COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT AND REASSESSMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD NEEDS AND RESOURCES[1]

The tool is designed to help city officials and other community leaders gain a better understanding of how young children and their families are faring and where assistance is needed. It can be used as the first step in developing a local agenda around early childhood to evaluate the success of current initiatives or to focus future strategies to help improve outcomes for young children. This tool was adapted to focus on young children (under age five) and is customized to Illinois data and demographics. The community assessment is meant to be a flexible guide for city/community leaders to investigate the state of early childhood in their community. Therefore, feel free to adapt the tool to your community's specific goals.

The community assessment has two sections:

I.   Condition of Young Children: Indicators and resources aimed at providing an overview of the well-being of children under age five. See **Data Guide** for assistance with data sources and alternate measures.
A. Demographic, Social, and Environment Indicators
B. Health Indicators
C. Program Indicators: Early childhood programs available in the community and the number of children they serve.
D. Inventory of Local Childhood Resources: Resources available for young children and their families in the community.

NOTES:
- *Use the indictors listed as a guide*. If your locality does not collect some of these data, or does not have it broken down at the community-level, do not be overly concerned. Use alternate measures or add other available data that will help provide a picture of the conditions of young children in the community.
- *Create a more comprehensive inventory* by using the blanks under each category to record specific program names, services, or other activities that are not listed. Identifying key contacts at these organizations or programs can also be helpful.
- *Consider collecting detailed information* about each program in the community.

II.   Condition of Our Community: A list of statements and questions that can be used to help focus discussions with various community stakeholders, including early childhood service providers and other key stakeholders.
A. Rate these Statements: Statements aimed at guiding assessment of the community's readiness to respond to its early childhood needs.
B. Open-Ended Questions: Questions aimed at guiding the discussion on early childhood needs with community stakeholders.

NOTE: View these discussions as an opportunity for engaging constituents in a meaningful way around early childhood issues.

Listed below are some general suggestions about the community assessment process:

- *Consider using a team approach* to the assessment. Since data and other information about local resources will most likely come from a variety of sources, it may be helpful to bring key experts (both within and outside city/county government), data suppliers and other knowledgeable partners together to work on the assessment as a group, rather than requiring one person to track down all the information
- *High-level leadership* from a mayor or city/town councilmember can help secure buy-in from the agencies and partners needed to collect data and other important information for the assessment.
- *Provide opportunities to reflect on the information gathered*. After completing the community assessment, do not just file it away! Instead, set aside time to discuss the results with other municipal leaders, staff from key city agencies, and stakeholders. Use these sessions to determine priorities, develop strategies, and build support for taking the next steps to address early childhood needs identified by the assessment.

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[1] Adapted from the National League of Cities. www.nlc.org/iyef

Part I: Condition of Families with Young Children

For each indicator, program, or resource listed in the tables below, locate community-level data, whether city or county, on children under age five. Refer to the Data Guide at the end for assistance with data sources and alternate or additional measures. Space is available to include additional indicators, programs, and resources.

Our community is defined as (i.e. County or City): _____

Indicator	Numeric Value	Notes	Data Date
A – Demographic and Social – *Indicators taken from Census, ACS, IECAM, and Chapin Hall Center for Children see Data Guide Section*			
Number of children under age five			
Percent of families with children under age five			
Percent of children under age five living in poverty			
Number of households speaking Spanish or other language at home & are linguistically isolated			
Median family income			
Number of children age five and under below 185% Federal Poverty Level (FPL)			
Number of children age five and under below 200% FPL			
Percent of population five years and over that speak a language other than English at home			
Of those that speak a language other than English at home, what percent speak English less than very well			
B – Health – *Indicators taken from state health data sources, CDC, and HRSA see Data Guide Section*			
Percent of infants born with low birth-weight			
Percent of children covered by health insurance 0-5 years old			
Percent of 2 year olds who were immunized			
Percent of mothers who smoke during pregnancy			
Percent of mothers who drink during pregnancy			
Teen birth rate (reported cases per 1,000 children)			
Percent of mothers beginning prenatal in the 1st trimester			
Percent of births by cesarean section			
Infant Mortality Rate			
Percent of children with special healthcare needs (CSHCN) 0-5 years old			

Child abuse and neglect rate for children 0-5 years old (reported cases per 1,000 children)			
Percent of children 6 years old and younger with elevated blood lead levels (based on number of children tested)			
Percent of children 3 years old and younger with elevated blood lead levels (based on number of children tested)			
Number of Medicaid deliveries			
Percent of children with dental exams, caries experience, untreated decay, urgent treatment, sealants			
Breastfeeding initiation rates			
Breastfeeding 6 month duration rates			
Maternal oral health care • Needed to see a dentist for a problem			
• Dental/health care worker spoke about care of gums and teeth			
• Visited dentist or dental clinic			

C – Programs		
	Total Number of Children Served in Your Community	**Notes**
Early Head Start: home-based		
Early Head Start: center-based		
Head Start		
State funded Preschool		
Licensed Child Care Centers		
Licensed-Exempt Child Care Centers		
Licensed Family Child Care Homes		
Home Visiting programs (HF, PAT, NFP, etc)		
Part C Early Intervention (EI)		
Part B (Special Education) Caseload – contact your local school district or local education agency		
Percent of first graders promoted to the next grade – contact your local school district		
*May need to contact programs directly		
D – Inventory of Local Early Childhood Resources – *Indicate resources available within your community*		
	Available? Y or N	**Notes**

Parent Education/Support		
Family Resource Centers		
Parenting Classes		
Family Literacy Programs		
Early Care and Education		
Child Care Research and Referral (CCR&R)		
Part C Early Intervention		
Child Health and Safety		
Food Stamps		
WIC		
Safety Seat Programs		
Smoke Detector Distribution		
Lead Abatement		
Federally Qualified Health Centers		
Local Health Department		
Community Health Centers		
Pediatric Practices		
Birthing Hospitals		
Social Services		
Counseling		
Transitional Housing		
Food Pantries		
Neighborhood Resource Centers		
Basic Needs Services		
Faith-Based Services		
Others:		

Part II: Condition of Your Community
In each section below, consider the early childhood resources and needs of your community. Consider your community's readiness to respond to its unmet needs, as well as how its readiness can be enhanced. We recommend using a team approach to these questions by including key contacts from a variety of partners, as well as high-level leadership. The answers to these questions offer an opportunity to reflect on the condition of your community and to identify next steps.

Part A: Rate These Statements
Use this section to assess your impression of your community's readiness to respond to its early childhood needs.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My community is ready to tackle early childhood issues.					
What is the evidence of this? _____ _____ _____					
There is a general awareness of the importance of successful early childhood in your community.					
How do you know this? _____ _____ _____					
I anticipate sources of resistance to municipal action to promote early childhood success.					
What is the nature of the anticipated resistance? _____ _____ _____					
There is significant need for more quality child care and early education opportunities in my community.					

Part B: Open-Ended Questions
Use these questions to help focus discussions with various community stakeholders, including early childhood service providers and other key stakeholders. View these questions as an opportunity for engaging constituents in a meaningful way around early childhood issues.

Questions for All Community Stakeholders
- What types of people/organizations in your community are important to have "at the table" when designing an early childhood agenda? (i.e. who are your key thought leaders?)
- What are some potential barriers to, and opportunities for, reaching out to parents of young children in your community?
- What is the nature of your linkage with the schools?
- What are the biggest unmet needs for young children and families? How do these relate to the data on the condition of young children that is collected in your community?
- Is there an existing coalition or other mechanism that promotes communication and coordination among providers of early care and education, health services, and parent support programs in your community? If so, what is it? How does it work?

Data Guide: Sources and Alternate Measures (This is not an exhaustive list, but a potential place to start collecting data)

❖   **Number of children under age five**

For ACS, American Community Survey data (Please note: This is a survey, not census data):
1)   Go to www.census.gov and click on "American Community Survey."
2)   On right side of screen, under "Get Data," click "American Fact Finder (AFF)."
3)   Select "Data Profiles".
4)   Select Geographic Area (state, county, congressional district, elementary or secondary school district).
5)   Select "Demographic" characteristics and search table for data.

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❖   **Median family income**

For ACS, American Community Survey data:
1)   Go to www.census.gov and click on "American Community Survey".
2)   On right side of screen, under "Get Data," click "American Fact Finder (AFF)."
3)   Select "Data Profiles."
4)   Select Geographic Area (state, county, Congressional District, elementary or secondary school district).
5)   Select "Economic" characteristics and search table for data.
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❖   **Percent of population five years and over that speak a language other than English at home**
❖   **Of those that speak a language other than English at home, what percent speak English less than very well.**

For ACS, American Community Survey data:
6)   Go to www.census.gov and click on "American Community Survey".
7)   On right side of screen, under "Get Data," click "American Fact Finder (AFF)."
8)   Select "Data Profiles".
9)   Select Geographic Area (state, county, congressional district, elementary or secondary school district)
10) Select "Social" characteristics and search table for data.
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❖   **Number of children age five and under below 185% Federal Poverty Level (FPL)**
❖   **Number of children age five and under below 200% FPL**
❖   **Percent of households with children under age five**

For Census 2010 data:
11) Go to www.census.gov and click on "American Fact Finder."
12) Under the "Data Sets Menu," box choose "Summary File 1."
13) Choose "Quick Tables" from the list on the right-hand side of the page.
14) On the next screen, make sure "List" is indicated for "Choose a Selection Method."
15) Next, choose your state from the "Select a State" drop-down menu. Wait for the page to reload.
16) Select one or more geographic areas and click "Add." When you have selected all of the areas of interest, click the "next" button at the bottom of the page.
17) On the table, select the "P34: Family Type and Presence of Own Children" category. Click "Go" on the right side of the box. Allow the page to refresh.
18) To capture all families with children under age six you must add together the percentages for "Under 6 years only" and "Under 6 & 6-17 years" in the next box.
19) Click on "Show result."
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❖   **Percent of children under age five living in poverty**

For ACS, American Community Survey data (Percent of children under age five in families living in poverty):
20) Go to www.census.gov and click on "American Community Survey."
21) On right side of screen, under "Get Data," click "American Fact Finder (AFF)."
     22) Select "Data Profiles."

23) Select Geographic Area (state, county, congressional district, elementary or secondary school district)
24) Select "Economic" characteristics and search table for data.

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❖ **Percent of first graders promoted to next grade**
❖ **Part B (Preschool Special Education) caseload**

Source: Contact your local school district or local education agency

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❖ **Percent of children with special healthcare needs**

For state-level data, go to the state's results page from the National Survey of Children with Special Healthcare Needs, administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA): http://mchb.hrsa.gov/cshcn05/SD/illinois.htm.