

## Early Learning Opportunities Act Discretionary Grants

CFDA: 93.577

Grant Applicant: Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council

Fiscal Agent: Lewis Cass Intermediate School District

### CRITERION 1: OBJECTIVES AND NEED FOR ASSISTANCE

1. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates the need for assistance including identification and discussion of its needs and resources assessment concerning early learning services and the relevancy of the results as the basis for determining its objectives and need for assistance for early learning services. Relevant data from the needs and resources assessment should be included. Participant and beneficiary information must also be included.

The Cass County ELOA Program will expand upon the volunteer early learning program, for children ages 0–5 years old, created with a Michigan Department of Education ASAP-PIE (All Students Achieve Program–Parent Involvement in Education) grant (1999–2001) and continued with Federal funding from the U.S. Department of Education under the Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative (2001–2004). When Cass County applied for the 0–5 initiative monies in 1999, it was a county in extreme distress. Cass County ranked 79 out of 83 Michigan counties (the higher the ranking number, the worse is the local environment for children’s well being) for the negative trends in child well-being.<sup>1</sup> Four years later, while the 2003 trends reveal that Cass County kids are still children with special needs, the county now ranks 70 out of 83 counties. The most recent Kids Count report (2003)<sup>2</sup> supports the findings from the 2002 needs assessment conducted by the Cass County Human Services Coordinating

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<sup>1</sup> Kids Count in Michigan, Data Book 2000, Annie E. Casey Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> Kids Count in Michigan, Data Book 2003, Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Council. Overall child well-being indicators are improving, but the regionally gathered statistics, along with a 2003 reassessment of local early learning resources, reveal there are still barriers preventing Cass County children from realizing long-term sustained gains.

**Table 1 – Child Health**

<b>Trend Data</b>		<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>
Infant Deaths	<b>Cass</b>	4	3	4	3	3
	<b>MI</b>	1,089	1,083	1,082	1,091	1,083
Infant Death Rate	<b>Cass</b>	8	5	7	5	5
	<b>MI</b>	8	8	8	8	8
Child Deaths	<b>Cass</b>	4	4	3	4	3
	<b>MI</b>	510	506	489	471	443
Child Death Rate	<b>Cass</b>	39	42	29	36	33
	<b>MI</b>	25	25	24	23	22

**Table 2 – Adolescence**

<b>Trend Data</b>		<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>
Births to Teens, Ages 15–17	<b>Cass</b>	43	36	29	26	27
	<b>MI</b>	5,815	5,486	5,099	4,841	4,540
Teen Birth Rate, Ages 15–17	<b>Cass</b>	39	32	26	24	24
	<b>MI</b>	28	26	24	23	22
Teen Deaths	<b>Cass</b>	1	3	2	2	0
	<b>MI</b>	426	393	362	336	333
Teen Death Rate	<b>Cass</b>	-	75	65	64	-
	<b>MI</b>	63	57	51	47	46

**Table 3 – Right Start**

<b>Trend Data</b>		<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
Births to Teens, Under Age 20	<b>Cass</b>	95	85	81	82	79
	<b>MI</b>	15,794	15,321	14,881	14,262	13,476
Percent Births to Teens, Under Age 20	<b>Cass</b>	17	16	15	15	15
	<b>MI</b>	12	12	11	11	10
Repeat Teen Births, Ages 15–19	<b>Cass</b>	21	18	17	18	15
	<b>MI</b>	3,359	3,235	3,120	2,936	2,729
Percent Repeat Teen Births, Ages 15–19	<b>Cass</b>	22	21	21	22	20
	<b>MI</b>	22	22	21	21	21
Births to Unwed Mothers	<b>Cass</b>	184	172	178	183	189
	<b>MI</b>	44,739	44,708	45,347	45,493	45,313

<b>Trend Data</b>		<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
Percent Births to Unwed Mothers	<b>Cass</b>	33	31	32	34	36
	<b>MI</b>	34	34	34	34	34
Births to Mothers with Less than 12 Years of Education	<b>Cass</b>	148	133	133	131	130
	<b>MI</b>	23,228	22,959	23,075	22,985	22,681
Percent Births to Mothers with Less than 12 Years of Education	<b>Cass</b>	27	24	24	24	25
	<b>MI</b>	17	17	17	17	17
Births with Late or No Prenatal Care	<b>Cass</b>	21	22	26	29	28
	<b>MI</b>	4,041	4,295	4,601	4,728	4,644
Percent Births with Late or No Prenatal Care	<b>Cass</b>	4	4	5	5	5
	<b>MI</b>	3	3	3	4	4
Births to Mothers Who Smoked during Pregnancy	<b>Cass</b>	160	150	153	143	138
	<b>MI</b>	22,882	22,150	21,397	20,815	20,321
Percent Births to Mothers Who Smoked during Pregnancy	<b>Cass</b>	29	28	27	27	26
	<b>MI</b>	17	17	16	16	15
Low Birth Weight Babies	<b>Cass</b>	45	42	41	38	43
	<b>MI</b>	10,344	10,502	10,626	10,708	10,608
Percent Low Birth Weight Babies	<b>Cass</b>	8	8	7	7	-
	<b>MI</b>	8	8	8	8	-
Preterm Births	<b>Cass</b>	61	56	56	55	60
	<b>MI</b>	14,248	14,444	14,616	14,739	14,825
Percent Preterm Births	<b>Cass</b>	11	10	10	10	11
	<b>MI</b>	11	11	11	11	11
Births to Mothers White Non-Hispanic (NH)	<b>Cass</b>	472	464	481	464	457
	<b>MI</b>	99,734	99,222	99,205	98,535	97,265
Percent Births to Mothers White Non-Hispanic (NH)	<b>Cass</b>	84	85	86	86	86
	<b>MI</b>	75	74	74	73	73
Births to Mothers Black Non-Hispanic (NH)	<b>Cass</b>	51	45	45	44	43
	<b>MI</b>	24,094	24,011	23,965	23,725	23,199
Percent Births to Mothers Black Non-Hispanic (NH)	<b>Cass</b>	9	8	8	8	8
	<b>MI</b>	18	18	18	18	18
Births to Mothers Hispanic	<b>Cass</b>	24	26	23	22	20
	<b>MI</b>	5,470	5,866	6,360	6,821	7,155
Percent Births to Mothers Hispanic	<b>Cass</b>	4	5	4	4	4
	<b>MI</b>	4	4	5	5	5
Births to Mothers Other Race & Ethnicity	<b>Cass</b>	13	13	10	10	9
	<b>MI</b>	4,178	4,443	4,838	5,153	5,312
Percent Births to Mothers Other Race & Ethnicity	<b>Cass</b>	2	2	2	2	2
	<b>MI</b>	3	3	4	4	4

**Table 4 – Economic Security**

<b>Trend Data</b>		<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
Free / Reduced Lunch	<b>Cass</b>	2,685	2,623	2,650	2,887	2,841
	<b>MI</b>	520,060	525,879	516,990	551,330	564,215
Percent Free / Reduced Lunch	<b>Cass</b>	37	37	37	40	40
	<b>MI</b>	32	31	31	32	33

**Table 5 – Child Safety**

<b>Trend Data</b>		<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
Children in Investigated Families	<b>Cass</b>	-	-	989	1,032	956
	<b>MI</b>	-	-	171,106	173,778	167,335
Rate of Children in Investigated Families	<b>Cass</b>	-	-	76	79	73
	<b>MI</b>	-	-	66	67	65
Confirmed Victims of Abuse or Neglect	<b>Cass</b>	-	-	248	232	222
	<b>MI</b>	-	-	26,888	28,806	27,294
Rate of Victims of Abuse or Neglect	<b>Cass</b>	-	-	19	18	17
	<b>MI</b>	-	-	10	11	11

Table 6 shows a profile of Cass County’s efforts since 1999 to diligently and steadily develop voluntary early learning programs intended to produce sustained gains in early learning for children ages 0–5 years old and their families.

**Table 6**

<b>Cass County Voluntary Early Learning Initiatives</b>		
<b>Service Characteristics and Early Learning Components</b>	<b>ASAP-PIE Outcomes (1999–2001)</b>	<b>SS/HS Outcomes (2001–2004)</b>
Targeted ages for children	0–5 years old	0–18 years old
Total 0–5 age children	3,504 (1990 Census)	3,134 (2000 Census)
Number of children served	799	685
Number of families served	637	565
Home visits	2,661	296
Parent groups	1,311	23
Developmental screenings	219	311
Links to quality preschools	27	9
Increased access to community services	202	136
Mental health services referrals for targeted families of children 0–5 years old	227	183
Kindergarten readiness programs	<b>Not included in funding initiative</b>	

In recently formed focus groups, the Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council reviewed the draft Results and Indicators for Michigan’s Early Childhood System. The following indicators are considered priorities for Cass County.

**Table 7 – Justification for Expanding Voluntary Early Learning Initiatives**

<b>Desired Outcomes for Cass County Children (0–5 years old)</b>	<b>Critical Indicators Under Examination for 2004 and Beyond</b>
Children are physically healthy.	Number and percentage of children under age 6 with a regular medical home. Number and percentage of uninsured/insured children under age 6. Percentage of children from birth to age 5 with up-to-date immunizations.
Families are physically healthy.	Number and percentage of families with access to health care. Number and percentage of parents and children under age 6 who are obese.
Children are socially and emotionally healthy.	Number and percentage of children under age 6 living with parents with history of mental health problems or current mental health problems.
Families are socially and emotionally healthy.	Number and percentage of families who report connection to informal support system. Number and percentage of parents receiving treatment for alcoholism or substance abuse.
Children’s basic needs are met.	Number and percentage of families with young children below the state self-sufficiency standard.
Families are economically stable.	Number and percentage of families with young children who pay more than 30% of their income for housing. Number and percentage of custodial parents with support order that are receiving support.
Children are safe.	Number and percentage of confirmed child victims of abuse and neglect.
Families support and guide their children’s early learning.	Number and percentage of parents who report reading to their children at least once daily. Number and percentage of new parents taking parenting skills classes focused on basic care and child safety.
Families have access to high-quality early care and education.	Percentage of licensed programs that are nationally accredited. Number and percentage of children with undiagnosed health or developmental needs at kindergarten entry. Preschool licensed child care capacity as a percentage of the total number of children.
Children are ready to succeed in school (public, private, or home school) and in life.	Percentage of kindergarteners who are interested in learning new things. Number and percentage of children who achieve reading and mathematics proficiency in fourth grade. Number and percentage of children, under age 6, with identified development delays or disabilities not receiving learning assistance. Number and percentage of children participating in Special Education under age 6.

Desired Outcomes for Cass County Children (0–5 years old)	Critical Indicators Under Examination for 2004 and Beyond
Communities make young children a priority by investing in families.	Availability of public transportation. Number of family literacy/adult education programs in the community and capacity to serve the families of young children. Percentage of local budget that is devoted to supporting families of young children.

Collectively, the relevancy of the data from the 2002 needs assessment, 2003 reassessment of local early learning resources, and the state’s identification of the critical indicators for Cass County to watch and monitor led the Council to its next phase in community intervention, the Cass County ELOA Program. *The vision, goals and objectives were carefully planned and written to close the gaps that exist in early childhood literacy in Cass County.*

2. The extent to which the applicant describes the context of the proposed project, including the characteristics of the community, magnitude, and severity of the problem, and the needs to be addressed.

Cass County is located in rural Southwest Michigan. Regionally, Cass County is a part of Michiana—an area comprised of Southwestern Michigan and the area of Northern Indiana; South Bend, Indiana, is the regional center for major purchases and medical services. Spread far apart, Cass County children and families live across almost 500 contiguous, remote, country miles. The total population of Cass County is 51,321 persons.<sup>3</sup> Slightly over six percent of the total population is children, ages 0–5 years old. The county is diverse in its ethnicity. It is home to descendants of slaves whose ancestors traveled north along the Underground Railroad en route to Canada, but who opted to remain in Cass County. It is also home to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, headquartered in Dowagiac. In the summer, the county’s beet farms attract migrant families who bring nearly 300 children (ages 0–5) into the region who are in need of

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

early childhood learning services while their parents work 12-hour days. Cass County’s rural location and blended populace bring both assets and deficits to all service providers, especially agencies providing early childhood learning services. **The Lewis Cass Intermediate School District’s regional service area map is attached.**

**Table 8 – A Glimpse of Cass County**

<b>Beneficiary Characteristics (51,321 residents)<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>Indicators</b>
African Americans	6.1%
Hispanics	2.4%
American Indians (Potawatomi, Chippewa, Cherokee, Ottawa, Latin American Indians, and other Native Americans)	0.8%
Asians	0.5%
Residents reporting other or two or more races	3.3%
Ten year migration rate (1985–1995): residents moving to Cass County from across the state line and from other counties in Michigan	20%
Female householder with children and no spouse	5.8%
Grandparents as caregivers	2.5%
Some high school (no diploma)	19.1%
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> grade education	8.62%
Total population at or below the Federal poverty level	9.89%
Children under age 5 residing in families at or below the Federal poverty rate	15.99%
Babies with birth defects <sup>5</sup>	4.3%
Students enrolled in special education programs at Lewis Cass Intermediate School District	13.7%
Free and reduced lunch rates at the four LEAs in Cass County <sup>6</sup> :	
Cassopolis Public Schools	50%
Dowagiac Union Schools	59%
Edwardsburg Public Schools	26%
Marcellus Community Schools	47%

**Table 9 – Early Learning Opportunity Gaps**

<b>Beneficiary Issues</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
<b>Number of children, ages 0–5, in subsidized child care</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>Number of children, ages 0–5, in unlicensed child care</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Percent of children, ages 0–5, in unlicensed child care</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Child care – licensed capacity</b>	<b>1,200</b>
<b>Percent capacity in centers</b>	<b>42.1%</b>

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.censusscope.org>, July 13, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Kids Count, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Michigan School Report Cards, 2004 (district level reports).

Beneficiary Issues	Indicators
Percent centers that are half-day	42.9%
Child care monthly costs (full-time/one child)	\$394.36
Percent of average wage per job parent pays for child care	17.5%

**Table 10 – Inventory of Early Childhood Learning Programs in Cass County**

Agency	Early Childhood Learning Programs	Ages
Lewis Cass ISD	Child Find	0–5
Lewis Cass ISD	Early On	0–3
Lewis Cass ISD	Wraparound	0–5
Lewis Cass ISD	Preprimary Impaired (PPI)	0–3
Lewis Cass ISD	Itinerant Services	0–5
Cassopolis Public Schools	MSRP 4 Ranger	4
Dowagiac Union Schools	Inside Track	4
Dowagiac Union Schools	Preprimary Impaired (PPI)	0–3
Edwardsburg Public Schools	Michigan School Readiness	4
Edwardsburg Public Schools	Preprimary Impaired (PPI)	0–3
Marcellus Public Schools	Michigan School Readiness	4
FIA	Family First	0–5
Woodlands Behavioral	Home-Based Services	0–4
Tri-County Head Start	Head Start	3–5
Pokagon Band Head Start	Head Start	3–5
Shepard House	Outreach Counseling	0–5
Michigan State U. Extension	Family Nutrition	0–5
Lewis Cass ISD	Infant-Toddler	0–5
Child Care Coordinated Centers (4C’s)	Child Care Resources	0–5
Michigan State U. Extension	Building Strong Families	0–5
Community Health	Children’s Special Health Care	0–5
Apostolic Lighthouse Church	Child Care Center	2 ½–5
St. Paul’s Lutheran Church	Child Development Center	3–5
Sister Lakes Com. Church	Nursery School	3–5
Cass District Library	Summer Reading	2–5

The Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council (45 member agencies), through its LICC/0–5 Workgroup has identified the following early learning problems need to be addressed under this grant initiative:

1. A **restoration** and **expansion** of the early childhood literacy efforts started with the ASAP-PIE grant is needed.
2. **Rural** and socially isolated parents, caregivers, **unlicensed** child care providers, and early educators need to increase their knowledge of early learning development,



including cognitive, language comprehension, expressive language, social-emotional, and motor skills, and to promote learning readiness.

3. **Teen parents** and **undereducated adult parents** need training and awareness in effective parenting skills.
  4. **Linkages developed** under the ASAP-PIE and SS/HS grant **must be monitored and strengthened**, where needed, among early learning programs in Cass County and between early learning programs and health care services for young children.
  5. New families (**transient and migrant**) need learn about and have **access to the seamless continuum of care** for early learning opportunities for children ages 0–5 years old and for young children with special needs, including developmental delays.
  6. **Unlicensed** child care providers must be encouraged to enroll in community-based professional development and training activities that qualify them for licensing and bring them under state regulations. These providers also need to be oriented and invited to participate in the Cass County continuum of care network.
  7. **Ancillary barriers**, such as the limited availability of public transportation and the low number of early learning programs open during nontraditional hours, must be removed in this chiefly agribusiness county where parents might work for area farms from sunup to sundown, six days per week.
3. The extent to which the applicant presents a vision of the project it anticipates developing, defines its goals and specific measurable objectives of the project; describes how its goals and objectives are linked together; and explains how implementation will fulfill the purposes of the ELOA. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates an understanding that goals are end products of a project, while objectives are measurable steps toward attainment of

the goals. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates a thorough understanding of the importance of early learning services and activities that help parents, caregivers, and child care providers incorporate early learning into the daily lives of young children, as well as the programs that directly provide early learning to young children.

**The Cass County Vision:** To increase, support, expand and better coordinate early learning opportunities for children and their families through local community organizations that are members and nonmembers of the Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council.

### **Goals and Objectives in Relation to ELOA**

**ELOA Purpose:** To increase the availability of voluntary programs, services, and activities that support early childhood development, increase parent effectiveness, and promote the learning readiness of young children so that they enter school ready to learn.

**Cass County Goal 1:** Enhance the collaborative service delivery model through community planning and improved coordination and linkages between service providers.

### **Cass County Measurable Objectives**

**Objective 1a:** Using data collected from the needs and resources assessment as a baseline measurement, improve the early child care education delivery system by 25% or more in areas of coordination, consistency, and cost-effectiveness by the end of the grant funding period.

**Objective 1b:** Using critical indicator data as a baseline measurement, the Council will promote service integration across 100% of Cass County's human services programs for young children and their families by the end of the grant funding period.

**Objective 1c:** Using systemic qualitative evaluation results of the Council's current continuum of care network as a baseline measurement, increase countywide systems oversight and accountability by 20% or more by the end of the grant funding period.

**Implementation Activities:**

**Table 11 – Strengthening the Collaborative Service Delivery Model**

Activity Undertaken with Grant Funding	Agency Responsible
Conduct outreach to identify parents of 0–5 age children and enroll them in Parents As Teachers training.	Lewis Cass Intermediate School District 0–5 Program.
Screen newly identified 0–5 age children using the Brigance Screens assessment tool.	
Refer children with suspected developmental delays to appropriate services.	
Hire Community Outreach Specialist to compare child care costs among non-school providers and work with providers to develop cooperative commodity purchasing practices and consistent sliding scales for low- to moderate-income families.	Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council, Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, Family Independence Agency, and 4C’s Child Care Resources.
Provide communitywide cross-training giving information on countywide services for resource sharing, linkages between agencies, and planning services.	

**ELOA Purpose:** To support parents, child care providers, and caregivers who want to incorporate early learning activities into the daily lives of young children.

**Cass County Goal 2:** To expand the capacity of parents, caregivers, and early childhood learning service providers to facilitate healthy development and early literacy skills.

**Cass County Measurable Objectives**

**Objective 2a:** Using critical indicator data as a baseline measurement, increase the percentage of new parents and caregivers, teen parents, and undereducated adult parents taking parenting skills classes on basic care and child safety by 25% or more by the end of the grant funding period.

**Objective 2b:** Using data collected from the needs and resources assessment as a baseline measurement, increase the number of unlicensed child care centers enrolling in community-based professional development and training activities that lead to the licensing and regulation process by 20% or more by the end of the grant funding period.

**Objective 2c:** Using the data collected from the children ages 0–5 database as a baseline measurement, increase the number of parents attending parent groups, including support groups, by 50% by the end of the grant funding period.

**Implementation Activities:**

**Table 12 – Enabling Parents, Caregivers and Early Learning Providers**

Activity Undertaken with Grant Funding	Agency Responsible
Train early childhood staff, countywide, on how to use the Brigance Screens.	Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, Child Care Resources, and Southwestern Michigan College
Provide a workshop for licensed child care providers on the accreditation opportunities and process (distance learning and classroom based).	Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services and 4C’s Child Care Resources
Offer 0–5 children’s parents, caregivers and child care providers with training in early childhood development skills and activities.	Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, Child Care Resources, and Southwestern Michigan College
Expand the number of parenting groups, including support groups to facilitate healthy development and early literacy skills, by using incentives for parent involvement.	Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, four LEAs, and public libraries

**ELOA Purpose:** To remove barriers to the provision of an accessible system of early childhood learning programs.

**Cass County Goal 3:** Expand the availability of existing voluntary early childhood learning services.

**Cass County Measurable Objectives**

**Objective 3a:** Using data collected from the needs and resources assessment as a baseline measurement, conduct extensive early childhood learning services availability outreach and orientation for 50% or more new families (transient and migrant) with children ages 0–5 years old by the end of the grant funding period.

**Objective 3b:** Using data collected from the needs and resources assessment as a baseline measurement, work with the four LEAs (Cassopolis, Dowagiac, Edwardsburg and Marcellus) to increase available early child care literacy program space, human resources, enrollment slots, and child transportation modalities by 20% or more by the end of the grant funding period.

**Objective 3c:** Using data collected from the needs and resources assessment as a baseline measurement, work with 20% or more of other early learning literacy programs (voluntary participation) in Cass County to develop focus groups to examine current provider hours and ability to extend/expand service timeframes for families in need of care during nontraditional work hours/days, and to review licensing status, employee training needs, and other issues impacting the quality of services, by the end of the grant funding period.

**Objective 3d:** Using data collected from the needs and resources assessment as a baseline measurement, increase services for children with special needs by 25% or more by the end of the grant funding period.

**Implementation Activities:**

**Table 13 – Enabling Early Childhood Literacy Efforts to Expand**

Activity Undertaken with Grant Funding	Agency Responsible
Conduct an outreach campaign quarterly for transient and migrant families concerning availability of early childhood learning services.	Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services and Michigan Telemon Migrant Head Start Corporation
Provide training in working with children with problem behaviors, learning disabilities, sensory integration, and other disabilities to staff from early childhood learning programs.	Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, Woodlands Behavioral Health Care, 4C’s Child Care Resources, Tri-County Head Start.
Promote and open access to sign language classes to staff from early childhood learning programs.	Lewis Cass Intermediate School District.

<b>Activity Undertaken with Grant Funding</b>	<b>Agency Responsible</b>
Implement a Child Care Expulsion Prevention (CCEP) Team to create a protocol for dealing with child care providers and parents of children who are at risk of being expelled from child care due to a disability or behavior.	Representatives from Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, Head Start, 4C's Child Care Resources, licensed child care providers, and Woodlands Behavioral Health Care
Coordinate efforts of existing school and community-based early child care programs to establish nontraditional hours and to advertise/promote services and programs for children ages 0–5.	Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, four LEAs, 4C's Child Care Resources, and licensed child care providers
Work with existing licensed child care providers to expand services to children, ages 0–5, during nontraditional hours.	Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, 4C's Child Care Resources, and licensed child care providers
Provide parent education and training activities at developmental childcare facilities.	Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, Head Start, 4C's Child Care Resources, and licensed child care providers
Provide community-based transportation for families to attend parent and child learning opportunities and support groups.	Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services

**ELOA Purpose:** To increase the availability and affordability of professional development activities and compensation for caregivers and child care providers.

**Cass County Goal 4:** Build broad regional support for accessible training opportunities and caregiver/child care employee reinvestment incentives.

**Cass County Measurable Objectives**

**Objective 4a:** Using critical indicator data as a baseline measurement, increase the percentage of licensed programs that begin the 18- to 24-month national accreditation process by 10% or more by the end of the grant funding period.

**Objective 4b:** Using data collected from the needs and resources assessment as a baseline measurement, increase training opportunities for caregivers and child care providers by 25% or more by the end of the grant funding period.

**Objective 4c:** Using data collected from the needs and resources assessment as a baseline measurement, increase the number and types of early childhood literacy professional development courses offered free-of-charge to home-based caregivers and child care agency employees by 10% or more by the end of the grant funding period.

**Implementation Activities:**

**Table 14 – Building Regional Support for Accessible and Affordable Training**

Activity Undertaken with Grant Funding	Agency Responsible
Provide incentives and compensation for caregivers and child care providers to attend four trainings throughout the grant period.	Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, Family Independence Agency, and 4C’s Child Care Resources
Provide training for child care providers during nontraditional hours	
Provide a workshop for licensed child care providers on accreditation opportunities and process (distance learning and classroom-based).	
Provide program-based training for early educators using PAT curriculum.	
Promote and invite licensed child care providers to become involved in the Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council’s LICC/0–5 Workgroup.	
Promote and invite licensed child care providers to a countywide cross-training of community service providers.	

**ELOA Purpose:** To facilitate the development of community-based systems of collaborative service delivery models characterized by resource sharing, linkages between appropriate supports, and local planning for services.

**Cass County Goal 5:** To strengthen the current network of seamless services for Cass County families with children ages 0–5 years old.

**Cass County Measurable Objectives**

**Objective 5a:** Using data to be collected at the beginning of the grant funding period as a baseline measurement, improve school readiness indicators, assessment standards, and early learning outcomes by 25% or more by the end of the grant funding period.

**Implementation Activities:**

**Table 15 – Strengthening and Expanding Service Integration Across Human Services**

**Programs**

<b>Activity Undertaken with Grant Funding</b>	<b>Agency Responsible</b>
Work with local child care centers and preschool programs to voluntarily adopt early literacy curriculum models.	Lewis Cass Intermediate School District, four LEAs, and 4C’s Child Care Resources
Promote and invite early childhood learning programs, including caregivers and child care providers, to the Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council’s LICC/0–5 Workgroup that meets monthly to collaborate and share common goals and measurements.	Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council, LICC/0–5 Workgroup, Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, and 4C’s Child Care Resources
Convene Cass County’s Early Childhood Advisory Board twice yearly, in the spring and in the fall, and invite representatives from the Child Care Resources agency and from child care provider agencies.	Early Childhood Advisory Board, Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, and 4C’s Child Care Resources
Build broad community support for early childhood learning by providing early childhood development and early literacy information to individuals through radio, print media, and other avenues of communication (English and Spanish).	Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council, Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, four LEAs, 4C’s Child Care Resources, Council on Aging, and regional media partners
Utilize the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District’s Family Resource Center mobile unit to provide key cities and remote rural areas with early childhood developmental and literacy materials. The mobile unit will travel to such community events as the fair, open houses, summer reading programs, festivals, and parenting awareness activities.	Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council, Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, Family Resource Center, four LEAs, Cass District Library, and Cass County Youth Council



<b>Activity Undertaken with Grant Funding</b>	<b>Agency Responsible</b>
Coordinate with the Cass District Library to provide books to the Family Resource Center that can be checked out by families who do not have access to the library.	Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council, Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, Family Resource Center, four LEAs, Cass District Library, and Cass County Youth Council
Provide, on a monthly basis, a lending library via the Family Resource Center mobile unit to families in rural areas of the county who lack access to the Cass District Library.	Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council, Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, Family Resource Center, four LEAs, Cass District Library, and Cass County Youth Council
Provide communitywide cross-training on Cass County programs and services for resource sharing, linkages between supports, and service integration planning purposes.	Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council, Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, Family Resource Center, four LEAs, 4C's Child Care Resources, Cass District Library, Cass County Youth Council, and countywide service providers

4. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates how it will support activities/projects that maximize the use of resources through collaboration with other early learning programs, provide continuity of services for young children across the age spectrum, and help parents and other caregivers promote early learning with their young children.

The Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council will support the implementation activities outlined in Section 3 of Criterion 1 by maximizing the extensive resources available from each Council partner. Table 16 lists each member agency and their partnership role in the Council's goals and objectives for the Cass County ELOA Program.

**Table 16 – Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council Support**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Collaboration Role in ELOA Program</b>
LICC/0–5 Workgroup	Information source; partner in training, community events, and other activities. Advisory capacity.
4C’s (Child Care Resources)	Referrals; speakers for trainings for child care providers and families; information source; participate in calendar of events and training. Provide Community Outreach Specialist to collaborate with cross-training, marketing efforts. Will send representatives to attend the Early Childhood Advisory Board; coordinate with the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District on adopting a literacy curriculum; and coordinate training for the child care providers with the Zero to Five Program.
Bethany Christian Center	Information source; speakers for parenting skills training; referrals; enhance services.
Cass County Administrator	Collaboration with community resources.
Cass County Court Approved Special (CASA) Program	Referrals; coordination participation and collaboration in training efforts.
Cass County Council on Aging	Marketing; information source; distribution of parent education materials; radio and news media spots on program.
Cass County HSCC	Collaboration; referrals; partner on organizing planning committee; information clearinghouse. Coordinate activities and facilitate the attainment of the program’s objectives. Collaborate in building community support for early childhood learning through community communications. Coordinate a communitywide cross-training. Provide oversight to the ELOA grant.
Cass District Library	Serve on planning committee; host lending library with materials supplied by grant; tailor relevant bibliographic materials as needed; computer access; story hour events. Partnership with the Family Resource Center.
Cass County Probate Court	Referral system for Cass County families of children at risk through abuse and neglect.
Cass County Public Health	Referrals; information source for immunizations; speakers for staff training; contractual agreement for nursing services.
Cass County Transit	Collaborate resources for transportation in the community.
Cass County Youth Council	Support to families; funding source for special activities and events.

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Collaboration Role in ELOA Program</b>
Local LEAs (four)	County referrals; parent groups, support groups, and other activities. Collaborate with Family Resource Center to schedule the mobile literacy unit for school events as well as parent meetings. Collaborate with the communitywide cross-training. Provide a representative from each district to be a part of the LICC/0–5 Workgroup subcommittee. Collaborate and help in the coordination of school and community efforts toward providing quality child care during nontraditional hours and expand services for children ages 0–5 and those with special needs.
Community Representative Robyn Smith-Woods	Guidance in Social Marketing and promotional materials.
Domestic Assault Shelter Coalition	Referrals; speakers for trainings; information source. Advocate on behalf of families.
Family Independence Agency	Referrals; speakers for trainings; resources, information on financial, medical and legal issues.
Friend of the Court	Referrals; speakers for staff in-service trainings.
Grandparent Raising Grandchildren & Relative Parent Program	Partner in coordinating family groups, activities, transportation; contribute to lending library; information source; resources; referrals. Collaborate with Council on providing a quality child care program in coordination with the Council on Aging.
Lewis Cass Intermediate School District	Provide a representative to the Council and the LICC/0–5 Workgroup.
Lewis Cass Intermediate School District (Family Resource Center)	Contribute to lending library; referrals; schedule mobile unit at family groups and other events as well as regular days in community. Expanding FRC services to overcome rural isolation. Collaborate with Council on community events.
Lewis Cass Intermediate School District (Respite & Resource)	Respite services; help families meet their basic needs, such as sending children to camp and providing funds for daily living needs.
Lewis Cass Intermediate School District (Transportation)	Transport client families who lack transportation to events, medical and other appointments and to programs for family and children.

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Collaboration Role in ELOA Program</b>
Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, Wraparound, Early On®, 0–5 Program, Child Find	Support workers; referrals; resources; information source; supervision and coordination of the grant. Collaborate with all ISD programs and other agencies. Screens and assessments.
Minority Coalition	Referrals; resource information; diversity trainings.
Michigan State University Extension, Building Strong Families, Home Economics, and Nutrition Programs	Referrals; parent education, nutrition, and budgeting information; training in home economics.
Parent Representative Sheri Notten	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) information and FASD screenings; recommendations for services.
Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians	Referrals; special services to Native American families.
Pokagon Head Start	Referrals and collaboration with early childhood events and trainings.
Senior Volunteers	Support in the schools to children of grandparents raising their grandchildren; child care for parent group activities.
Shepard House Counseling	Guidance; speakers at parent groups; partnership with support groups; referrals.
Sheriff's Department	Referrals; participation in training efforts.
Southwest Community Action Agency	Partner in coordinating family groups for credit counseling and referrals.
Southwestern Michigan College	Space for trainings; share information with families on upcoming events and notify parents of any classes that would benefit them; speakers for parent education trainings and activities.
The Link	Intervention for families and youth in crisis; referrals; information source; outreach counseling and drug prevention/education training services.
Tri-County Head Start	Referrals; partner services and training, including training opportunities to other early childhood learning programs; representation on the Early Childhood Advisory Board and the LICC/0–5 Workgroup and subcommittee.

Agency	Collaboration Role in ELOA Program
Michigan Telemon Migrant Head Start Corporation	Referrals; partner services; training; translation services.
United Presbyterian Church of Cass	Referrals; information on community events; host to community events for families and children.
Wesley House	Referrals; after-school program for at-risk youth; community outreach and information sharing.
WIC	Nutrition resources and information; referrals; coordination of transportation for families receiving WIC services.
Woodlands Addition Center	Speakers for workshops/trainings; organizing support groups; referrals; information source; in-kind for the implementation of the Child Care Expulsion Prevention Team.
Woodlands Behavioral Healthcare	Speakers for workshops/trainings; support groups; referrals; information source; in-kind for the implementation of the Child Care Expulsion Prevention Team.
Michigan Works (Displaced Homemaker Program)	Assessments and vocational guidance; crisis counseling and referrals; workshops; job searches; mileage assistance; computer training; resume assistance; on the job training; job placement; individual and group counseling; other services to displaced homemakers.
United Methodist Church of Cassopolis	Referrals; information on community events; host to community events for families and children.
Lighthouse Christian Day Care	Referrals; information on community events; host to community events for families and children; in-kind for implementation of the Child Care Expulsion Prevention Team. Collaborate with training and accreditation process for child care providers. Seek ways to expand services, capacity, and accommodations for children ages 0–5 and with special needs.
Open Arms Day Care	Collaborate with training and accreditation process for child care providers. Seek ways to expand services, capacity, and accommodations for children ages 0–5 and with special needs.
Cass County Prosecutor's Office	Referrals; source of information for trainings and workshops.
Michigan Gateway Community Foundation	Funding information.
John Gore, Community Representative	Housing and other community information.

5. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has worked with local education agencies to identify cognitive, social, and emotional, and motor development abilities which are necessary to support children's readiness for school; that the programs, services, and activities assisted under this title will represent developmentally appropriate steps toward the acquisition of those abilities; and that the programs, services, and activities assisted provide benefits for children cared for in their own homes as well as children placed in the care of others.

**Understanding the Integration of Community Services for Young Children and Their Families** – The Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council first developed the components of a Comprehensive System of Care in 1994. In response to statewide directives issued by Michigan's governor, state-level directors of the Departments of Mental Health, Public Health, Social Services, Education, and the Agency on Aging formed the Human Service Interagency Work Group. The group assessed existing systems, facilitated programmatic cooperation, and advised the Governor. In April 1991, the directors sent the Governor an action agenda for children's services and a set of principles to guide interdepartmental policy- and decision-making with regard to children and families. The principles "emphasize the importance of prevention through health, education, and family support services and recognize the role and responsibilities of families and communities in developing healthy and achieving children." Legislation was enacted that required county-based program coordination and interagency collaboration for state and Federal programs housed in the Michigan Department of Education. Each local human services coordinating council was required to create formal written agreements regarding shared staff and resources, interagency and intradepartmental planning and implementation, and joint staff training. Head Start programs and other agencies were required to coordinate comprehensive services and to work with community programs to provide services to

specific clients. Since 1994, the Cass County Coordinating Council has worked closely with the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District, Head Start and other early childhood literacy providers to integrate the following programs in the local continuum of care network:

1. **Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children At Risk.** At the local level, the Michigan Early Childhood Program requires Council-coordinated advisory committees that are drawn from the Departments of Health, Social Services, appropriate volunteer agencies, and parents. The four LEAs in Cass County have formal subcontracting relationships with Head Start to implement the preschool program.
2. **Compensatory Education Chapter 1 and Even Start.** The Council, working closely with the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District has worked to develop collaborative efforts between Compensatory Education, the Special Education Service Unit, and the Comprehensive Programs in Health and Early Childhood to facilitate program planning and local LEA training for Chapter 1 educators and support staff. In addition, the Council has worked closely with Even Start programs, including the Adult Literacy component.
3. **Child Care and Development Block Grant.** Cass County agencies receiving a grant from the Michigan Department of Education are required to establish an advisory committee and coordinate services with other programs within their communities. The Council, working closely with the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District, has historically been involved in coordinating services delivered under the Child Care and Development Block Grant.

4. **Dependent Care (4C's).** The Council has worked closely with the 4C offices (Child Care Resources) in Cass County to coordinate child care provider training, technical assistance, and resource and referral services for parents.
5. **Migrant Education.** The Council works with the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District to coordinate and integrate the recruitment and referral process for the Migrant Head Start Program in Cass County.
6. **Special Education Program for Children Birth Through Five Years of Age.** The Council works with the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District to oversee the special efforts for intraagency and interagency collaboration by participating in countywide planning, steering, and/or advisory committees designed to improve coordinated services for children with handicapping conditions.
7. **Part H of IDEA – Infant and Toddler Program.** The Council works with the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District to identify and coordinate all appropriate resources for infants and toddlers with special needs and their families.

#### **Creating Workgroups to Further Plan and Coordinate Local Early Childhood**

**Programs** – The Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council has designated a group of early childhood literacy professionals to serve on the LICC/0–5 Workgroup. The Workgroup meets monthly and reviews early childhood initiatives in Cass County. The Workgroup was instrumental in bringing the ASAP-PIE and SS/HS grants to Cass County. This Workgroup serves as liaison between the Council and the Michigan Department of Education’s Early Childhood System, reviewing and interpreting state and county research data and providing input on the needs of young children from a Cass County perspective. The Workgroup is currently working with the Michigan Department of Education on Project Great Start, a statewide effort to



coordinate both public and private efforts to achieve common objectives and measurable results for Michigan's youngest children. Project Great Start encompasses both immediate action and creating a blueprint, or strategic plan, for the Michigan early childhood system of programs, services, and supports for all children from birth to age five. Goals under Great Start that have been adopted by the Council include:

- Affordable, developmentally appropriate child care options for well and sick kids, including those with special needs, are available to families.

  - Children arrive in kindergarten ready to succeed.

  - Families have resources outside the family.

  - Learning partnerships between schools, parents, and children are in place.

  - Parents have knowledge of parenting skills and child development.

  - Communities are responsive to the needs of young children and families.

  - Communities collaborate successfully.

## CRITERION 2: APPROACH

1. The extent to which the applicant describes its project design, services, product development and dissemination. The extent to which the applicant presents an approach that: (a) Reflects an understanding of the characteristics, needs, and services currently available to the target population; (b) is based on current theory, research, and/or best practices; (c) is appropriate and feasible; (d) can be reliably evaluated; (e) could be replicated, if successful; and (f) can be sustained after Federal funding has ceased.

(a) The Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council has studied and used the data collected from the 2002 needs assessment, 2003 reassessment of local early learning resources, 2004 draft Results and Indicators for Michigan’s Early Childhood System, and the children ages 0–5 database (2004). The characteristics of the community are not new: multicultural; agribusiness; special developmentally delayed children; strong and proud descendants of African Americans and American Indians; unlicensed, but affordable child care centers and licensed, but not always affordable child care centers. In addition, everyone touching the life of a young child, age 0–5, in Cass County needs training in early childhood literacy approaches, from parents to professionals.

**Table 17 – Closing the Gap**

Weaknesses/Problems	Council Approach
Cass county children ages 0–5 are falling through the continuum of care network gaps.	Conduct outreach to identify parents of children ages 0–5 and train them in Parents As Teachers. Screen all newly identified 0–5 children using the Brigance Screens assessment tool. Refer children with suspected developmental delays to appropriate services. Work with Council partners and regional technical assistance agencies to monitor and strengthen the Cass County continuum of care network.

<b>Weaknesses/Problems</b>	<b>Council Approach</b>
Need for improvement (restoration and expansion) in the early childcare education delivery system in the areas of coordination, consistency, and cost-effectiveness.	Conduct child care cost comparisons among nonschool providers. Work with nonschool providers to develop cost savings management and operational practices, including consistent sliding scales for low- to moderate-income families. Provide cross-training for all child care agencies for resource sharing, facilitating linkages and joint planning.
Teen parents and undereducated adult parents need training and awareness in effective parenting skills.	Provide training for 0–5 parents in early childhood development skills with small group activities where high-risk parents can be observed working with their child(ren).
Rural and socially isolated parents, caregivers, licensed and unlicensed child care providers, and early educators need to increase their knowledge of early learning development.	Provide training for all licensed child care providers on the accreditation opportunities and process. Train early childhood staff, countywide, on how to use the Brigance Screens. Expand the number of parenting/caregiver groups, including support groups, to facilitate healthy development and early literacy skills by using incentives for parent involvement.
Transient and migrant families with young children, ages 0–5 years old, are unaware of early learning programs, early childhood literacy and positive parenting skills.	Conduct an outreach campaign to publicize the availability of early childhood learning services. Provide parenting education classes for families whose children have developmental delays. Provide bilingual and deaf interpreter staff for parents with special communication needs.
Ancillary barriers prevent families from participating in parenting training. Parents who work nontraditional hours cannot find child care to fit their work schedules.	Work with existing licensed child care providers to expand services to children during nontraditional hours (evenings, third shift, weekends, and holidays). Provide transportation in local communities for families to attend parent and child learning opportunities, training and support groups.

(b) Working with the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District, the Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council has reviewed early childhood learning research to support the Cass County ELOA Program design and approach. Findings are presented in this section.

**Parents as Teachers**<sup>7</sup> curriculum content is based on reliable and current research in the areas of child development and neuroscience. The information shared with parents is not anecdotal information, but content based on the key characteristics of reliable research (studies

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.patnc.org/researchevaluation.asp#research> on July 17, 2004.

that use the scientific method, have been replicated, are generalizable, meet rigorous standards of peer review, and have converging results). Research on brain development confirms the critical nature of the early years. In collaboration with neuroscientists from Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc. developed the *Born to Learn*<sup>™</sup> curriculum to translate the latest neuroscience findings on early learning into concrete *when, what, how* and *why* advice for parents. Leading, recent research on neuroscience and child development is woven throughout the curriculum and is documented by scientific references. Parents as Teachers curriculum and training address what reliable research has identified as the essential components of school readiness. Based on research in child development and early education, the National Education Goals Panel identified five areas that play key roles in children's success in school. Dimensions of school readiness, the Panel determined, include physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development, and cognition and general knowledge. Parents as Teachers curriculum and training are designed to support the development of the whole child and include visit plans and content that addresses each of these research-based readiness dimensions. Parents as Teachers places a premium on the kinds of experiences to which young children are exposed and affirms the crucial role of parents in orchestrating those experiences. Parents are principle architects of their children's development. Reliable research points to the important role of parents in young children's lives—the more extensive the parental involvement in the child's education, the higher the student achievement. The Parents as Teachers model is designed to enhance parents' involvement in their children's education. Cass County first incorporated the Parents as Teachers model under ASAP-PIE funding in 1999. Six years of evaluation studies indicate that the curriculum works well with parents of all educational levels.

**Screening** – According to the Healthy People 2010<sup>8</sup> document "Achieving Success for All Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs," the goals of screening are twofold:

1. To identify children in the general population who have special health care needs as early as possible so that they and their families can be given appropriate services to address those needs; and
2. To continually screen children identified with special health care needs to identify or prevent secondary conditions that interfere with development and well-being.

The **Brigance Screens**<sup>9</sup> tap speech-language, motor, readiness and general knowledge, and for the youngest age group, social-emotional skills. The K & 1 Screen also measures reading and math skills. All screens use direct elicitation and observation except the Infant and Toddler Screen, which can be administered by parent report. Widely used in educational settings and often administered by paraprofessionals, a video is available to facilitate learning the test. All Brigance Screens are available in English or Spanish, and the K & 1 Screen is also available in Laotian, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Tagalog. A major revision to the Early, Preschool and K & 1 Screens will be available in 2005. The Cass County ELOA Program will use the Ages and States Questionnaire and other developmental screening tools as well.

**Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICCs)**, like the Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council, are planning and advisory bodies for the *Early On* system, established through the sixty-four local service areas in Michigan. LICCs are made up of family members who have children with special needs and of representatives from Education, Community Health, Family Independence Agency and other organizations that provide services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. Based on the belief that families and

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<sup>8</sup> Healthy People 2010, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, November 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Pediatric Development and Behavior Journal, retrieved from <http://www.dbpeds.org/articles/detail.cfm?id=5> on July 16, 2004.

agencies know their community best, Michigan's system was designed to give local councils the role of developing, implementing and evaluating their community's early intervention system. Family and professional partnerships are at the center of an effective early intervention system. Family representatives bring their knowledge of the strengths and needs of the child and family unit. Representatives from organizations and agencies provide important information about organizational resources. Both family and agency representatives are essential to a successful LICC. The vision for LICCs is to create a structure where families and agencies from a community work together to share expertise and resources in order to provide the best and most effective early intervention system for their community. Each LICC works with a locally based *Early On* coordinator to develop and implement a comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary interagency system of early intervention services for eligible infants and toddlers and their families. Members plan, implement and evaluate the appropriate use of additional resources and recommend, develop and secure those resources needed to fill gaps in existing services. The LICC provides an organizational framework within which the independent but similar functions of various agencies are structured. The intent is to eliminate fragmentation and duplication of services, allow for more effective utilization of personnel and resources, and ensure the provision of a full array of services within the community. In 2002, the Michigan Department of Education released a Progress Report<sup>10</sup> on the effectiveness of LICCs. Over 20 cluster areas were evaluated based on legislatively mandated strategic directives. In all areas of evaluation, the development of local improvement plans to improve the outcomes for children ages 0–5 were required. Assumptions were compiled and evidence (or indicators) of change were defined. Eventually, these indicators were incorporated into the 2004 Results and Indicators for

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<sup>10</sup> Progress Report: Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Improvement Plan, Michigan Department of Education, December 2002.

Michigan’s Early Childhood System—the report from which Cass County drew its indicators for the LICC/0–5 Workgroup’s focus in 2005 and beyond. All of the proposed Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council strengthening approaches presented in this grant application derive from state-based research and recommendations for continuous LICC qualify improvement.

**Joint Planning for Affordable Child Care Options** – A study by the Carnegie Corporation in 1994<sup>11</sup> called for communities to organize and examine how they could guarantee affordable and quality child care options. The task force recommended that every community develop a comprehensive child care network linking all child care programs and offering consumers a variety of child care settings. In order to be effective, a child care network should have three key features:

1. It should be comprehensive, encompassing all existing child care services and enabling children with disabilities to participate fully.
2. It must be developed and operated locally and funded through a combination of public and private sources.
3. It should have as its hub an institution that is central to its particular community.

Clearly, to be effective, the network must draw on the energy of the community, involving people who know best what local parents and children need.

The Cass County ELOA Program will convene joint planning subcommittees to identify affordable child care options.

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<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.carnegie.org/starting\\_points/startpt3.html](http://www.carnegie.org/starting_points/startpt3.html) on July 16, 2004.

**Working with Teen and Undereducated Adult Parents** – In 2001, Mathematica Policy Research released an evaluation report on their Teen Parent Demonstration Project<sup>12</sup> in Chicago. The premise for the research was that teenage parents need extensive and intensive training in early childhood development and parenting skills. The study enrolled nearly 6,000 teenage mothers and also studied the supply and demand for unregulated and regulated child care providers. Findings showed that parents cannot reach self-sufficiency without affordable child care options, training in applied parenting skills and a thorough understanding of early childhood development stages. **Adult Parents with Special Learning Needs** – No one provides clear guidelines about the right way to parent. There are no classes in school, and childbirth preparation focuses almost entirely on the birth process. After having a child, hospitals provide some basic instruction on the care and feeding of a newborn, but no one teaches how to nurture, support, guide and educate a child to become a responsible adult. Most of parents muddle along on their own. Psychologists have studied what works, and what doesn't work. Parenting skills training passes this knowledge onto parents.<sup>13</sup> Developmental psychologists have done research on different parenting styles, the effects of discipline, and how children respond to various people and life events, such as divorce, stepparents, abuse, sibling conflict, poor academic success, bullying, or parental substance abuse. This knowledge has allowed psychologists to develop effective treatment interventions for children and families in crisis. It also provides a basis for teaching parents how to manage their children's behavior effectively, and how to intervene with specific child and adolescent problems. Training in parenting skills and early childhood development stages will be conducted by the Lewis Cass Intermediate School

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<sup>12</sup> Retrieved from <http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov/hsp/isp/tpd/> on July 17, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.psychologyinfo.com/treatment/parenting\\_skills.html](http://www.psychologyinfo.com/treatment/parenting_skills.html) on July 17, 2004.



District's Family and Children Services Department, which employs a Psychologist for special needs families.

**Training for Licensed and Unlicensed Child Care Centers and Expanding Services to Children During Nontraditional Hours** – In May of 1999, the Michigan Department of Consumer & Industry Services issued a statewide advisory<sup>14</sup> urging parents to be sure the caregiver they entrust their children to while they are at work is licensed.

There have been some tragic instances recently that underscore the importance of using a qualified, licensed child care provider. . . . While our licensing process isn't perfect, it does give parents an added level of support and a way for the state to take action against those who are not providing good care. There is little we can do from the state level if a parent uses an unlicensed provider.

In Michigan, anyone caring for unrelated children in their home must be registered or licensed with the State of Michigan and meet state standards including a background check, on-site inspection, and references. One hundred years ago, a college degree was not required for teaching school, but those days are in the distant past. Research consistently indicates that better educated child care staff provides better care. Michigan does not require even a high school education to work as a child care provider, although it does use public funds from quality improvement money to pay for 15-hour basic and advanced training courses for child care staff. The growing consensus in the research is that there are three critical components of quality child care programs:

-Trained child care providers, that is, those who have relevant formal education as well as specific early childhood education training.

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<sup>14</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.michigan.gov/minewswire/0,1607,7-136-3452-52371--M\\_1999\\_5,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/minewswire/0,1607,7-136-3452-52371--M_1999_5,00.html) on July 17, 2004.

-Low child-to-adult ratios.

-Small group sizes.

Child care supply and demand rests on an ongoing balancing of quality with affordability and availability. Any change in one of these factors affects the others. There are pronounced shortages of certain types of care in Michigan.<sup>15</sup>

These include:

-Infant care

-Care for children with special needs

-Care in the evening or at odd hours

-After-school care

The Cass County ELOA Program addresses all of the research concerns.

(c) Appropriate and feasible.

The Cass County ELOA Program approach closes the gaps identified in assessments of early childhood literacy and early childhood educator deficiencies. The approach is prescriptive for Cass children, ages 0–5, and for their families who need parenting and developmental skills training. In addition, the Cass County ELOA Program will examine and work in correcting the barriers preventing parents from using licensed child care or from receiving early learning literacy services. Finally, this initiative will address the issues associated with child care centers that cannot afford traditional training venues by providing grant-funded workshops held in classrooms or by distance learning. Given the 17-month program funding timeframe, the Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council’s partners believe that all of the goals and objectives are attainable.

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<sup>15</sup> Child Care and Education, Michigan Family Impact Seminars Briefing Report, Michigan State University, March 2000.

(d) Can be reliably evaluated.

The Cass County ELOA Program is designed with realistic yet attainable benchmarks (measurable objectives). Each objective has baseline data and a 17-month end-of-program measurement. The Council believes that the program's objectives can be evaluated using both qualitative and quantitative measurements, while protecting the confidentiality of participants and assuring use of standards required for a quality evaluation. The developmental assessment tools that will be used have excellent test-retest reliability to assure data validity.

(e) Can be replicated, if successful.

The Cass ELOA Program has the potential to be replicated in any community across America. Using the LICCs as the conduits for community change is nearly a decade old. Using the lessons learned in Cass County—remote and rural—any county with an LICC will be able to easily adopt the goals presented in the grant application; set their own measurable objectives; and proceed with securing the funding necessary to develop, operate, or enhance voluntary early learning programs that are likely to produce sustained gains in early learning.

(f) Can be sustained after Federal funding has ceased.

Cass County is in a unique position. It has the demographics and at-risk indicators to attract state and Federal grant awards. Step 1: ASAP-PIE built the framework for intervention services for children ages 0–3 and educated the Council about the types of interventions needed to remove early learning barriers for Cass County families and their children. Step 2: SS/HS built the framework for integrating law enforcement, mental health services, and substance abuse prevention services into a continuum of care network for children ages 0–18 years old. Step 3: The next step for Cass County's LICC plan will be implemented with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families ELOA grant monies. This step

will provide a capstone finale for Federal funding support for the 0–5 population. This step will allow Cass County to close the remaining gaps for the target population and plan for continuity with a stronger and more directed Council. All activities proposed in this grant application will be continued at some level upon completion of Federal funding.

2. The extent to which the applicant includes a detailed plan that identifies goals and objectives, relates those goals and objectives to the findings of its needs and resources assessment, and provides a work plan identifying specific activities necessary to accomplish the stated goals and objectives. The extent to which the plan demonstrates that each of the project objectives and activities supports the current needs and resource assessment and can be accomplished with the available or expected resources during the proposed project period.

**Goal 1:** Enhance the collaborative service delivery model through community planning and improved coordination linkages between service providers.

**Table 18 – Objectives and Needs Met**

<b>1a.</b> Improve the early child care education delivery system by 25% or more in areas of coordination, consistency, and cost-effectiveness.
<b>1b.</b> Promote service integration across 100% of Cass County’s human services programs for young children and their families.
<b>1c.</b> Increase countywide systems oversight and accountability by 20% or more.
<b>Needs Met:</b> Need to expand early childhood efforts started with ASAP-PIE grant. Need to monitor and strengthen linkages developed under the ASAP-PIE grant.

**Workplan activity briefs:** Extend 0–5 parent outreach; conduct Parents as Teachers training; screen children with recognized developmental assessment tools; refer children countywide to appropriate services; form and monitor a new 0–5 Workgroup subcommittee to address affordable child care costs and provide communitywide cross-training on resources, linkages between agencies, and early learning literacy planning services.

**Expected resources:** Inputs from Council members include: staff expertise and time, volunteers and volunteer time, facilities, in-kind support and ELOA grant support.

**Goal 2:** To expand the capacity of parents, caregivers, and early childhood learning service providers to facilitate healthy development and early literacy skills.

**Table 19 – Objectives and Needs Met**

<b>2a.</b> Increase the percentage of new parents and caregivers, teen parents, and undereducated adult parents taking parenting skills classes on basic care and child safety by 25% or more.
<b>2b.</b> Increase the number of unlicensed child care centers enrolling in community-based professional development and training activities that lead to the licensing and regulation process by 20% or more.
<b>2c.</b> Increase the number of parents attending parent groups, including support groups, by 50%.
<b>Needs Met:</b> Rural and socially isolated parents, caregivers, unlicensed child care providers, and early educators lack knowledge of early learning development. Teen parents and undereducated adult parents need training and awareness in effective parenting skills.

**Workplan activity briefs:** Provide countywide Brigrance Screens training for all early childhood staff; make accreditation training available to all licensed child care providers; offer training to 0–5 parents, caregivers and child care providers in early childhood development skills, and incentive-driven parent support groups.

**Expected resources:** Inputs from Council members include: staff expertise and time, volunteers and volunteer time, facilities, in-kind support and ELOA grant support.

**Goal 3:** Expand the availability of existing voluntary early childhood learning services.

**Table 20: Objectives and Needs Met**

<b>3a.</b> Conduct extensive early childhood learning services availability outreach and orientation for 50% or more of new families (transient and migrant) with young children ages 0–5 years old.
<b>3b.</b> Work with the four LEAs to increase available early child care literacy program space, human resources, enrollment slots, and child transportation modalities by 20% or more.
<b>3c.</b> Work with 20% or more of other early learning literacy programs (voluntary participation) in Cass County to develop focus groups to examine current provider hours and ability to extend/expand service timeframes for families in need of care during nontraditional work hours/days, and to review licensing status, employee training needs, and other issues impacting the quality of services.
<b>3d.</b> Increase services for children with special needs by 25% or more.

**Needs Met:** New families need learn about and have access to the seamless continuum of care for early learning opportunities for children ages 0–5 years old and for young children with special needs, including developmental delays. Families need transportation to child and parent learning activities. Parents need child care during nontraditional hours.

**Workplan activity briefs:** Launch public outreach campaign; train early childhood learning program staff in working with special needs children; offer bilingual and signed classes for parents with language barriers or who are deaf; implement a Child Care Expulsion Prevention team; coordinate efforts countywide for nontraditional child care hours at school-based programs and at child care centers; provide parent training and parent group activities at all developmental child care facilities; and provide transportation for families to attend parent and child learning opportunities.

**Expected resources:** Inputs from Council members include: staff expertise and time, volunteers and volunteer time, facilities, transportation assistance, in-kind support and ELOA grant support. The local media (newspaper, radio and television) will provide coverage, public service announcements, and alerts related to the Council news in English and Spanish.

**Goal 4:** Build broad regional support for accessible training opportunities and caregiver/child care employee reinvestment incentives.

**Table 21 – Objectives and Needs Met**

<b>4a.</b> Increase the percentage of licensed programs that begin the 18- to 24-month national accreditation process by 10% or more.
<b>4b.</b> Increase training opportunities for caregivers and child care providers by 25% or more.
<b>4c.</b> Increase the number and types of early childhood literacy professional development courses offered free-of-charge to home-based caregivers and child care agency employees by 10% or more.
<b>Needs Met:</b> Unlicensed child care providers must be encouraged to enroll in community-based professional development and training activities that qualify them for licensing and bring them under state regulations. Providers also need orientation to the Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council and how to participate in the continuum of care.

**Workplan activity briefs:** Give incentives and compensation to child care providers attending four trainings; offer training during nontraditional hours; conduct workshop on accreditation opportunities and process; invite providers to become involved in Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council; supply program-based training to early educators using PAT curriculum; and coordinate countywide cross-training for child care providers with other community service providers.

**Expected resources:** Inputs from Council members include: staff expertise and time, volunteers and volunteer time, facilities, in-kind support and ELOA grant support.

**Goal 5:** To strengthen the current network of seamless services for Cass County families with children ages 0–5 years old.

**Table 22 – Objectives and Needs Met**

<b>5a.</b> Improve school readiness indicators, assessment standards, and early learning outcomes by 25% or more.
<b>Needs Met:</b> Linkages developed under the ASAP-PIE and SS/HS grant need to be monitored and strengthened.

**Workplan activity briefs:** Work with local child care centers and preschool programs to voluntarily adopt early literacy curriculum models; promote and invite early childhood learning programs to the Council’s LICC/0–5 Workgroup; convene the Early Childhood Advisory Board and invite representatives from the 4C agency, as well as from child care provider agencies to attend; build broad community support for early childhood learning by providing public information via all media streams; use the Family Resource Center mobile unit to provide all areas of Cass County with early childhood developmental and literacy materials; provide a monthly lending library via the mobile unit; provide cross-training on early learning programs and services for resource sharing, linkages between agencies, and service integration planning purposes.

**Expected resources:** Inputs from Council members include: staff expertise and time, volunteers and volunteer time, facilities, capital equipment, in-kind support and ELOA grant support.

3. The extent to which the plan (a) Describes the sequence and timing of major activities, tasks and subtasks, important milestones, and reports and indicates when each will be accomplished (a timeline is recommended). The extent to which the applicant’s plan provides quantitative monthly or quarterly projections of the accomplishments to be achieved for each function or activity in such terms as the number of people served and the number of activities accomplished. When accomplishments cannot be quantified by activity or function, the extent to which the accomplishments are listed in chronological order to show the schedule of accomplishments and target dates.

**Table 23 – Timeline for Strengthening the Collaborative Service Delivery Model**

<b>PY&gt;</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>				<b>2006</b>
<b>Activities</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr.</b>
Enroll a minimum of 200 0–5 parents in PAT.	20	40	50	60	30	Ongoing
Screen a minimum of 200 new 0–5 children	20	40	50	60	30	Ongoing
Children with suspected developmental delays referred to appropriate agencies	10	20	25	30	15	Ongoing
Child care cost containment subcommittee forms and meets monthly	3 Meetings	3 Meeting	3 Meetings	3 Meetings	3 Meetings	3 Meetings
Community-wide cross-training	3 Trainings	3 Trainings	3 Trainings	3 Trainings	3 Trainings	3 Trainings
Evaluation data collection; interim and final reports to stakeholders	Begins	Continues	Interim Report	Continues	Continues	Continues & Summative Report



**Table 24 – Timeline for Enabling Parents, Caregivers and Early Learning Providers**

<b>PY&gt;</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>				<b>2006</b>
<b>Activities</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr.</b>
Brigrance Screens training	3 Trainings	3 Trainings	3 Trainings	3 Trainings	3 Trainings	1 Training
Accreditation process training	3 Trainings	3 Trainings	3 Trainings	3 Trainings	3 Trainings	1 Training
Parent, caregiver and provider training in early childhood development	2 Trainings	4 Trainings	4 Trainings	4 Trainings	4 Trainings	1 Training
Expand parent groups	2 Groups	4 Groups	6 Groups	8 Groups	10 Groups	10 Groups
Evaluation data collection; interim and final reports to stakeholders	Begins	Continues	Interim Report	Continues	Continues	Continues & Summative Report

**Table 25 – Enabling Early Childhood Literacy Efforts to Expand**

<b>PY&gt;</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>				<b>2006</b>
<b>Activities</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr.</b>
Bilingual parent outreach campaign to reach over 3,000 families with young children	Weekly Media Events	Weekly Media Events	Weekly Media Events	Weekly Media Events	Weekly Media Events	Weekly Media Events
Early learning staff training in working with special needs children	2 Trainings	4 Trainings	4 Trainings	4 Trainings	4 Trainings	
Training in sign language for early learning staff	1 Training	1 Training	1 Training	1 Training	1 Training	
Implement and convene Child Care Expulsion Prevention Team	1 Meeting	3 Meetings	3 Meetings	3 Meetings	3 Meetings	3 Meetings
Coordination meetings to establish centers that provide child care during non-traditional hours	3 Meetings	3 Meetings	3 Meetings	3 Meetings	1 Meeting	1 Meeting

<b>PY&gt;</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>				<b>2006</b>
<b>Activities</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr.</b>
Child care services offered during nontraditional hours		1 Center	2 Centers	3 Centers	4 Centers	4 Centers
Parent education and training activities at all developmental child care facilities	3 Trainings	3 Trainings	3 Trainings	3 Trainings	3 Trainings	3 Trainings
Community-based transportation for families to attend parent and child learning opportunities and support groups	4 local meetings	2 LEAs provide transp.	4 LEAs provide transp.	4 LEAs provide transp.	4 LEAs provide transp.	4 LEAs provide transp.
Evaluation data collection, interim and final reports to stakeholders	Begins	Continues	Interim Report	Continues	Continues	Continues & Summative Report

**Table 26 – Building Regional Support for Accessible and Affordable Training**

<b>PY&gt;</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>				<b>2006</b>
<b>Activities</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr.</b>
Incentives and compensation for caregivers and child care providers to attend a minimum of four trainings	1 Incentive	1 Incentive and Comp.	1 Incentive and Comp.	1 Incentive and Comp.	1 Incentive and Comp.	1 Incentive and Comp.
Training in non-traditional hours for caregivers and child care providers	1 Training	2 Trainings	2 Trainings	2 Trainings	2 Trainings	2 Trainings
Accreditation process training for licensed child care providers	1 Training	1 Training	1 Training	1 Training	1 Training	1 Training
Inclusion of licensed child care providers in LICC/0–5 Workgroup	1 Meeting	3 Meetings	3 Meetings	3 Meetings	3 Meetings	3 Meetings

<b>PY&gt;</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>				<b>2006</b>
<b>Activities</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr.</b>
Countywide cross-training for licensed child care providers	1 Training	1 Training	1 Training	1 Training	1 Training	1 Training
Evaluation data collection; interim and final reports to stakeholders	Begins	Continues	Interim Report	Continues	Continues	Continues & Summative Report

**Table 27 – Strengthening and Expanding Service Integration Across Human Services**

**Programs**

<b>PY&gt;</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>				<b>2006</b>
<b>Activities</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Qtr.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr.</b>
Voluntary adoption of early literacy curriculum model	2 Centers	4 Centers	6 Centers	6 Centers	8 Centers	10 Centers
Inclusion of licensed child care providers in LICC/0–5 Workgroup	1 Meeting	3 Meetings	3 Meetings	3 Meetings	3 Meetings	3 Meetings
Advisory Board meetings with Child Care Resources and child care provider agencies		1 Meeting		1 Meeting		1 Meeting
Bilingual media awareness campaign to build broad support for ELOA Program	2 Press Releases	3 Press Releases	3 Press Releases	3 Press Releases	3 Press Releases	3 Press Releases
Family Resource Center mobile unit events	2 Events	4 Events	4 Events	4 Events	4 Events	4 Events
Lending library	2 Events	3 Events	3 Events	3 Events	3 Events	3 Events
Countywide cross-training for licensed child care providers	1 Training	1 Training	1 Training	1 Training	1 Training	1 Training
Evaluation data collection; interim and final reports to stakeholders	Begins	Continues	Interim Report	Continues	Continues	Continues & Summative Report

4. The extent to which the applicant (a) Specifies who will conduct the activities under each objective; (b) describes how subcontractors will be chosen and held accountable for carrying out activities in compliance with this application, and grant terms and conditions; (c) describes how actual and perceived conflict of interest will be avoided if the Local Council is also a direct service provider; and (d) indicates how programs, services, and activities will be based on the family's ability to pay for those services that customarily require a payment.

(a) Agencies responsible for carrying out the activities under Objectives 1a. – 1c. (outlined in Table 23) are: the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District, 0–5 Program and Family & Children Services Department, Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council, Family Resource Center, four LEAs, Cass District Library, Cass County Youth Council and countywide service providers.

Agencies responsible for carrying out the activities under Objectives 2a. – 2c. (outlined in Table 24) are: the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services Department, Child Care Resources, Southwestern Michigan College, 4C's Child Care Resources, four LEAs, and Cass District Library.

Agencies responsible for carrying out the activities under Objectives 3a. – 3d. (outlined in Table 25) are: the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services Department, Michigan Telemon Migrant Head Start Corporation, Woodlands Behavioral Health Care, 4C's Child Care Resources, Tri-County Head Start, licensed child care providers, and four LEAs.

Agencies responsible for carrying out the activities under Objectives 4a. – 4c. (outlined in Table 26) are: the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services Department, Family Independence Agency, and 4C's Child Care Resources.

Agencies responsible for carrying out the activities under Objective 5a. (outlined in Table 27) are: the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services Department, Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council, LICC/0–5 Workgroup, 4C’s Child Care Resources, Early Childhood Advisory Board, four LEAs, Council on Aging, regional media partners, Cass District Library, Cass County Youth Council, and countywide service providers.

(b) The Council will not use subcontractors to conduct any of the proposed Cass County ELOA Program activities. Council member agencies will carry out 100% of the activities.

(c) The Council’s role is to coordinate activities and facilitate the attainment of the program’s objectives. The Council will not be delivering direct services to Cass County families with children ages 0–5 years old.

(d) All Cass County ELOA Program services from Council member agencies will be provided free-of-charge to low-income families. Moderate-income families will be asked to pay a small service fee determined by using a sliding scale based on the family’s after-tax income. Referrals to agencies that are not Council members will be reviewed in a case by case basis with a request from the referring agency to accept the family for treatment or care at a reduced fee—one that will be affordable for the family so as not to deter them from seeking help. In the past, Council members have been able to negotiate reduced fee services from non-member agencies in Cass County.

(5) The extent to which the applicant describes how the project will form collaborations among local early learning, youth, social service, educational providers (including faith-based organizations) and, as appropriate, organizations that can facilitate distance learning, to maximize resources and concentrate efforts on areas of greatest need.

As it stands, the Council has 45 member agencies representing early learning providers, youth service providers, social service providers, and educational providers (including one faith-based child care center). The largest educational provider and the grant application's fiscal agent is the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District, a regional service center that provides special education, instructional services, and career technical education coordination for local school districts. The District currently employs more than 175 persons. Its geographic coverage encompasses approximately 487 square miles and includes most of Cass County and small portions of Van Buren and St. Joseph counties, in lower Southwest Michigan. Four local school districts, Cassopolis, Dowagiac, Edwardsburg, and Marcellus, as well as the county's private and parochial schools, depend on the District for the provision and coordination of general and specialized services. Almost 8,000 students, enrolled in pre-kindergarten through 12th grades, represent the primary consumers that the District incorporates into its strategic education plan. The District is a part of the Berrien County Regional Education Media Center (REMC), known as REMC 11. The regional distance learning initiative, SouthwestNet, is provided by REMC 11. The SouthwestNet Distance Learning Collaborative is a regional project of school districts in Berrien, Cass, And Van Buren counties. This project was brought to southwestern Michigan during the 1999–2000 school year through two Technology Literacy Challenge Fund grants. The system has the ability to broadcast adult education classes, professional development workshops and community enrichment classes from the distance learning classroom labs to LEA classrooms in Cassopolis, Dowagiac, Edwardsburg, and Marcellus—Cass County communities. The Council has worked with REMC 11 in the past to deliver parent training and community education forums via SouthwestNet. The Council's goal is to maximize educational resources

and concentrate service provision efforts on remote, rural areas outside of small cities and towns, where parents are in the greatest need.

(6) The extent to which the applicant describes its work with local educational agencies to identify cognitive, social, emotional, and motor developmental disabilities, which are necessary to support children's readiness for school. The Cass County Human Services Coordinating

Council has been a key partner with the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District since the Council's formation in 1994. The Council's LICC/0–5 Workgroup includes staff from the District's Special Education Department. Collectively, the Council/District collaboration has planned and created programming for the following 0–5 services: Early On, Child/Infant & Toddler Program, Special Education, Zero to Five Program, Wraparound, Respite & Resource, and the Family Resource Center. Children with physical, medical and developmental learning delays and social/emotional problems are the recipients of these jointly planned and monitored school readiness programs.

(7) The extent to which the applicant's programs, services, and activities assisted under ELOA will represent developmentally appropriate steps toward the acquisition of those abilities.

Cass County educators have completed Search Institute training in the 40 Developmental Assets. Early learning programs have been restructured to provide the most outcomes (developmental assets) for challenged children. Licensed child care providers also attended the Search Institute training. The Cass County ELOA Program will build upon the lessons learned about developmentally appropriate steps for early learning school readiness programs. The 40 Developmental Assets for Early Childhood<sup>16</sup> are the foundation for all Cass County programs serving children ages 0–5 years old.

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<sup>16</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.search-institute.org/assets/EarlyChildhood.html> on July 18, 2004.

**Table 28 – Developmental Assets for Early Childhood**

Family Support	Positive Family Communication	Other Adult Relationships	Caring Neighbors
Caring Alternative Care and School Climate	Parent Involvement in Early Care and Education	Community Cherishes and Values Young Children	Young Children Receive and Are Seen as Resources
Young Children are Able to Make a Contribution	Young Children Feel and Are Safe	Family Boundaries	Alternative Care or Out-of-Home Boundaries
Neighborhood Boundaries	Adult Role Models	Positive Peer Relationships	Positive Expectations
Play and Creative Activities	Out-of-Home and Community Programs	Religious Experiences	Time at Home
Motivation to Mastery	Active Participation in Learning Experiences	Bonding to Alternative Care Programs	Home-School Connection
Early Literacy	Caring	Integrity	Honesty
Interpersonal Skills	Self-Regulation	Planning and Problem Solving	Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity
Resistance Skills	Conflict Resolution	Personal Power	Positive Self-Esteem
Positive View of Personal Future	Sense of Purpose	Equality and Social Justice	Responsibility

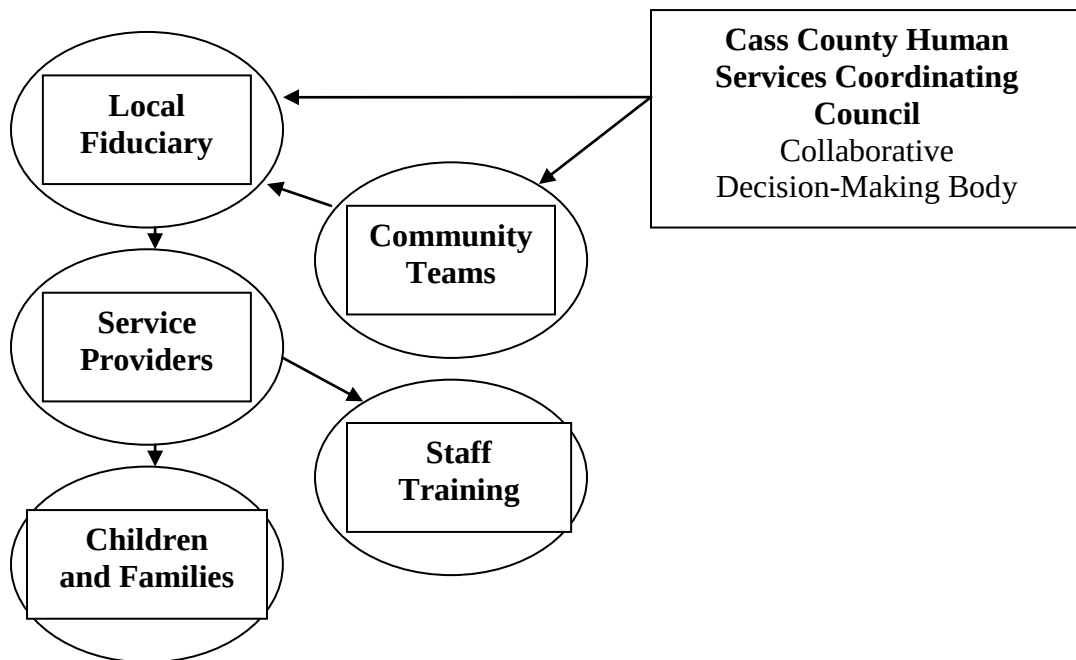
(8) The extent to which the applicant’s programs, services, and activities assisted under this announcement provide benefits for children cared for in their own homes as well as children placed in the care of others.

The Cass County ELOA Program will work aggressively to identify unlicensed home-based and out-of-home child care providers/caregivers. Information will be given to these providers on ELOA training and activities. In addition, bulletins will be sent out to unlicensed home-based and out-of-home providers on the Family Resource Center’s mobile unit’s weekly location. Full program access will be given to unlicensed providers seeking to become licensed and/or seeking to improve their knowledge of early learning literacy and child learning approaches.



(9) The extent to which the applicant’s plan: (a) Describes how the project will be structured and managed; (b) defines the procedures to be used to determine whether the project is being conducted in a manner consistent with the work plan; (c) lists organizations, cooperating entities, consultants, or other key individuals who will work on the project along with a short description of the nature of their effort or contribution to the project; (d) discusses the impact of the project’s various activities on the project’s effectiveness including factors that may affect project implementation or outcomes and presents realistic strategies for resolution of these difficulties; (e) describes how timeliness of activities will be ensured, how quality control will be maintained, and how costs will be controlled; and (f) describes how unanticipated problems will be resolved to ensure that the project will be completed on time and with a high degree of quality.

(a) Project structure and management



- The Council selected the Local Fiduciary.
- The Council monitors the Community Teams.
- The Community Teams approve service plans for the Local Fiduciary.
- Local member agencies act as fiscal agents to channel local, state and Federal funds through the Council's Local Fiduciary. For this grant, the Council is the applicant and the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District will act as the fiscal agent or local fiduciary.
- The Community Teams (in this case, members of the LICC/0–5 Workgroup) have approved the Cass County ELOA Program's service plan. Providers, including the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District, will provide services, staff training and guarantee services to children and families in the target group. **The Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council's STAR chart is attached. This chart shows the components of the Cass Comprehensive System of Care.**

(b) Defines the procedures to be used to determine whether the project is being conducted in a manner consistent with the work plan.

As fiscal agent, the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District will assume the responsibility for monitoring the project's timelines, reviewing the work plan tasks, and providing checks and balances for all Council partners that have precommitted to being responsible agencies for designated activities.

(c) Lists organizations, cooperating entities, consultants, or other key individuals who will work on the project along with a short description of the nature of their effort or contribution to the project.

**Table 29 – Council Member Contributions**

<b>Key Agencies in Carrying Out Project Design</b>	<b>Collaboration Role in ELOA Program</b>
LICC/0–5 Workgroup	Information source; partner in training, community events, and other activities. Advisory capacity.
4C’s (Child Care Resources)	Referrals; speakers for trainings for child care providers and families; information source; participate in calendar of events and training.
Cass County Council on Aging	Marketing; information source; distribution of parent education materials; radio and news media spots on program.
Cass County HSCC	Collaboration; referrals; partner on organizing planning committee; information clearing-house.
Cass District Library	Serve on planning committee; host lending library with materials supplied by grant; tailor relevant bibliographic materials as needed; computer access; story hour events. Partnership with the Family Resource Center.
Cass County Youth Council	Support to families; funding source for special activities and events.
Local LEAs (four)	County referrals; parent groups, support groups, and other activities.
Lewis Cass Intermediate School District (Family Resource Center)	Contribute to lending library; referrals; schedule mobile unit at family groups and other events as well as regular days in community. Expanding FRC services to overcome rural isolation.
Lewis Cass Intermediate School District (Respite & Resource)	Respite services; help families meet their basic needs, such as sending children to camp and providing funds for daily living needs.
Lewis Cass Intermediate School District (Transportation)	Transport client families who lack transportation to events, medical and other appointments and to programs for family and children.
Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services, Wraparound, Early On®, 0–5 Program, Child Find	Support workers; referrals; resources; information source; supervision and coordination of the grant. Collaborate with all ISD programs and other agencies. Screens and assessments.
Southwestern Michigan College	Space for trainings; share information with families on upcoming events and notify parents of any classes that would benefit them; speakers for parent education trainings and activities.
Tri-County Head Start	Referrals; partner services and training.
Woodlands Behavioral Healthcare	Speakers for workshops/trainings; support groups; referrals; information source; in-kind for the implementation of the Child Care Expulsion Prevention Team.
Michigan Telemon Migrant Head Start Corporation	Referrals; partner services; training; translation services.

The Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Family & Children Services Department staff will take the lead in providing administrative oversight, program implementation oversight, site-level monitoring, technical assistance, and evaluation.

(d) Impact of project's effectiveness including factors that may affect project implementation or outcomes and presents realistic strategies for resolution of these difficulties.

Coalition member services funded through this initiative will primarily provide early learning literacy training, developmental stages training, community resource training, and coordination for countywide early childhood services for children ages 0–5 in settings such as early learning programs offered by LEAs, licensed child care centers, licensed and unlicensed family child care homes, preschools, and nursery schools, including faith-based settings. It is important to note that the only funding allocated for unlicensed child care providers will be directed at getting these providers trained and on the licensing track.

**Program access support critical** – Extensive research by Council members, beginning as early as 1999, indicates some of the Cass County ELOA Program's various activities will impact the project's overall effectiveness. With the ASAP-PIE grant, Cass County child care providers, including the four LEAs, learned that if transportation is not provided, in part, for many of the low-income, more remotely located families, that parents will not attend free training—incentives or not. ASAP-PIE funding allowed transportation costs, which resulted in identifying and enrolling over 200 parents with children ages 0–3 years old in the first of three project years. This outcome, alone, supports the 17-month ELOA benchmark for serving a minimum of 200 families with children ages 0–5 years old. When ASAP-PIE ended, the SS/HS grant did not allow covering expenses for transportation costs. The number of participating families with 0–3 children quickly dropped—with many families calling various service

providers to complain about the lack of transportation. In rural areas where there is no “mass” transportation plan or service, it is the LEAs that must budget for and stretch their own school transportation resources in order to pick up and drop off parents on long and winding country roads. This competition—ELOA—allows some funds to remove barriers to participation, including transportation. The rest of the burden will be in-kind on the part of the four LEAs located in Cassopolis, Dowagiac, Edwardsburg and Marcellus (Cass County), Michigan.

**Turf issues set aside for the good of all Cass County families** – Cass County child care providers are long past turf issues. There are plenty of families (over 3,000) with young children ages 0–5 years old to go around and only 1,200 licensed child care slots countywide.

**Likelihood of low participation by unlicensed child care providers** – Based on feedback from 4C’s Child Care Resources, the licensed child care providers in Cass County are eager to participate in low-cost/no-cost professional development training. Those centers that are not accredited want to work toward and achieve accreditation. Their owners and employees are hardworking local individuals or families trying to maintain a small business in their neighborhoods and communities—a service for working parents. The unlicensed providers have no real incentive to participate in training other than to increase their enrollments from families who ask for credentials and references before making the decision to leave their child in someone else’s care. The campaign to identify unlicensed providers and families in need of quality child care will be aggressive in an attempt to achieve training goals for both unlicensed providers and for families with child care concerns who have their own set of skill deficiencies.

The Lewis Cass Intermediate School District will collaborate with 4C’s Child Care Resources in the hiring of a 1.0 FTE Community Outreach Specialist for the program. The individual selected for this position will, primarily, be responsible for finding unlicensed child

care providers and providing them with information on the training available and the benefits of working toward licensure.

Aside from the above impact issues, the Council has nearly six years of tenure in early learning literacy problems and solutions. The lessons learned have been used to build what the Council believes will be a *rural model* for enhancing early childhood literacy.

(e) Describe how timeliness of activities will be ensured, how quality control will be controlled and how costs will be controlled.

**Timeliness** – The Council has developed rigorous Standard Operating Procedures for monitoring member-involved programs, including monitoring the progress of benchmarks and collecting valid evaluation data. Procedures call for quick convening of the evaluation team (stakeholders’ group and/or third party independent evaluator) and identifying the data collection tools within 60 days from the program start date. The Council also expects frequent reporting on the data analysis and interpretation process. Checks and balances are in place for identifying any grant application fiscal agent that does not comply with the Council’s agreed upon procedures.

**Quality control** is built into every Council-involved program, whether the program is funded with public or private funds. Quality control is achieved through three types of end-user stakeholder feedback: (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written feedback. Every program component, from training to transportation to the public media campaign to coordination, will be assessed by the end recipient of the service component. Feedback will be collected by member agency staff, countywide, and given directly to the evaluation team for data analysis, interpretation and reporting. The evaluation team will report its findings to the Council Advisory Board within 30 days. Any problems with quality will be quickly corrected and reassessed at more frequent intervals.

**Cost control** will be maintained through careful fiscal agent expenditure tracking and through substantial in-kind contributions from member agencies. In rural communities, agencies learn to share resources, minimize purchases and trade commodities. No resource is left unused, nor is it thrown out.

(f) Describes how unanticipated problems will be resolved to ensure that the project will be completed on time and with a high degree of quality.

Unanticipated problems will be brought to the immediate attention of the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District and the LICC/0–5 Workgroup. Problems will be analyzed for cause and effect on the quality of the Cass County ELOA Program. Resolutions will be discussed and the most cost-effective and quality-driven resolution will be applied and monitored. Corrections will be made where necessary, with continued monitoring at frequent intervals.

(10) If the project includes the use of any distance learning techniques in support of informal or isolated child care providers, the extent to which the purposes of the distance learning are clearly described and appropriate objectives are identified for specific types of child care providers. (If distance learning is not an element of the project, this sub-criterion does not apply.)

For the purposes of the Cass County ELOA Program, the Council will work with the Berrien Intermediate School District’s REMC XI to provide early childhood professional development courses to all LEA buildings via a video streaming uplink. Parents will be able to attend early literacy, developmental assets and parenting skills training in small volunteer- or staff-facilitated groups. Given the past success of SouthwestNet in delivering educator professional development and parent training, it will be the most cost-effective conduit for using the services of early child care experts, including medical professionals, who will be able to broadcast from one central site to many downlinked sites throughout Cass County. Distance

learning training will be offered to unlicensed child care providers, licensed child care providers, early learning program staff, parents and program volunteers at no cost to participants.

Incentives will be offered to unlicensed providers to garner their interest and attendance at these sessions. In addition, refreshments will be on hand for all participants. Parents in need of child care while they are in training will have access to free, on-site (in the LEA's facility) child care by licensed and accredited professionals. **Objectives:** Employ a cost-effective way to simultaneously share the expertise of one child care professional with many individuals located at multiple sites. Use an education and entertainment training approach (media and snacks) to attract attendance of less-educated, unlicensed child care providers. Maximize site usage and expert information while introducing parents and nonschool licensed and unlicensed providers to school-based resources. Videotape and make multiple copies of the distance learning-delivered trainings and distribute on request to Center-based programs for staff training. Also make copies of the videos available for checkout by rural parents and home-based child care providers in the mobile unit's lending library.



### CRITERION 3: RESULTS AND BENEFITS

1. The extent to which the applicant specifies the number of children and families to be served and how the services to be provided will be funded consistent with needs assessment results.

The Cass County ELOA Program will serve a minimum of 200 families with children ages 0–5 years old during the 17-month funding timeframe.

**Table 30 – Findings and Priorities**

Needs Assessment Findings	ELOA Funding Priorities
Restoration and expansion of early childhood literacy efforts started in Cass County with ASAP-PIE grant are needed.	Strengthening the Council’s capacity to coordinate early childhood literacy efforts
High numbers of Cass County children are cared for by unlicensed child care providers.	Educating parents about the characteristics of quality child care providers and where open licensed slots are in their community
High numbers of Cass County licensed providers lack state and national accreditation.	Quickly identifying licensed providers and enrolling them in courses that lead to accreditation
High numbers of early learning educators need reinforcement training in early learning development.	Training early learning educators in screening procedures, reporting protocol, and early learning development stages
High numbers of teen parents and undereducated adult parents need training and awareness in effective parenting skills.	Enrolling teen parents and undereducated parents in parenting skills and early childhood development stages training
Linkages for 0–5 children need to be monitored more closely and strengthened.	Monitoring and evaluating program quality at all levels at frequent intervals
New families (transient and migrant) need to learn about and have access to the seamless continuum of care network for early learning opportunities for young children.	Public media campaign (in English and Spanish) to inform, educate and enroll children in licensed programs and parents in parenting skills and early childhood development stages training
Unlicensed child care providers need incentives to enroll in professional development and training activities that can qualify them for licensing.	Distance learning and community-based training and attendance incentives for unlicensed child care providers that leads to licensing
Rural, low-income families need transportation to school-based early learning training and services and also need child care services during nontraditional work hours.	Transportation to training for families, and working with child care providers to develop nontraditional service hours at licensed centers.

2. The extent to which the applicant explains how the expected results will benefit the population to be served in meeting its needs for early learning services and activities.

**Expected results for Cass County families:**

- Increased literacy about early learning and its importance in their child(ren)'s life.
- Increased understanding of how parents can be teachers in their own homes—and contribute to their child(ren)'s developmental assets.
- Increased understanding of their child(ren)'s developmental problems and how to work with their child(ren) at home on motor skills and cognitive development.
- Increased understanding of positive parenting skills and how to use them daily.
- Increased knowledge of community resources and services for families with young children.
- Increased knowledge of what constitutes quality child care and how to select an affordable and licensed child care center.
- Increased knowledge of school-based resources and early learning programs.
- Increased parenting skills and abilities for teen and undereducated parents.
- Increased understanding among deaf parents of all program components for parents and children.
- Increased understanding among non-English speaking parents of all program components for parents and children.

**Expected results for Cass County children ages 0–5 years old:**

- Earlier developmental assessments, referrals and treatments.
- Earlier inclusion in licensed child care settings and in school readiness programs.
- Increased chance of experiencing age-appropriate developmental stages.

-Increased chance of having a *Parents as Teachers* trained parent or caregiver to observe, guide and nurture their developmental stages.

-Increased chance of not becoming an at-risk indicator statistic in Cass County.

-Increased number of migrant and transient children enrolled in licensed child care centers.

**Expected results for Cass County unlicensed child care providers:**

-Increased awareness of the possibility of closure if informed parents decide to move their child(ren) to a licensed child care center.

-Increased knowledge about licensing requirements and the need to qualify for licensing.

-Increased knowledge of early learning literacy curriculum models and classroom applications.

-Increased knowledge about the early childhood developmental assets.

-Increased knowledge about community resources.

-Increased knowledge about reporting children's observed developmental problems to parents and providing them with community resource information including screening sites.

-Increased knowledge about the Council and the LICC/0–5 Workgroup.

**Expected results for Cass County licensed child care providers:**

-Increased knowledge of early learning literacy curriculum models and classroom applications.

-Increased knowledge about the early childhood developmental assets.

-Increased knowledge about community resources for family referrals.

-Increased knowledge about reporting children's observed developmental problems to parents and providing them with community resource information including screening sites.

-Increased knowledge about the Council and the LICC/0–5 Workgroup.

-Increased knowledge about the accreditation process and how to achieve center accreditation.

**Expected results for Cass County early learning educators:**

- Increased knowledge of early learning literacy curriculum models and classroom applications.
- Increased knowledge of how to use development screening tools and report findings.
- Increased knowledge about community resources for family referrals.
- Increased knowledge of affordable child care options for families with young children who are not old enough for a school-based school readiness program.

3. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that completion of the proposed objectives will result in specific measurable results.

**Table 31 – Objectives That Lead to Results**

Measurable Objectives	Quantifiable Results
<b>1a.</b> Improve the early child care education delivery system by 25% or more in areas of coordination, consistency, and cost-effectiveness.	Minimum of 200 parents trained Minimum of 200 children screened Minimum of 100 children referred to other agencies for services
<b>1b.</b> Promote service integration across 100% of Cass County’s human services programs for young children and their families.	Minimum of 18 subcommittee meetings to study cost containment Minimum of 18 communitywide cross-trainings for service providers
<b>1c.</b> Increase countywide systems oversight and accountability by 20% or more.	Minimum of 10 licensed child care providers join Council
<b>2a.</b> Increase the percentage of new parents and caregivers, teen parents, and undereducated adult parents taking parenting skills classes on basic care and child safety by 25% or more.	Minimum of 50 new parents, caregivers, teen parents and undereducated adult parents enrolled in training
<b>2b.</b> Increase the number of unlicensed child care centers enrolling in community-based professional development and training activities that lead to the licensing and regulation process by 20% or more.	Minimum of 10 unlicensed child care centers enrolled in training activities that lead to licensing and regulation

<b>Measurable Objectives</b>	<b>Quantifiable Results</b>
<b>2c.</b> Increase the number of parents attending parent groups, including support groups, by 50%.	Minimum of 100 parents attend support groups
<b>3a.</b> Conduct extensive early childhood learning services availability outreach and orientation for 50% or more of new families (transient and migrant) with young children ages 0–5 years old.	Minimum of 25 migrant and/or transient families enrolled in training and child care services
<b>3b.</b> Work with the four LEAs to increase available early child care literacy program space, human resources, enrollment slots, and child transportation modalities by 20% or more.	Minimum of four LEAs-based early child care literacy programs expand space, staffing, enrollment slots, and transportation assistance for children and families
<b>3c.</b> Work with 20% or more of other early learning literacy programs (voluntary participation) in Cass County to develop focus groups to examine current provider hours and ability to extend/expand service timeframes for families in need of care during nontraditional work hours/days, and to review licensing status, employee training needs, and other issues impacting the quality of services.	Minimum of 14 coordination meetings to establish centers that provide child care during nontraditional hours Minimum of 4 centers offer child care during nontraditional hours
<b>3d.</b> Increase services for children with special needs by 25% or more.	Minimum of 18 awareness trainings Minimum of 16 meetings of the Child Care Expulsion Prevention Team Minimum of 5 sign language trainings for early learning staff Minimum of 18 trainings for early learning staff working with special needs children Minimum of 3,000 parents receiving public information about services for children with special needs
<b>4a.</b> Increase the percentage of licensed programs that begin the 18- to 24-month accreditation process by 10% or more.	Minimum of 6 trainings on the accreditation process Minimum of two licensed centers receive national accreditation

<b>Measurable Objectives</b>	<b>Quantifiable Results</b>
<b>4b.</b> Increase training opportunities for caregivers and child care providers by 25% or more.	Minimum of 40 total trainings offered for caregivers and child care providers
<b>4c.</b> Increase the number and types of early childhood literacy professional development courses offered free-of-charge to home-based caregivers and child care center employees by 10% or more.	Minimum of 40 trainings offered free-of-charge to home-based caregivers and child care center employees
<b>5a.</b> Improve school readiness indicators, assessment standards, and early learning outcomes by 25% or more.	<p>Minimum of 4 LEA early learning programs and 6 licensed child care centers adopt early learning literacy curriculum models</p> <p>Minimum of 10 licensed child care providers join the Council</p> <p>Minimum of 3 Advisory Board meetings with Child Care Resources and child care provider agencies</p> <p>Minimum of 1,000 families given information on school readiness indicators and early learning outcomes</p> <p>Minimum of 22 Family Resource Center mobile unit events targeting rural parents</p> <p>Minimum of 6 countywide cross-trainings that incorporate the early childhood developmental assets for child care providers</p>