

Vision

Every DuPage child will be ready to succeed in kindergarten.

Mission

To build sustainable local coordinated systems for early childhood development across the county.

Why Invest in Early Childhood?

Investing in early childhood development of disadvantaged children will produce great returns to individuals and society in better education, health, economic and social outcomes -- not only saving tax-payers money but increasing our nation's economic productivity,

James Heckman, Nobel Prize Winner

Research has shown that children who participate in quality early learning experiences during the first five years of life are better prepared to succeed in kindergarten which ultimately puts them on the path for lifelong success. This is especially true for children who are considered at-risk due to issues such as developmental delays, low income, lack of English skills or their parents' lack of education.

From birth to age five, approximately 85% of brain development occurs and the cognitive and socio-emotional skills developed provide the foundation from which more complex skills are built. Children who grow up in an environment with limited learning opportunities are less likely to develop these critical skills. Unfortunately, low skill levels and social ability are often contributing factors toward many of today's economic and social problems (i.e. crime, teenage pregnancy, high school drop-out rates, and adverse health conditions.)

Even local law enforcement officials agree on the importance of investing in early childhood. Kane and DuPage County sheriffs, Pat Perez and John Zaruba, have publicly recognized the value of high-quality preschools as one of the most powerful crime-fighting tools we have available and have stated that at-risk kids who do not attend preschool are more likely to drop out of high school and commit violent crimes.

For every dollar invested in early childhood education, it has been estimated that \$7-\$10 is saved in crime, welfare and other costs. Evidence also suggests that investing in high-quality, early-learning programs combined with support for at-risk families leads to:

- Lower rates of participation in special education
- Lower rates of involvement with the criminal justice system
- Higher rates of high school graduation

Despite the compelling reasons to invest in early childhood programs, it is not always considered a priority in a community. Additionally, funding for programs that benefit at-risk children and families has repeatedly been in jeopardy of funding cuts by the State of Illinois.

In many communities, early childhood services are delivered by multiple providers (school district, preschool, home caregiver, child care center, park district, pediatrician, not-for-profit organizations, etc.) yet there is often a lack of coordination and communication among the programs and resources that are available.

Background

During the past 12 years, the DuPage Foundation engaged in a long-term campaign to raise funds to address early childhood care and education issues in DuPage County. Through the generosity of local donors and matching funds provided by the Grand Victoria Foundation, the Foundation established three endowments -- Communityworks, Gustafson Family Fund, and the Audrey and Glenn Mensching Fund -- to support local early childhood programs and initiatives in perpetuity.

The Opportunities

It takes a “village” to prepare children for kindergarten and to launch them on the road to life-long success which is why the Foundation will invest financial resources to help local communities establish a coordinated approach toward this goal. DuPage County is made up of 39 municipalities and is home to 42 public school districts and 49 private schools with each community having a unique demographic and set of needs with regard to early childhood care and education.

Engaging multiple community partners is very important to the success of each collaborative effort. Prior to applying, providers who touch the lives of children from birth to five in each community should already be meeting on a regular basis to establish a coordinated approach. The local public school district is a key partner to have at the table and it is imperative that it be an active part of the effort. Local private schools (preschools, elementary/middle, and high schools) should also be included. Collaborations are encouraged to engage local parents who represent the population they are specifically trying to serve. In addition to local community stakeholders, there are many agencies providing county-wide early childhood programs and services; it is suggested that they are also included in the planning.

The DuPage Foundation will provide funding to help one or more communities expand their collaborative efforts focused on creating systemic change in addressing early childhood needs as they relate to preparing children for kindergarten.

The ultimate goals of the Bright & Early DuPage initiative are that more kids are ready to succeed when they enter kindergarten and that there are fewer disparities in kindergarten readiness by race, ethnicity and income. To that end, the Foundation is focused on specific service delivery and system level outcomes (see attached Simplified Logic Model) and will use this information to measure the overall impact of the initiative. It is understood that these collaboratives have already implemented systems and are measuring data that is meaningful and important for their communities. Focusing on these outcomes is not meant to discourage those efforts but to build upon them.

Service Delivery Outcomes

- More high-needs children receiving high-quality child care/preschool and Early Intervention/Special Ed services.
- More low-income parents receiving coaching on how to support their children’s learning.

System Level Outcomes

- More high-quality services available.
- Children with special needs identified early.
- Optimal recruitment for programs.
- Better parent awareness.

The Foundation offers two grant opportunities. Local collaborations can select the opportunity that best aligns with the stage at which they are currently operating.

Planning Grant Opportunity

Local collaborative groups that are in the beginning stages of working together may apply for a planning grant of up to \$10,000. This grant is intended to be used as seed funding to help the collaboration get off the ground and begin implementation of initial programming. Groups that are in this phase are encouraged to take advantage of technical assistance offered through the DuPage Early Childhood Collaborative. Based on the applications received and each collaboration's readiness, it's possible that one or more applicants will receive funding at amounts less than \$10,000.

Implementation Grant Opportunity

Local groups which have operated as an early childhood collaborative for at least one year and have received funds from the Foundation for less than four years may apply for grant funding for up to \$65,000. It is expected that collaborations at this stage have developed a vision, mission and structure for their collaborations and have created specific goals that they are already working toward in an effort to address the issues and barriers that impact kindergarten readiness in their communities. Based on the applications received and each collaboration's readiness, it is possible that one or more applicants will receive funding at amounts less than \$65,000.

Groups which have received funding for four years may apply for grants for up to \$50,000.

Sustainability

While the DuPage Foundation's financial assistance will help to expand one or more collaborative kindergarten readiness efforts, additional funding from other sources will be critical to long-term sustainability. It is expected that partners involved with the effort will leverage other funding (local, state, private foundations, individual donors, etc.) to increase the resources available.

Eligibility

Applications for funding will be accepted from DuPage County school districts or not-for-profit organizations that serve young children and families and are public charities classified as exempt from federal income taxes under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

One qualifying agency should be identified as the lead agency for the collaboration and will be responsible for submitting the application and monitoring the grant. It is preferable that the lead agency is not a governmental agency.

For the purpose of the Bright & Early DuPage initiative, the Foundation does not award grants to:

- Organizations located outside of DuPage County
- Individuals
- Support religious activities (secular activities provided by religious organizations may be eligible for grant funds)
- Endowments
- Disease-specific organizations
- Private foundations and private operating foundations
- Hospitals, including supporting foundations

Grant Application Due Date

Applications must be submitted for the Bright & Early DuPage Grant Program by 5:00 on Friday, April 7, 2017. Applications submitted after the specified deadlines will not be accepted.

Online Grant Application Process

Proposals must be submitted via the online grant application process.

To begin the online grant application process, applicants will need to create an account by providing basic information (email address, password, name, organization, EIN#, address, etc.). Once you have initially created your account, you will be able to access current and future grant applications. The following are tutorials which have been provided by our vendor, Foundant, to help you create an account and begin completing your application.

Video Tutorial

Applicant Tutorial

Preview the required questions and the format of the online grant applications:
Bright & Early DuPage Application (Actual application can be accessed below)

Application Review Process

The DuPage Foundation's Bright & Early DuPage committee consists of community volunteers, Foundation trustees and the vice president for programs.

- Committee will evaluate all applications received.
- Committee will recommend one or more community projects to the full Board of Trustees for approval.
- Applicants will be notified in late May as to the status of their applications.
- Grants will be distributed mid-June.

Application Questions

If you are interested in applying, please contact Barb Szczepaniak, vice president for programs, at 630.598.5280 to discuss the application process.

For further details about Bright & Early DuPage, visit our website at <http://www.dupagefoundation.org/be/TheCase.aspx>.