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African American Early Childhood Health Equity Partnership

Minnesota Integrated Care For Early Childhood Initiative (MN-ICECI)

2023-2026

Strategic Plan

FOR IMPROVED SYSTEMS ACCOUNTABILITY

October 23, 2023

APPROVED BY MN-ICECI ADVISORY COUNCIL

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Some of the best indicators of a country developing along the right lines are healthy mothers giving birth to healthy children who are assured of good care and a sound education that will enable them to face the challenges of a changing world.

- AUNG SAN SUU KYI, Burmese politician, diplomat, author, and a 1991 Nobel Peace Prize laureate

Introduction

Every family should have an equal opportunity to interact with a high-quality early childhood system that promotes the development and well-being of their children. While Minnesota has prioritized young children and families in systems work, troubling disparities still exist based on the race/ethnicity of the family. The Minnesota Integrated Care for Early Childhood Initiative (MN-ICECI) is an African American community-centered partnership that is designed to connect health resources to strengthen services to African American children 0-3 and their families. The work is funded by a Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Child and Family Health (CFH) Division Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) grant. MN-ICECI work is directed by an African American community Advisory Council of early childhood parents and professionals and coordinated by a diverse group of MDH staff and consultants.

Disproportionate Impacts

Minnesota faces significant challenges in implementing a coordinated early childhood system. For example, the array of programs is complex and fragmented because of variations in eligibility and funding. The combined impact of these challenges points toward a great need for coordinated efforts related to screenings, referrals, and follow-ups within populations who have experienced the greatest barriers to accessing the state's early childhood system—specifically, the African American community.

MN-ICECI is aimed at building the infrastructure for an equitable, family-centered, integrated model for conducting early childhood screenings, referrals, and follow-ups within health settings for African American families who are pregnant or parenting young children (ages 0 – 3 years old). Building off other early childhood initiatives in the state, such as the [Preschool Development Grant](#), the MN-ICECI links with needed supports and resources to ensure better childhood and lifelong outcomes.



Vision, Mission, and Values

VISION

MN-ICECI envisions an early childhood system that is holistic, integrated, family-centered, and connects families to resources within their community to improve their health and wellbeing.

MISSION

Partner with Minnesota early childhood systems to deliver a broad spectrum of strongly connected community-centered health programs and services to African American children 0-3 and their families.

VALUES

Community Outreach, Engagement, and Inclusion

Work closely with the African American community to ensure the health issues of children 0-3 and their families are addressed.

Partnerships

Build relationships with early childhood systems to create more cohesive, responsive, and equitable health outcomes for children and families.

Systems Disruption

Help shift systems to create stronger connections that improve early childhood health outcomes.

Family-Centered

Ensure African American parents with children ages 0-3 and early childhood workers and providers are involved in all aspects of MN-ICECI work.

Advocacy

Support city, county, and state policies and practices that improve African American early childhood health.

Lived Experience

Include community members who are parenting 0-3 year-olds at all levels of MN-ICECI's early childhood systems work.

Storytelling

Create spaces for learning, understanding, and healing through storytelling.

Systems Accountability

Establish processes for monitoring, analyzing, and improving the performance of early childhood systems.



Strategic Priorities, Goals, Strategies, and Key Performance Indicators

Community-Driven Leadership

Cultivate and support a community-driven leadership structure where problems and solutions are defined by, and decision-making power is shared with the community.

1.1. Recruit African American parents and early childhood professionals to serve on the MN-ICECI Advisory Council.

- Ongoing recruitment of parents and early childhood professionals.

1.2. Create a paid Community Liaison or Ambassador Network of parents with lived experience of African American early childhood issues to support MN-ICECI's outreach and engagement activities.

- The size and scope (e.g., Twin Cities and Greater MN) of the Community Liaison or Ambassador Network has been determined.
- A job description for the casual appointments is written and approved by MN-ICECI Advisory Council.
- Community Liaison or Ambassador Network recruitment has occurred.
- Community Liaison or Ambassador Network applicants have been interviewed and hired.
- Community Liaison or Ambassador Network hires are actively working in the African American community.
- African American families with children who are ages 0-3 are aware of and know how to address the biggest barriers (e.g., well child care visits, completing

immunizations, locating behavioral health services, transportation) to health care.

1.3. Ensure MN-ICECI's systems accountability work transforms the way early childhood health services are provided to African American children 0-3 and their families and that MN-ICECI brings long-term value to Minnesota's early childhood health system.

- A long-term governance structure is in place and operating effectively.
- A sustainability plan for MN-ICECI is developed and implemented.

1.4. Advocate for early childhood health policy that improves outcomes for African American children 0-3 and their families.

- The MN-ICECI Advisory Council's policy work is driven by African American children's and families' lived experiences and the Council's efforts to increase equity and access in early childhood services.
- MN-ICECI has the capacity to adequately support policy work.
- MN-ICECI has an Advisory Council-approved policy platform when needed.

Shared Understanding and Vision

Build a shared understanding and vision of gaps, assets, and opportunities in achieving an equitable early childhood system that is inclusive of the health system.

2.1. Recruit and hire a research team to complete a systems assessment by mid-2023.

- Guiding principles are established and existing needs assessment reports (including those completed by the MIECHV, Title V, and PDG initiatives) are compiled and shared with the assessment team, including benchmarking inequities over time to illustrate positive change.
- Focus areas for further assessment and project priorities are identified with the assessment team.
- Agreed on information is gathered, in-depth analyses of focus areas is completed, and the desired state is envisioned.

- Possible strategies to help reduce gaps and improve systems are identified.
- The assessment is completed by the end of May 2023.

2.2. Design and launch MN-ICECI website.

- A domain name is identified and purchased.
- Content for the MN-ICECI website is agreed on.
- Website design is completed.
- Website is launched.
- Approval of launched website is provided by MN-ICECI Advisory Council.

JEDI Impact

Increase Minnesota's capacity to advance justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) in accessing services and supports for African American children 0-3 and their families.

3.1. Enhance community awareness using storytelling and parent voice.

- African American parents with children 0-3 and Early Childhood workers/providers have formed a work group that helps collect and share community stories.

3.2. Use the MN-ICECI website, Social Media, and community outreach, and engagement to connect African American families and their children ages 0-3 to a broad array of health services.

- An information campaign is developed, and messages and the scope of the campaign are approved by the MN-ICECI Advisory Council.
- Increased numbers of Minnesota African American families are familiar with and using early childhood programs and services for children ages 0-3.

- Minnesota African American families gain tools that strengthen their voices and messages to health systems.

3.3. Leverage existing data collections to collect new and useful data on African American 0-3 early childhood issues.

- New and innovative approaches are available to improve health outcomes for African American children 0-3 and their families.
- New learning, especially what works to prevent health crisis, is consistently reported to African Americans through community storytelling and a variety of media.

Health Systems Capacity

Increase health system capacity to serve young African American children and their families.

4.1. Build a systems-wide network that centers on lived experience.

- Specific partners with lived experience are identified, engaged, and their recommendations are acted on throughout early childhood systems.

4.2. Create partnerships between health care and early childhood education.

- Silos are broken.
- Regular assessments are completed to record successes and challenges.

4.3. Develop partnerships with organizations from a wide range of backgrounds and geographic locations that are serving African American children 0-3 and their families with the expressed purpose of strengthening cross-systems outcomes.

- MN-ICECI maintains dialogue and effective working relationships with a broad range of organizations that are serving children 0-3 and their families (e.g., Office of African American Health, Department of Children and Families).
- MN-ICECI uses community knowledge to advocate for systems accountability.

4.4. Regularly gather quality improvement data regarding MN-ICECI and its partners outcomes.

- Data are used to amplify ongoing issues and systems change efforts that are making a difference.
- Data allows MN-ICECI's Advisory Council to hold systems accountable.

Financial Support and Fund Development

Identify and carry out innovative financial and policy strategies to support implementation and sustainability of efforts.

5.1. Help organizations that are serving African American children 0-3 and their families build programs and services capacity.

- Organizations wishing to expand programs and services to African American children 0-3 and their families are incentivized.
- The biggest barriers to health care for African American children 0-3 are addressed.
- Financial capacities of organizations serving African American children 0-3 and their families are strengthened.

5.2. Improve MN-ICECI's long-term financial stability through fund development that maintains MN-ICECI's operating budget beyond the HRSA grant timeline.

- MN-ICECI's Advisory Council understands MN-ICECI's revenue, and expenses, including necessary overhead for communications, outreach, and fundraising.
- Funding and financial plans to maintain MN-ICECI's systems accountability work are created and implemented.
- Strategic partnerships and collaborations generate additional MN-ICECI revenue

Implementation

The MN-ICECI 2023-2026 Strategic Plan for Improved Systems Accountability is designed to serve as a framework for MN-ICECI and its partners that are working to visibly improve health outcomes for African American children 0-3 and their families. The plan is intended to inform and guide systems connections, service delivery, program planning, financial incentivizing, policy development, and research. It will also serve as a tool to promote stronger connections across systems that will result in ease of use for parents, identify new opportunities for partnerships, and monitor and evaluate progress.

This plan is part of the State of Minnesota’s ongoing effort to advance justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) in health and other outcomes. The work identified in the plan presents opportunities to strengthen cooperation and cross-learning, and complements and expands upon recent legislative and executive actions such as coordination and access to infant and early childhood services for families.

The responsibility for realizing the plans goals cuts across the work of many systems at local and state levels. The MN-ICECI will convene on a regular basis to advance implementation of the plan. The MN-ICECI Support Team will provide input for the development of an implementation plan and will meet regularly to coordinate activities, identify opportunities to better align and accelerate efforts, apply lessons learned from data and research findings, address emerging issues, monitor progress toward the Plan’s goals and objectives, and report on progress.

This work will foster and be strongly informed by partnerships with a variety of local and state systems, African American parents, and community-based organizations, especially those serving African American communities.

Monitoring and Accountability

Achieving the priorities outlined in this Plan is no easy task. The work requires strong partnerships with parents,

systems, and community-based organizations; measuring progress; and dedicating sufficient financial and other resources.

Implementation efforts will expand upon the broad goals and strategies identified in this Plan; specify timelines and implementing entities for each of the five goals. MN-ICECI’s Advisory Council may assign committees and Support Team liaisons to track the progress of individual goals and MN-ICECI’s Support Team will provide Advisory Council members with operational workplans and periodic reports on the advancement of each goal.

As a general practice, MN-ICECI’s Advisory Council will include regular discussions of the 2023-2026 goals, including what is working and what recommendations they have for changes to goals if shifts are needed. The Advisory Council reserves the right to amend the MN-ICECI 2023-2026 Strategic Plan as needed throughout the three-year implementation period.

Evaluation

MN-ICECI’s Support Team will report quarterly to the Advisory Council regarding the implementation of strategic goals, including steps forward on each of the five Strategic Priorities. Quarterly progress reports will allow the Advisory Council to determine to what extent goals are being accomplished, and if not, consider whether:

- Deadlines need adjusting.
- Additional resources (personnel, money, equipment, facilities, training, etc.) are needed to achieve the goals.
- Goals and strategies should be adjusted to remain realistic and relevant.
- Advisory Council or Support Team assignments should be changed to put more focus on achieving the goals.
- Additional monitoring and evaluation could provide information to help improve future work.

FIVE METHODS WILL BE USED TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN:



Identifying strong systems partners



Implementing new ways of working together



Appropriate budgeting



Policy development



Data gathering and measurement

Acknowledgments

The MN-ICECI Advisory Council is very grateful for the candid input and considerable expertise that guided the development of MN-ICECI's Strategic Plan. This plan is possible because of the generous contribution of time and expertise from MN-ICECI parent and early childhood partners and Support Team. The Council is grateful for the diverse range of perspectives and recommendations that deeply informed this plan. The Advisory Council participated in 4 discussion sessions and the MN-ICECI Support Team completed 25 meetings. Both groups contributed to a Systems Assessment and identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with early childhood systems that serve African American children 0-5 and their families. Council members, including parents of children 0-3, and the MN-ICECI Support Team also participated in a day-long retreat. The MN-ICECI Advisory Council thanks each Advisory Council member, Minnesota Department of Health staff, Rainbow Research, and GrayHall staff for their contributions to strategic planning. Just as the formation of this Plan would not have been possible without rigorous engagement from a broad group of stakeholders, its implementation hinges on the work we will do together. We look forward to continuing this collaboration in the years ahead, in service of our vision of an early childhood system that is holistic, integrated, family-centered, and connects families to resources within their community to improve their health and wellbeing.

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Contact Minnesota Integrated Care for Early Childhood Initiative (MN-ICECI) to learn more about how MN-ICECI is building African American early childhood health equity partnerships and how to join the effort.

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