



## 2012 Agenda

### FAIR OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERY CHILD

## FACT SHEET: Replace Funding for Successful and Critical Early Childhood Programming

Every child in Kentucky deserves the opportunity to enter school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote their success — ready to grow, ready to learn, and ready to succeed. Quality early childhood programs help counter the effects that poverty and economic hardship may have on a child's development and early school success.

#### FACTS:

**The first five years of life are the most critical for children, as 85 percent of their brains develop during that time.** By investing in a quality, comprehensive early childhood system, Kentucky will see long term gains in the success of residents and substantially improved outcomes in education and workforce development. Recent findings in the field of neuroscience support the lifelong importance of early childhood development; and in the field of economics, the long term economic and social benefits of high quality care are clear. Kentucky has an opportunity to build on previous early childhood education initiatives and create a more cohesive system that serves children from birth to age five.

**The KIDS NOW initiative includes several early childhood programs designed to prevent negative outcomes for young children.** In 2000, Kentucky lawmakers unanimously decided to designate 25 percent of the Master Tobacco Settlement dollars to fund KIDS NOW. This decision placed the Commonwealth at the forefront nationally in early childhood development circles. KIDS NOW includes home visiting programs for at-risk families (HANDS), health screenings, immunizations for underinsured children, early childhood mental health trainings, substance abuse treatment for pregnant and post-partum women, and child care subsidies.

**Kentucky's investment in the youngest children through KIDS NOW has paid off, with many measurable results in the last decade:** infant mortality rates declined, over 40,000 uninsured children received immunizations, children with mental health challenges had fewer expulsions from child care, and no children are on a waiting list for child care subsidies. These are just a few of the many positive outcomes of KIDS NOW programs. The results are clear – focused attention on children 0-5 years old pays off.

**Forecasts show that funds from the Master Settlement Agreement are a declining source of revenue in Kentucky.** Because of the dedicated funding stream, Kentucky policymakers have not had to identify sources to support these programs year after year. However, as these funds decline, critical early childhood programs such as HANDS home visiting, scholarships for early childhood educators, and child care subsidies so families can work and children can be in quality settings also decline, putting children at risk.

#### SOLUTIONS:

- Ensure that funding for KIDS NOW early childhood programs do not go below the 2012 revised budget of \$24.3 million in Fiscal Year 2013 and in Fiscal Year 2014 begin to incrementally increase the budget to get back to initial investments of over \$30 million.
- Keep the additional \$15 million in the House and Senate budgets for expanded preschool opportunities.