

# ARKANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMS INITIATIVE (AECCS)

## OVERVIEW

The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education in the Arkansas Department of Human Services, in partnership with Maternal and Child Health (Title V) of the Arkansas Department of Health, , directs the Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (AECCS) Grant Program. AECCS assists with coordinating and integrating statewide systems that support families and communities in the development of all children so that they are healthy and ready to learn. The Program also supports the State's plan to coordinate the activities, services, leadership, and resources of public and private agencies and organizations. In turn, this Plan assists families and communities in providing for the healthy physical, social, and emotional development of young children, primarily birth to eight years of age.

Many issues related to early childhood systems are crosscutting and must be addressed through the partnerships formed across the entire AECCS Initiative. Stakeholders recognize that all related programs and program areas and the resources they represent are integrally necessary to the success of AECCS. As a result, four shared, major goals have been developed around:

- **Public Awareness:** Families, communities, and local and state policy makers recognize the impact of quality early childhood experiences on the community.
- **Access to High Quality:** Children have access to quality and comprehensive physical and mental health care, early care and education, and social/emotional development.
- **Parenting Supports:** Parents have the information, services, and supports needed to ensure their young children are developing in healthy environments.
- **Availability of Services:** Quality and coordinated systems of care are available for families and children throughout the state.

Services and activities of AECCS build on past and current efforts and initiatives which are centered on the four shared goals and five areas of concern: Early Care and Education, Medical Homes/Health Care, Social and Emotional Health, Family Support, and Parenting Education. The primary activities focus on access to the following:

- 1) High quality child care and early education programs
- 2) Health insurance and preventive health services for young children
- 3) Developmental/social-emotional health screenings for young children
- 4) Mental health services for families of young children
- 5) Family support services and resources
- 6) Statewide parenting education services

The AR ECCS Partnership Council and the Workgroup co-chairs provide oversight to the development and enhancement of infrastructure and services for children and their families which are based on family-centered principles.