

NGA News Release

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Contact: Christopher Cashman, 202-624-7787

STATES TO CONVENE SUMMITS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

NGA Center Awards Grants to 10 States

WASHINGTON—To help states develop policies that address the needs of at risk infants, toddlers and preschoolers, the NGA Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) today announced 10 states will receive \$10,000 grants to support Governors’ Summits on Early Childhood: **Alaska, Connecticut, Florida, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah and Virginia.**

The first years of life are a critical time for developing the foundational skills and competencies that children need for success in school. Children who enter kindergarten without these characteristics start – and stay – behind their fellow classmates who possess these traits. Early intervention and support can help close this gap before it starts to widen. Research shows that high quality care and early learning experiences coupled with stable, nurturing parental relationships are directly linked to children’s success in school and in life.

“These grants will allow governors to convene their key stakeholders around state action plans for early childhood development,” said John Thomasian, director of the NGA Center. “Governors are committed to improving and coordinating all services to better prepare the nation’s youth for their first day at school.”

As stated in [*Building the Foundation for Bright Futures: Final Report of the NGA Task Force on School Readiness \(2005\)*](#), governors recognize that shifting the odds for children in the first five years is a necessary and critical step to closing the persistent achievement gap in America. The NGA Early Childhood Summit grants are intended to help governors build support for a state early childhood policy agenda that incorporates the core principles, policy framework and recommendations of the [*NGA Task Force on School Readiness*](#).

The selected states demonstrated strong gubernatorial commitment and set clear goals, objectives and measures for converting new energy into concrete action following the summits and will receive technical assistance from the NGA Center and partner organizations of the Birth to Five Policy Alliance. These groups will work with each state to meet the intended summit goals, which include:

- Developing consensus on specific policy recommendations for governors early childhood agenda;
- Cultivating leadership among business, philanthropy and community stakeholders;
- Building partnerships with the private sector; and,
- Strengthening capacity for decision-making and service delivery at the local level.

All states were invited to apply for the grants, with the exception of states that received an Early Childhood Grant in 2006. The grants are made possible through the generous support of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund and an anonymous foundation. To learn more about governors' efforts to prepare children for school, visit www.nga.org/center/earlychild.

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Founded in 1908, the National Governors Association (NGA) is the collective voice of the nation's governors and one of Washington, D.C.'s most respected public policy organizations. Its members are the governors of the 50 states, three territories and two commonwealths. NGA provides governors and their senior staff members with services that range from representing states on Capitol Hill and before the Administration on key federal issues to developing and implementing innovative solutions to public policy challenges through the NGA Center for Best Practices. For more information, visit www.nga.org.