



## Support Young Children with Developmental Delays and Disabilities: Invest in *Early On*

### What is *Early On*?

- *Early On* is Michigan's early intervention system for all families with infants and toddlers age 0-to-3 who have identified developmental delays or disabilities.
- *Early On* supports and partners with families to promote the development of their infants and toddlers through a comprehensive system of services and resources.
- *Early On* provides families with qualified professionals who visit them in their homes to teach skills for supporting their infant or toddler's development.
- This includes special education services like physical and occupational therapy, speech therapy, social work and psychologist services, hearing and vision services, and specialized instruction for families and caregivers to support children for future success in life.
- *Early On* currently provides services to 26,000 children each year, with each child's services determined by a comprehensive evaluation and an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

### Why intervene early?

- *Early On* reaches children in their first three years of life when their brains and bodies are growing at a faster pace than at any other time in their lives. 80% of a child's brain develops by age 3, so intervening early reaps greater benefits for a child's development than waiting until they are in school.
- Children, identified as having developmental delays or disabilities, who benefit from *Early On* are far less likely to need special education or other costly services later in life.

### *Early On* is currently underfunded in Michigan:

- *Early On* is supported by Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funding and a very modest investment from the Michigan School Aid budget. Most programs across the state must rely on a funding model dependent upon local school special education millages. This means that local access to services is often impacted by area property values. This has led to very inequitable service delivery where many children do not receive the frequency or specific types of services they need, and a lack of outreach and awareness means that many more children are not referred for early intervention services in the first place.
- Currently, only four percent of Michigan infants and toddlers are receiving early intervention services, compared to thirteen percent of K-12 students who are receiving more expensive special education supports.
- Referrals for *Early On* services are up 12% this year, and providers across the state are really struggling to assess these children with very limited staff.

### What is the need?

- Currently *Early On* receives \$22.3 million in state funding. It is estimated that the state needs to invest three to four times the current allocation to adequately fund *Early On*.
- The Pritzker Children's Initiative and Think Babies Michigan have commissioned a comprehensive study on the true cost to fund *Early On* that will be available in early 2024.
- Increased funding would allow *Early On* programs to hire additional highly qualified staff, provide more frequent services that reflect the needs of families, and ensure outreach to more infants and toddlers who have developmental delays or disabilities.