years in life when rapid periods of brain development are critical for later success

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Nov. 17, 2017) — Research consistently shows that the most rapid period of brain development is in the first years of life, when a baby’s brain forms more than a million new neural connections every second. This cognitive, social and emotional growth is critical for later success in school and the workplace. To embrace this crucial time in a child’s development, the National Association of Counties, National League of Cities, Center for the Study of Social Policy, National Institute for Children’s Health Quality (NICHQ) and StriveTogether today announced an unprecedented partnership to work with communities across the country to improve kindergarten readiness by focusing on child development from birth to three.

The partnership will be funded by the Pritzker Children’s Initiative (PCI), a project of the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, which will invest more than \$6.5 million initially during the one year pilot — with additional funding to follow — to enhance local supports for infants, toddlers and their families. The Sorenson Impact Center, housed at the University of Utah’s David Eccles School of Business, will work with PCI and the partner organizations to manage the initiative. This is the first in a series of PCI-supported national, state and local efforts to improve kindergarten readiness for children nationwide.

Each year, an estimated 3 million children across the U.S. are at risk of reaching kindergarten not ready to learn. This network of partners will work together to dramatically reduce this number by promoting targeted, evidence-based programs and services, including a focus on a healthy start at birth, support of families with infants and toddlers and provision of high-quality care and learning environments. Research shows that investment in children and their families in the earliest years helps communities create better education, health, social and economic outcomes that increase revenue and reduce the need for costly, less effective interventions later in life.

“Communities across the country are leading innovative efforts to address the unique needs of infants and toddlers and, in turn, drive better education, health and economic outcomes for our entire nation. We plan to harness this momentum to build on promising community-based approaches, share their lessons broadly and move forward together,” said Janet Froetscher, president of the J.B and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation. “We are confident that through close collaboration and a shared focus on



Ideas
into
Action



our nation's youngest children, this strong network of partners will be able to build local capacity to achieve the greatest outcomes for as many children as possible.”

These organizations will work together to implement a multipronged strategy focused on building local capacity to best reach infants and toddlers and their families and bring promising programs to scale. They also will leverage each other's strengths and share best practices to maximize the reach of high-quality services for young children and stimulate a coordinated movement with lasting impact.

To achieve this mission, the partner organizations will equip communities with tools and resources to build strong early childhood systems and share best practices with other cities, counties and states. PCI will encourage local partners to disseminate content that will help drive policies that make the case for public and private investment in core services for infants and toddlers.

“The science is telling us that we have an opportunity to ensure all our nation's children are on a path to success far before children begin kindergarten,” said Rachel Schumacher, director of the Pritzker Children's Initiative. “Engaging communities in this work is key. When communities come together, the potential for positive change for their children and families is profound.”

Program partners' comments:

Frank Farrow, president, Center for the Study of Social Policy:

“The Center for the Study of Social Policy is looking forward with great enthusiasm to partnering with the Pritzker Children's Initiative. CSSP is eager to bring the perspectives of early childhood systems builders to this important work, and to help advance their efforts to strengthen child health outcomes, link children to high quality child care and bolster families' ability to nurture and support their young children at such a critical time in their development. As we move forward, we will place a high priority on engaging parents and other caregivers, and elevating the central role they play in preparing healthy, secure children for school. This high-stakes investment will help achieve equitable opportunities for all children, families and communities and ensure more children are on the path to a successful future.”

Roy Charles Brooks, president, National Association of Counties, and a Tarrant County, Texas commissioner:

“We're pleased to partner with the Pritzker Children's Initiative to advance county efforts to serve some of our most vulnerable residents, especially children under the age of three and families living in poverty. When we make investments and demonstrate leadership in early childhood development, we will lower future costs in health, child welfare, public safety and justice services. This unprecedented partnership will help us build healthier, more vibrant, safer communities across the nation.”

Scott D. Berns, MD, MPH, FAAP, president and CEO, National Institute for Children's Health Quality (NICHQ):

“This partnership is poised to have a huge influence on the pace in which improving outcomes for children ages 0 to 3 can happen. We're eager to bring our change management approach to help local



Ideas
into
Action



providers use data and continuous quality improvement methods to improve the lives of the children they serve. Ultimately, we aim to crystalize strategies that can be amplified nationally as best practices.”

Clifford Johnson, executive director, National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families:

“While growing numbers of mayors and other city leaders are pursuing early childhood strategies designed to put young children and their families on the path to success, they urgently need promising practices and practical guidance on how to ensure that all children thrive by age three. Local elected officials know that a child’s earliest years, from birth to age three, are the most critical time for learning and development, and cities can create local innovations that enable infants and toddlers to grow up healthy and reach their full potential. Through this new partnership with the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, NLC is excited to provide city leaders with new tools to help them increase supports and services for the youngest children in their communities.”

Fraser Nelson, managing director, Sorenson Impact Center:

"We at the Sorenson Impact Center are honored to play a role in the groundbreaking work of the Pritzker Children's Initiative. Our mission is to solve complex social problems through evidence-based programs and policies. Through this work, we feel privileged to bring our expertise in project management, innovative financing and data science to improve outcomes for young children and their families."

Jennifer Blatz, interim CEO, StriveTogether:

“We’re excited to partner with Pritzker Children’s Initiative and NICHQ on ensuring our most vulnerable children are better prepared for school. Early experiences have a big impact on a child’s future, but not all families receive the support they need. Through cohort learning and data-driven tools, we will help communities reduce disparities, improve developmental outcomes and identify strategies that can be scaled as national best practices to ultimately support the success of every child in the country.”

About the Partners

Center for the Study of Social Policy

The [Center for the Study of Social Policy](#) (CSSP) is a national, nonprofit public policy, research and technical assistance organization headquartered in Washington, DC, with offices in New York City and Los Angeles. CSSP is committed to securing equitable opportunities and optimal outcomes for children and families. CSSP strives to achieve this by focusing on the families facing the most significant barriers – including families living in poverty and those whose lives are affected by discrimination based on race, immigration status, sexual orientation and gender identity.

National Association of Counties

The [National Association of Counties](#) (NACo) unites America’s 3,069 county governments. Founded in 1935, NACo brings county officials together to advocate with a collective voice on national policy, exchange ideas and build new leadership skills, pursue transformational county solutions, enrich the public’s understanding of county government and exercise exemplary leadership in public service.



National Institute for Children’s Health Quality (NICHQ)

The [National Institute for Children’s Health Quality \(NICHQ\)](#) is a mission-driven nonprofit dedicated to driving sustainable improvements in the complex issues facing children’s health. We provide deep expertise in developing the pathways and partnerships for catalyzing change to achieve better outcomes for children and families.

National League of Cities

The [National League of Cities \(NLC\)](#) is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. Working in partnership with the 49 state municipal leagues, NLC serves as a resource to and an advocate for the more than 19,000 cities, villages and towns it represents. The Institute for Youth, Education and Families (YEF Institute) is a special entity within NLC that helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth and families in their communities.

Sorenson Impact Center

The [Sorenson Impact Center](#), housed at the University of Utah’s David Eccles School of Business, is a think-and-do tank that marshals capital for social good, empowers data-driven programs, breaks down silos across sectors, and equips the next generation of leaders with social purpose. To learn more, visit www.sorensonimpact.com

StriveTogether

[StriveTogether](#) leads a national movement of 70 communities to get better results in every child’s life. We coach and connect community partnerships across the country to focus efforts and close gaps, especially for children of color and low-income children. Communities using our approach have seen measurable gains in kindergarten readiness, academic achievement and postsecondary success. The StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network reaches 8.2 million students, involves 10,800 organizations and has partners in 32 states and Washington, D.C. Visit www.strivetogether.org.

About the Pritzker Children’s Initiative

For more than 15 years, [the Pritzker Children’s Initiative](#) (PCI) has been committed to a single, attainable goal: that all of our nation’s at-risk children will have access to high quality early childhood development resources, increasing their likelihood of success in school and life. With a focus on the importance of ages birth to three, PCI supports initiatives that unlock public and private investments in early childhood development, increase the supply and reach of evidence-based interventions, and accelerate innovation and knowledge sharing.