

256A.3 Duties of council.

The child development coordinating council shall:

1. Develop a definition of at-risk children for the purposes of this chapter. The definition shall include income, family structure, the child's level of development, and availability or accessibility for the child of a head start or other child care program as criteria.
2. Establish minimum guidelines for comprehensive early child development services for at-risk three-year- and four-year-old children. The guidelines shall reflect current research findings on the necessary components for cost-effective child development services.
3. At least biennially, develop an inventory of child development services provided to at-risk three-year- and four-year-old children in this state and identify the number of children receiving and not receiving these services, the types of programs under which the services are received, the degree to which each program meets the council's minimum guidelines for a comprehensive program, and the reasons children not receiving the services are not being served. The council is not required to conduct independent research in developing the inventory, but shall determine information needs necessary to provide a more complete inventory.
4. Make recommendations to the department of education and the general assembly regarding appropriate curricula and staff qualifications and training for early elementary education, coordination of the curricula with child development programs, and the development of an at-risk children definition for use in school-district-sponsored early elementary and before and after school child care programs.
5. Subject to the availability of funds appropriated or otherwise available for the purpose of providing child development services, award grants for programs that provide new or additional child development services to at-risk children.

In awarding program grants to an agency or individual, the council shall consider the following:

- a.* The quality of the staff and staff background in child development services.
- b.* The degree to which the program is or will be integrated with existing community resources and has the support of the local community.
- c.* The ability of the program to provide for child care in addition to child development services for families needing full-day child care.
- d.* A staff-to-children ratio within the guidelines established under subsection 2, but not less than one staff member per eight children.
- e.* The degree to which the program involves and works with the parents, and includes home visits, instruction for parents on parenting skills, on enhancement of skills in providing for their children's learning and development, and the physical, mental, and emotional development of children, and experiential education.
- f.* The manner in which health, medical, dental, and nutrition services are incorporated into the program.
- g.* The degree to which the program complements existing programs and services for at-risk three-year- and four-year-old children available in the area, including other child care services, services provided through the school district, and services available through area education agencies.
- h.* The degree to which the program can be monitored and evaluated to determine its ability to meet its goals.

i. The provision of transportation or other auxiliary services that may be necessary for families to participate in the program.

j. The provision of staff training and development, and staff compensation sufficient to assure continuity.

Program grants funded under this subsection may integrate children not meeting at-risk criteria into the program and shall establish a fee for participation in the program in the manner provided in section 279.49, but grant funds shall not be used to pay the costs for those children.

6. Encourage the submission of grant requests from all potential providers of child development services and shall be flexible in evaluating grants, recognizing that different types of programs may be suitable for different locations in the state. However, requests for grants must contain a procedure for evaluating the effectiveness of the program and accounting procedures for monitoring the expenditure of grant moneys.

The council shall seek to use performance-based measures to evaluate programs. Not more than five percent of any state funds appropriated for child development purposes may be used for administration and evaluation.

7. Encourage the establishment of regional councils designed to facilitate the development on a regional basis of programs for at-risk three-year- and four-year-old children.

8. Annually, submit recommendations to the governor and the general assembly on the need for investment in child development services in the state.

9. Subject to a decision by the council to initiate the programs, develop criteria for and award grants under section 279.51, subsection 2.

10. Encourage the establishment of programs that will enhance the skills of parents in parenting and in providing for the learning and development of their children.

88 Acts, ch 1130, § 4; 89 Acts, ch 135, § 54, 55; 89 Acts, ch 206, § 8, 9; 92 Acts, ch 1221, §3; 99 Acts, ch 192, §33; 2003 Acts, ch 108, §45