

Gov. Evers: Wisconsin awarded nearly \$10 million for early childhood efforts

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers announced today that Wisconsin has been awarded \$10 million through the Preschool Development Birth to Five Grant (PDG B-5) to strengthen the state's early childhood system. The grant focuses on addressing pervasive challenges around equity, access, quality, and affordability in early care and education.

The grant will allow Wisconsin to collect better information about the needs of the early care and education system. That information will be used to create a state plan. The grant activities are led by Gov. Evers, First Lady Kathy Evers, State Superintendent Carolyn Stanford Taylor, the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and a newly created Leadership Council on Early Years (LCEY) comprised of state agency leaders. The LCEY will allow a more diverse group of stakeholders to be involved in providing feedback on early childhood policy - connecting the dots among sectors like business, healthcare, and higher education that bring valuable knowledge and experience to the conversation.

"The first years of a kid's life set the tone for their future success," said Gov. Evers. "Right now, many families struggle to find affordable and reliable care for their kids before they reach school age. This grant provides us with an opportunity to clear some of those hurdles, and to connect the dots for our kids and their families."

As part of the grant activities, the state will be looking at ways to improve recruitment, retention, and support of the early care and education workforce. Finding qualified employees and keeping them is often cited as one of the biggest challenges childcare providers face. Wisconsin's plan will also focus on bridging the gap between early childhood and school-aged programming and vulnerable and underserved children.

“This grant gives us an opportunity to rethink how Wisconsin values early childhood,” said Secretary-designee Emilie Amundson. “What we hear from people across the state is that access to high-quality early care and education experiences drive a whole host of other positive outcomes for communities. This is our chance to build a bigger table and help everyone understand the value early care and education provides Wisconsin.”

“Providing a strong educational foundation for our youngest learners is critical to close opportunity and achievement gaps,” State Superintendent Carolyn Stanford Taylor said. “The funding allows us to design a Wisconsin-specific approach that respects the diverse challenges our communities face in providing early care and education. This exciting opportunity for our state has the potential to transform the way we serve families and prepare our children for their K-12 education.”

The PDG B-5 is designed to provide states with the funding necessary to plan changes to their early care and education systems. Awards help offset the cost of those activities and must be spent within one calendar year. During the initial round of funding, which covered planning activities from Dec. 31, 2018 through Dec. 30, 2019, 46 states and territories were provided awards. Wisconsin was one of six states and territories to receive an award during the second round of initial funding.