



“All children will enter kindergarten safe, healthy, and eager to succeed in school and in life.”

Collaborative of Muskegon County

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Members

- Catholic Social Services
- Child and Family Services
- Child Abuse Council
- Christians for Health
- Community Coordinating Council
- Community Foundation for Muskegon County
- Community Mental Health
- Department of Human Services
- Every Women's Place/Webster House
- Fruitport Community Schools
- Hackley Community Care Center
- Head Start of Muskegon/Oceana
- Holton Public Schools
- Mona Shores Public Schools
- Montague Area Public Schools
- Muskegon Area Chamber of Commerce
- Muskegon Area Intermediate School District
- Muskegon Community College
- Muskegon Community Health Project
- Muskegon County Health Department
- Muskegon Family Care
- Muskegon Heights Public Schools
- Muskegon Public Schools
- North Muskegon Public Schools
- Oakridge Public Schools
- Orchard View Schools
- Parent Representatives of the Community
- Pathways
- Ravenna Public Schools
- Reeths-Puffer Schools
- The Gerber Foundation
- United Way of the Lakeshore
- Whitehall District Schools

A Great Start for All Our Children! Local Collaborative Receives State Funding

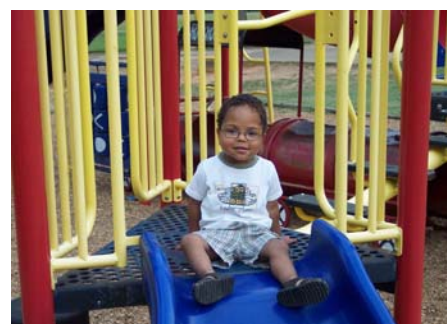
The vision is that **all Muskegon County children will enter kindergarten safe, healthy, and eager to succeed in school and in life.** Truly, what a “Great Start” that would be for all our children. A newly-formed venture in the state of Michigan called the **Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC)** is spearheading a state-wide effort to develop comprehensive early childhood development systems in all Michigan communities. Earlier this year, Muskegon County was named a “Great Start Collaborative” community, **one of seven counties in the state** to be so designated. This award was a result of the many partnerships and track record of collaboration and results in Muskegon County on early childhood issues.

A planning grant is being used to launch the **Great Start Collaborative of Muskegon County.** Representatives from education, business, philanthropy, human services, the medical field, faith community, and parents are part of the collaborative body and will be working earnestly on data assessment and strategic planning through the first year.

Muskegon Great Start Collaborative Gathers Working for the Good of the Community

The Great Start Collaborative of Muskegon County held its first meeting on May 23, 2006, at the **Muskegon Area Intermediate School District (MAISD)** offices. Members were welcomed by MAISD Superintendent Dr. Susan Meston. Thirty-four county agencies and organizations attended the meeting. Parent representatives were also present.

On June 28, 2006, the Collaborative met at the **Muskegon Family Care.** Executive Director, Donna Littlejohn welcomed members.



Luther Dease, the 2006 poster child for the Miracle Network, is a resident of Muskegon Heights.

Goal of the Great Start Collaborative: To improve health and well-being in the entire county.

Assessment Process Begins

The members of the Great Start Collaborative of Muskegon County have begun the process of collecting data reflective of the services provided children 0-5 and their families.

The study will also include how well these families are able to access the services. Finally, the Collaborative will look at the strengths and weaknesses of the services provided as compared to the needs revealed through the assessment of data.

The final task will include the development of a long-term strategic plan for improving all services for all young children and their families in Muskegon County.



The Muskegon County
Great Start Collaborative

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National Kids Count Data Book Released

The 17th annual report was released **June 27, 2006**, by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. **Kids Count** includes well-being indicator data for America's kids. Progress for children has slowed and is no longer improving steadily as it did in the 1990s. Measures of well-being included in the national Kids Count data research indicate:

- The percent of low birth-weight babies continues to rise.
- Infant mortality rate remains constant. (Michigan is only 43rd in the nation)
- National teen death rate improves slightly (Michigan's best rating).
- Teen birth rate continues to drop.
- Child poverty rate increases between 2000 and 2004.

The Great Start Collaborative will be analyzing this data as it applies to Michigan and Muskegon County. This in-depth focus on the health of the county will result in a long-term plan for improvement for the county.

Early Childhood Happenings

A number of important resources are available in the county for children aged 0-5; here are just a few timely announcements:

- ▲ Enrollment of eligible three- and four-year-old children for free **Head Start** preschool is ongoing. Classes fill up fast with a long waiting list by fall. Call **(231) 767-8300** for information.
- ▲ Free preschool for eligible four year-old children through the **Michigan School Readiness Program (MSRP)** is also underway. Call you local school district for information.
- ▲ Children in need of health or dental care? Muskegon County's two community health centers, **Hackley Community Care Center and Muskegon Family Care**, are open to enroll area children. The centers are the largest providers of health and dental care in the county to Medicaid-eligible children.



Preschooler Maegen Myers is proud of her artwork.

DID YOU KNOW? One in Five Children Live in Poverty

