

28.8 School ready children grant program establishment and administration.

1. The departments of education, human services, and public health shall jointly develop and promote a school ready children grant program which shall provide for all of the following components:

a. Identify the indicators that will be used to assess the effectiveness of the school ready children grants, including the amount of early intellectual stimulation of very young children, the basic skill levels of students entering school, the health status of children, the incidence of child abuse and neglect, the level of parental involvement with their children, and the degree of quality of and accessibility to child care.

b. Identify guidelines and a process to be used for determining the readiness of a community empowerment area for administering school ready children grants.

c. Provide for technical assistance concerning funding sources, program design, and other pertinent areas.

2. The program developed and components identified under subsection 1 are subject to approval by the Iowa empowerment board. The Iowa empowerment board shall provide maximum flexibility to grantees for the use of the grant moneys included in a school ready children grant.

3. A school ready children grant shall, at a minimum, be used to provide the following:

a. Preschool services provided on a voluntary basis to children deemed at risk of not succeeding in elementary school as determined by the community board and specified in the grant plan developed in accordance with this section.

b. Family support services and parent education programs promoted to parents of children from birth through five years of age. The services and programs shall be offered in a flexible manner to accommodate the varying schedules, meeting place requirements, and other needs of working parents. Family support services shall include but are not limited to home visitation. After a community empowerment area board has committed the portion of school ready grant funding that is designated or authorized by law to be used or set aside for a particular purpose, the community board shall commit approximately sixty percent of the remainder to family support services and parent education programs targeted to families with children who are newborn through age five.

c. A comprehensive school ready children grant plan developed by a community board for providing services for children from birth through five years of age including but not limited to child development services, child care services, training child care providers to encourage early intellectual stimulation of very young children, children's health and safety services, assessment services to identify chemically exposed infants and children, family support services, and parent education programs. At a minimum, the plan shall do all of the following:

(1) Describe community needs for children from birth through five years of age as identified through ongoing assessments.

(2) Describe the current and desired levels of community coordination of services for children from birth through five years of age, including the involvement and specific responsibilities of all related organizations and entities.

(3) Identify all federal, state, local, and private funding sources available in the community empowerment area that will be used to provide services to children from birth through five years of age.

(4) Describe how funding sources will be used collaboratively and the degree to which the moneys can be combined to provide necessary services to children.

(5) Identify the results the community board expects to achieve through implementation of the school ready children grant program, and identify community-specific quantifiable performance indicators to be reported in the annual report.

4. The community board shall submit an annual report on the effectiveness of the grant program in addressing school readiness and children's health and safety needs to the Iowa empowerment board and to the local governing bodies. The annual report shall indicate the effectiveness of the community board in achieving state and locally determined goals.

5. *a.* A school ready children grant shall be awarded to a community board for a three-year period, with annual payments made to the community board. The Iowa empowerment board may grant an extension from the award date and any application deadlines based upon the award date, to allow for a later implementation date in the initial year in which a community board submits a comprehensive school ready grant plan to the Iowa empowerment board. However, receipt of continued funding is subject to submission of the required annual report and the Iowa board's determination that the community board is measuring, through the use of performance and results indicators developed by the Iowa board with input from community boards, progress toward and is achieving the desired results identified in the grant plan. If progress is not measured through the use of performance and results indicators toward achieving the identified results, the Iowa board may request a plan of corrective action, withhold any increase in funding, or withdraw grant funding.

b. The Iowa board shall distribute school ready children grant moneys to community boards with approved comprehensive school ready children grant plans based upon a determination of readiness of the community empowerment area to effectively utilize the moneys, with the grant moneys being adjusted for other federal and state grant moneys to be received by the area for services to children from birth through five years of age.

c. A community board's readiness shall be ascertained by evidence of successful collaboration among public or private early care, education, health, or human services interests or a documented program design evincing a strong likelihood of leading to a successful collaboration between these interests. Other criteria which may be used by the Iowa board to ascertain readiness and to determine funding amounts include one or more of the following:

(1) Experience or other evidence of capacity to successfully implement the services in the plan.

(2) Local public and private funding and other resources committed to implementation of the plan.

(3) Adequacy of plans for commitment of local funding and other resources for implementation of the plan.

d. The Iowa board's provisions for distribution of school ready grant moneys shall take into account contingencies for possible increases and decreases in the provision of state and local funding in future fiscal years which may be used for purposes of school ready children grants and for early childhood programs grants and for differences in local capacity for program implementation and provision of local funding. In developing these provisions, the Iowa board shall consider equity concerns; options for making capacity adjustments by restricting grant amounts based on service population size groupings to accommodate small, medium, and large population groupings; and options for making adjustments to accommodate varying amounts of time and assistance needed for implementation, such as extending the grant period to more than one year.

e. The Iowa empowerment board shall identify and apply limitations on the carryforward of school ready children grant funding. The limitations shall address an unusually high percentage of a grant being carried forward, the number of years a grant has been carried forward which shall not exceed three years, and other objective criteria. The limitations shall make allowances for special circumstances such as the carryforward of funding that is designated for a particular purpose and is scheduled in the grant plan. The board may provide for redistribution or other redirection of the funding that meets the criteria.

6. The priorities for school ready children grant funds shall include providing preschool services on a voluntary basis to children deemed at risk of not succeeding in elementary school, training child care providers and others to encourage early intellectual stimulation of very young children, and offering family support services and parent education programs on a voluntary basis to parents of children from birth through five years of age. The grant funds also may be used to provide other services to children from birth through five years of age as specified in the comprehensive school ready children grant plan.

98 Acts, ch 1206, §8, 20

C99, §7I.7

99 Acts, ch 190, §13, 1820; 99 Acts, ch 192, §33

CS99, §28.8

2005 Acts, ch 148, §1214; 2006 Acts, ch 1157, §811