What does it mean to give every child a winning beginning?

Everyone wants children to succeed in life.

The fact is children who start behind stay behind.

Winning Beginning NY knows what works. High-quality early care and learning opportunities put children prenatal to third grade and their families on a positive life path, creating a strong economy, vibrant communities and a brighter future for everyone.

An early start is the best start.

Invest in a winning beginning for life.
The investments we make today not only benefit an individual child and family, but they improve our state’s potential for long-term success.

Small investments made early in a child’s life prevent major expenses as that child grows.

Winning Beginning NY is a coalition working to inform lawmakers, parents and other decision makers about the importance of early care and education. Together, we can ensure a winning beginning for every child in New York State, knowing a solid foundation today will strengthen our communities, economy and prospects for years to come.
All Families Benefit From Comprehensive Health Care

Families – including parents, grandparents and other primary care givers – need affordable health care that covers treatment for the whole child. This includes physical, social-emotional and substance use care. Coverage must also include preventive services (such as dental care) and screenings so that small problems are addressed early, before they become more costly and detrimental to a child’s growth.

Affordable prenatal care is also critical. Low birthweight babies suffer from learning disabilities, chronic disease and other long-term health problems. A 2009 government report shows the country’s high rates of premature birth are also driving up our already high infant mortality rate. Babies born early are more likely to die, but a comprehensive care system – including prenatal visits – can prevent premature birth and its unfortunate, and sometimes tragic, consequences.

All Children Benefit From Immunizations and Developmental Assessments

Children must have access to immunizations and health and developmental assessments, wherever they are, by professionals who can knowledgeably make referrals when a child’s health issues are outside their area of expertise.

Nearly one in five young New Yorkers has special health and developmental needs (Kids Count, 2009). Improving their life chances means recognizing and addressing issues early — when early intervention specialists can be most effective.

All Children Benefit From a Medical Home

A true medical home provides care that is family centered, accessible, continuous, comprehensive, compassionate and culturally competent. The best care is coordinated. Children need a “medical home” or a designated medical care provider with whom parents, child care providers and specialists can share information and work together to make good decisions for children.

Medical homes are most successful when they coordinate care for children and families, establish strong connections with the community to make meaningful referrals and build partnerships, and most importantly, realize the great opportunities for health promotion and disease prevention in all domains of well-being — including physical health, social-emotional health, and development. Given the near universal access to young children and families of the medical home, combined with the trust that families place in their health care providers, medical homes represent ideal settings for screening, education and counseling, and co-location of necessary services.

A winning beginning includes full health coverage and the coordination of care to ensure healthy children.

A Checklist for New York State:

- All Families Benefit From Comprehensive Health Care
- All Children Benefit From Immunizations and Developmental Assessments
- All Children Benefit From a Medical Home

The cost of neonatal care for a low birthweight baby is $10,000

Low birthweight babies are more likely than babies of normal weight to have health problems, including respiratory distress syndrome. Many of these babies require specialized care in a newborn intensive care unit (NICU).
A winning beginning starts with: strong families

Universal: services for all expectant and new mothers and families, including prenatal health, welcome baby contacts, referrals, and parent education.

Intensive: services for families and children at high-risk for issues such as abuse, neglect, homelessness, poverty.

Targeted: services for families and children with identified needs, such as mental illness, substance abuse, speech and language issues, or physical disability.

Home visitation: an ideal start for every family

At age three, a child’s vocabulary differs significantly, based on the parents’ economic situation.

**500 words:** Child of low-income parents

**700 words:** Child of working-class parents

**1,100 words:** Child of college-educated parents
All Families Benefit From a Welcome Baby Contact and Parent Education

A “Welcome Baby” contact meets a family during pregnancy or at the time of birth/adoPTION, and becomes a lifeline to additional services, including voluntary prenatal/postpartum care and longer-term home visiting programs. Parents must have access to ongoing, age appropriate education and information to help them strengthen their family and develop the skills, knowledge and behavior necessary to create a nurturing home and stronger community for their children. Most importantly, parent education has proven one of the most effective tools in preventing child abuse. Supporting families and connecting them to resources and parenting classes can be a life-saving investment.

High-Risk Families Benefit From Home Visiting

Both during pregnancy and after childbirth, home visiting programs have proven a highly effective tool in identifying important needs, especially in high-risk families. Currently, there are not enough services and families are missing out on life-changing supports that promote physical and mental health, as well as family functioning and self-sufficiency.

All pregnant women and new families should have access to a broad set of basic wellness services. Home visiting can help link families with more specific needs to the targeted services they require. Most importantly, home visits quickly identify high-risk mothers and families that require our most intensive level of support and services.

All Families Benefit from Paid Family Leave

Helping families get off to a good start saves money and resources down the road. The current system often forces an unconscionable choice on new parents: go back to work when a child is just weeks old or risk not being able to pay the bills.

Paid leave improves child health. Parents have time to provide essential early care such as breastfeeding, which reduces the risk of infections and getting necessary immunizations, all of which contribute to lower infant mortality and morbidity rates.

This time also helps form the crucial emotional bonds that foster a child’s earliest emotional development. Families who have adopted or who have a child with special needs often require even more time to form attachments and adjust to new family dynamics.

And paid leave doesn’t just help families with newborns. A third of parents with children under age five have changed jobs or made different arrangements for child care in the past year. For such families, a sick child or a school meeting can mean lost wages or even a lost job.

A winning beginning gives parents and caregivers the tools they need to nurture their children, creating stronger families.

A Checklist for New York State:

- All Families Benefit From a Welcome Baby Contact and Parent Education
- High-Risk Families Benefit from Home Visiting
- All Families Benefit from Paid Family Leave

Healthy children

A winning beginning for every young New Yorker

Early learning

Strong families

$6,700: average undergraduate tuition and fees at a State of New York University

$12,147: average market rate for a two-year-old at a child care center

$9,776: average market rate for a two-year-old at a family or group family child care
All Families Benefit From a Streamlined System of Early Care and Learning Programs

In New York State, children may languish on waiting lists for culturally, linguistically and developmentally appropriate services. These services may not be available, families may not know how to access them, or they may be far too expensive.

Research has proven the first five years of a child’s life are critical to their long-term success. And New York State offers many early learning services – yet there is no clearinghouse or system to coordinate the many programs families need. The state should create a path of services that move with the child from birth through the early school years.

Organizations and communities have pioneered successful innovations in improving early learning outcomes. Now it is time for New York State to take the lead, tapping the expertise of the Early Childhood Advisory Council. The state must create a funding strategy, such as a Children’s Budget, that identifies gaps in services, directs resources to fill those gaps, and helps families navigate the opportunities available to their children.

A child with quality early learning:
- 30% more likely to graduate high school.
- 200% more likely to go on to college.
- 40% less likely to need remedial services.
All Families Benefit From Affordable Early Care and Learning Programs

Center child care, family and group child care, Pre-K, Head Start, Early Head Start, Early Intervention and preschool special education are a critical part of the daily lives of thousands of New York families.

Parents rely on child care to keep their jobs and, most importantly, know their children are safe and well cared for. High-quality child care – that is both developmentally appropriate and environmentally safe – provides children with the emotional and cognitive tools they need to successfully transition to school.

For too many families, the cost of child care is one of the biggest strains on the household budget – especially in tough economic times. And the current eligibility levels are confusing and aren’t serving enough children. A stronger combination of child care subsidies and tax incentives can help more children attend quality programs to get the early education they need for a lifetime of success. Publicly-funded Pre-K should be available for every four-year-old and expanded to include three-year-olds. Other programs, such as Early Intervention, should be provided to families free of charge.

All Families Benefit From QUALITYstarsNY Programs

Research shows that brain development in the first five years of life sets the stage for a lifetime of learning. Yet parents have never had a way to determine the quality of their child care provider. QUALITYstarsNY aims to change that. New York has joined 30 other states that participate in this quality rating and improvement system for early childhood settings.

QUALITYstarsNY recognizes all early care and learning programs that exceed state licensing standards, while more importantly, offering the technical assistance and professional development to those programs striving to improve. QUALITYstarsNY is a long-needed tool to raise the quality of early learning for our children. We must make sure public support and investment continue so that all early childhood settings are included. Parents need a meaningful way to evaluate the early childhood programs they are considering for their children and to ensure that these programs are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate.

All Families Benefit From a Strong Early Childhood Workforce

Like any business or organization, the success of an early childhood care program depends on the quality of the employees. Yet New York State lags far behind other states, especially its creating ways to strengthen its early childhood workforce and attract new teachers to the field.

Raising the quality of early childhood education means ensuring our children are being cared for by fully-trained, properly-compensated, well-supported early childhood professionals.

A winning beginning recognizes the vital role of early childhood learning and makes smart, effective investments to improve its quality statewide.

Compensation for child care workers lags behind other careers:

$35,000: Child care worker, median salary, 20+ years experience
$60,000: Dog walker, median salary, 5-9 years experience
$45,000: Doorman, median salary, 1-4 years experience
$30,000: Pizza delivery, median salary, 5-9 years experience

Data on salary disparities from Payscale.com
A Checklist for New York State:

- Healthy children
- Strong families
- Early learning

Added together, they equal a winning beginning for every young New Yorker.

A winning beginning recognizes the vital role of early childhood learning and makes smart, effective investments to improve its quality statewide.

To learn more, please visit: www.winningbeginningny.org.