

The Status of Young Children in *Eaton County*

THE ISSUES:

- 22 % of children under age 6 are living in poverty
- Free and reduced lunches jumped over 47% in 2008 indicating an increase in children of poor and near-poor families
- Eaton County ranks 20th, in the exact middle of counties ranked for child deaths, an indicator that has gotten worse in recent years.
- Child abuse and neglect is higher in Eaton County than other similar sized counties. We are ranked 59 of 83, which puts us in the bottom 50%.



In partnership with the Early Childhood Investment Corporation, the *Eaton County* Great Start Collaborative (GSC) and Great Start Parent Coalition were formed in 2007 to build a comprehensive early childhood system in Eaton County. Community stakeholders have created a comprehensive strategic plan to address the above issues which call for:

Eaton County's Community Plan:

.....empower families of young children to aspire to provide basic needs, economic security, and safety for their children.

.....provide opportunities for parent education and family support

.....advocate for quality childcare and early learning experiences for all children

.....promote a safe, stable, and nurturing environmentopportunities for positive social emotional growth and awareness of community resources

.....challenge Eaton County to address all areas of children's health including environmental and persona well-being

The state's role is critical in helping Eaton County address the needs of young children.

Eaton County Great Start Collaborative and Great Start Parent Coalition are the focal point for local early childhood efforts. For more information about early childhood in Eaton County, please contact: Ronda Rucker; 517-541-8987; ronda@eatongreatstart.org; www.eatongreatstart.org.

The Great Start Collaborative and Great Start Parent Coalition are supported by the Early Childhood Investment Corporation. For more information about the statewide efforts of the Great Start Initiative and the Early Childhood Investment Corporation, visit www.greatstartforkids.org.

What Eaton County Citizens Want from State Leaders:

- *State and local support systems coordinated and easily accessible for families.*
- *Less strings attached to funding streams so local collaboratives can make decisions that best meet the needs of their families and reduces mandated duplications caused by state bureaucracy.*
- *The state to restructure its overall funding efforts to address comprehensive needs of young children that now are impacting school readiness.*
- *Pre-K expanded to ensure all children have the opportunity to enter school ready to learn.*
- *Additional funding for high quality services such as home visiting, parenting education, and training/consultation for providers.*

Make early childhood investment a priority.