



Engaging and Supporting Families

GRANTEES FEATURED

Georgia
Kentucky
Michigan
New Jersey
Pennsylvania

In December 2013, **Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Vermont** became the newest states to receive Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (ELC) grants. Although they, like the 14 states that received awards before them, do not plan to use a significant portion of their grants to fund initiatives targeting infants and toddlers specifically, their efforts to strengthen the systems that support all young children and families have potential to improve outcomes for babies if their needs are intentionally addressed. This excerpt from *Meeting the Challenge: How the Newest Early Learning Challenge Grantees Can Meet the Needs of Infants and Toddlers* [www.zerotothree.org/public-policy/state-community-policy/elc-grantees-2014.pdf] discusses grantees' plans to engage and support families.

Parents are their children's first teacher and play a critical role in supporting their young children's healthy development. Early childhood programs and services are most effective when they engage parents and other family members. The new ELC grantees have several initiatives to improve family engagement within the early childhood system and increase parents' understanding of early childhood development.

- **Kentucky, Michigan, and New Jersey** plan to integrate the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families strength-based framework of protective factors into their services and systems. All of the public and private partners in **Kentucky's** ELC grant will integrate the framework into services they currently provide to low-income families. **Michigan** and **New Jersey** will ensure their QRIS standards reflect the framework. **New Jersey** will use an evidence-based progression of statewide family engagement standards in its QRIS, and both will train early care and education providers on the protective factors. **Georgia** developed its own family engagement standards and plans to provide professional

development on them to early childhood educators. The state will also ensure the QRIS program standards are aligned to them.

- **Kentucky, Michigan, and Pennsylvania** have initiatives to help parents understand their children's development and how they can support it. **Kentucky** plans to expand the Toyota bornlearning® Academies—school-based workshops for low-income families with young children that offer parents strategies they can use at home to maximize their child's early learning and development—to reach 150 or more elementary schools over the grant period. Existing Family Resource & Youth Services Centers (FRYSC) will be used to offer the workshops with the intention of fully incorporating the bornlearning® program into FRYSC core components so that it will be sustained after the ELC grant ends. **Michigan** will engage existing Great Start Parent Coalitions to work collaboratively with other community stakeholders to widely disseminate materials about early childhood learning and development to families across the state. **Pennsylvania** plans to update and improve its Early Learning Guiding Parents Smoothly (GPS) website for parents of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. The GPS is an interactive tool that helps families understand what they can do to help their young children learn and grow.

This series explores six strategies the newest ELC grantees are pursuing: developing and integrating Early Learning Guidelines for infants and toddlers; professional development of the infant-toddler workforce; expansion of home visiting; building capacity in high-need communities; engaging and supporting families; and connecting families to appropriate services. Download all of the strategy briefs and full paper, as well as other ELC resources, at www.zerotothree.org/elc.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ZERO TO THREE has developed a number of resources related to the ELC, including a toolkit outlining how states can use the ELC to benefit infants and toddlers and articles detailing how the 2013 and previous ELC grantees targeted very young children. View them all at www.zerotothree.org/elc