

Early Childhood Iowa: Lakes Region

Serving Clay, Dickinson, O'Brien, and Osceola Counties
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Vision: Every child, beginning at birth, will be healthy and successful

Did you know? The early years matter because, in the first few years of life, 700 new neural connections are formed every second. Neural connections are formed through the interaction of genes and a baby's environment and experiences, especially "serve and return" interaction with adults, or what developmental researchers call contingent reciprocity. These are the connections that build brain architecture – the foundation upon which all later learning, behavior, and health depend. *Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University*

The **Best Care for Better Babies program** provides home visits by registered nurses to families prenatally through the baby's first six months. Here, a nurse shares a story about a family served: Ana is a stay at home mom, and Ivan is a hard worker at a construction business in town. I first started doing home visits over a year ago when Ana was pregnant for the fourth time. Unfortunately, she had experienced three previous miscarriages (last one was at 15 weeks) and was very nervous, as would be expected. She was a referral from the WIC/MATURA program. She had been seen at our local family practice clinic, but due to her high risk status, she chose to have prenatal care in Sioux Falls. Due to Ana's anxiety and distance from Sioux Falls, sometimes the doctor and I would coordinate visits to monitor her weight, blood pressure, and heart tones. This saved the family a few trips to Sioux Falls as her pregnancy was going smoothly. It was very reassuring for Ana and Ivan to hear the baby's heart beat when I visited. She delivered in Sioux Falls as planned at 39 weeks gestation. Ivan was and is ALWAYS home for our visits. For the next six months I followed up with baby Aiden, supporting mom with breast feeding, and providing general education and screenings for their growing baby. They are a close and private family with no extended family support nearby. Ana is pregnant again and due in a couple of months, so I continue to see and support them. I provided them with a contact person at one of the churches as they wanted to get Aiden baptized. Our Child Passenger Safety program was able to assist them with a car seat for Aiden and continues to help them with car seat adjustments as another baby is on the way. They are reluctant to check out other community resources, but I provide them information, connections, and encouragement. Ana knows she can call me anytime with questions about the pregnancy or Aiden, and she does. They are very excited when I come to visit and proud to show me the new skills Aiden is learning. Sometimes we get silly, and Aiden and I dance to his musical toys. They are so appreciative of the services our program has offered and have developed into loving, confident parents.

Community Plan Priorities:

- Strengthen the relationship between parents and their children through the provision of quality family support programs
- Improve the health and wellness of infants
- Improve the quality of early care and learning environments

Children require strong, safe, and nurturing families who are able to meet their emotional, physical, and developmental needs. Our family support programs assist parents in creating and providing responsive home environments. Quality, nurturing early care and education environments, in addition to healthy, supportive families, are essential for children to succeed in school and life. Our services to early care and learning environments teach, coach, and support providers to promote the healthy mental and social development of children in their care.

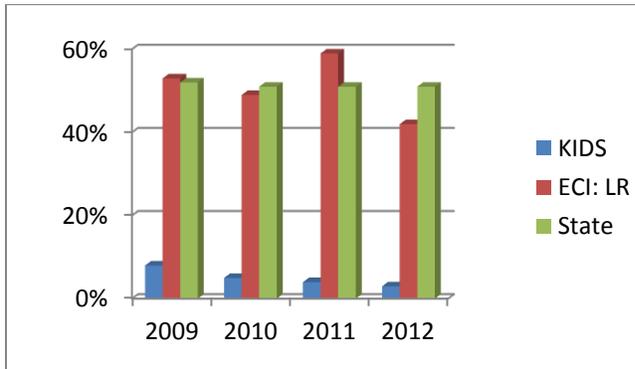
Services, programs, and activities supported by ECI: Lakes Region

Relationship building is the foundation of our work with families, providers, and community partners. The core programs and services of ECI: Lakes Region include:

- ✚ An early childhood mental health collaborative promoting the Social, Emotional, Educational Development (SEED) needs of young children is implementing strategies and services to address the various tiers of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and to promote the healthy mental wellness of young children.
- ✚ KIDS and Best Care for Better Babies are family support programs that provide home-based parent education/support, child development screenings/services, health education, and resource networking. The KIDS program was the first program to be awarded the Iowa Family Support Credential.
- ✚ The Hand in Hand program provides resources, education, and advocacy for children, parents, and child care providers. Services to center, preschool, and home providers focus on the healthy mental development of young children.
- ✚ Preschool scholarships are provided to children from families with income at or less than 200% of the federal poverty level.
- ✚ ECI: Lakes Region has strong collaborative relationships with other community agencies and organizations. We partner with them to provide professional development and training to ECI: Lakes Region program staff, child care providers, preschool staff, parents, and community members.

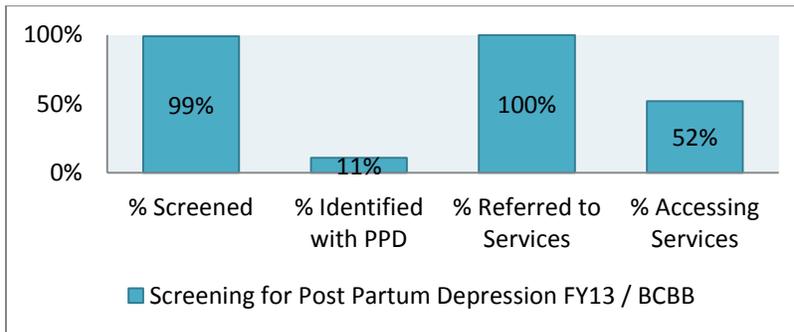
How do we measure our progress?

1. Percent of confirmed abused children 5 years and younger



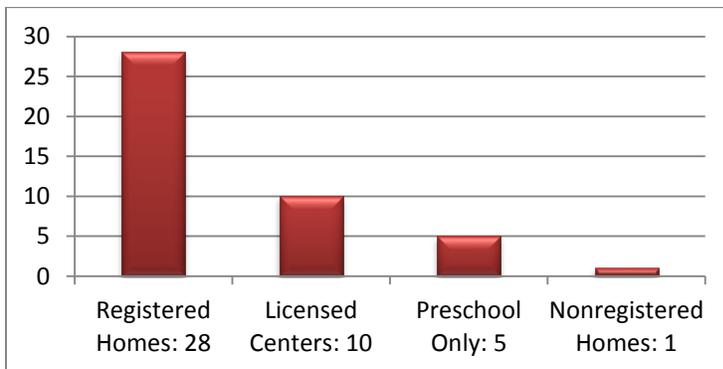
Younger children make up a larger proportion of abuse and neglect victims than do older children. (*Zero to Three*) Families participating in the ECI: Lakes Region KIDS program continue to have significantly lower abuse rates than those in the overall ECI: LR area. The 2011 statistics for the ECI: LR showed a significant increase which correlates with other data contained in the FY12 Community Plan. Home visitors report that many families experience multiple risk factors simultaneously.

2. Screening for Postpartum Depression



The emotional wellness of parents plays a significant role in the health and mental health of their children. (*Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University*) The Best Care for Better Babies program screens mothers for postpartum depression using the Edinburgh Postpartum Depression Screening tool.

3. Early Care and Learning Programs Participating in Hand in Hand



Hand in Hand works with early care and learning providers to support children's healthy social and emotional development by providing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports training and on site coaching, as well as other early healthy development curricula and activities. 48% of registered homes, licensed centers, and preschools accessed these services. This exponentially impacts the number of children and families with every provider served. In FY13 431 children from 351 families were enrolled in programs served by Hand in Hand.

What can you do to help?

- Talk with your local, state, and national legislators. Encourage them to support and fund services for young children and their parents. Register to vote! Vote!
- Remind businesses that investment in quality early childhood programs has a positive economic development impact.
- Contact ECI: Lakes Region at 712-363-3363 or access the website at www.ecilakesregion.com to learn about our services, connect to our programs, link to resources for families with young children, volunteer to be a board member, participate on local planning groups, or for general information and questions.

Others within our community working on similar issues:

- Local planning groups in Clay, Dickinson, O'Brien, and Osceola counties
- Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc. (programs such as Head Start, Early Head Start, WIC), Mid Sioux Child Care Resource and Referral, Matura Child Care Nurse Consultant
- Prairie Lakes AEA, Northwest AEA, local school districts and preschools
- DCAT, Community Partnerships for Protecting Children, Priority One, Dream Center, Cherish House/Cherish Center, Atlas, Love, Inc.
- Local child abuse prevention councils
- Community agencies and organizations