



# PUERTO RICO STATE PLAN

**Unidos por la Niñez Temprana**  
***(United for Early Childhood)***

**A collaborative agenda which provides the necessary infrastructure that makes it possible for Puerto Rico's Early Childhood to enjoy a healthy development and be successful in school from the start.**



## *Our Vision*

All children deserve to be born and develop physically, mentally and emotionally in a home that offers unconditional love and supported by a system that offers access to all available services for the early childhood period (ages 0 to 5) and their families.



## *Our Mission*

Establish a system of services by integrating all sectors of society to work in collaborative strategies that assure equal access to services for children ages 0 to 5 and their families.



*Unidos por la Niñez Temprana* (United for Early Childhood) has a comprehensive agenda based on collaborative work. It strives to provide the necessary infrastructure and support system that Puerto Rico's Early Childhood population needs in order to grow up healthy, develop their full potential and be prepared to commence their school education. It helps families and their children ages 0 to 5, by developing a support system and improving services in its five essential working components: *Access to Health Insurance and Medical Home, Parent Education, Child Care and Early Education, Mental Health and Social-Emotional Development, and Family Support.*

In 2003 a meeting was held by a group of professionals that later became the Planning Committee of *Unidos por la Niñez Temprana* (UNT). The members of the Committee were interested in identifying the strategies, activities and experiences that would assure all children ages 0 to 5 had access to high quality services that supported their full development within the context of their own family and community. This Committee was responsible for creating the Puerto Rico UNT State Plan for Early Childhood.

This State Plan belongs to all agencies, stakeholders, and organizations that believe in establishing a collaborative effort and are focused in common goals that will improve children's health and readiness for school.

## BARRIERS FOUND

- Programs and services designed to support children ages 0 to 5 and their families are fragmented.
- Many professionals, families and the population at large are unaware of the importance the first five years of life have for the optimal development of a human being.
- Insufficient funds to support the strategies and activities that promote the optimal development in early childhood.

**Recent brain research emphasizes that the quality of health services, child care and early education to which children ages 0 to 5 are exposed are intimately related with the quality of the brain connections they develop for the rest of their lives.**

## Some of our allies and associates

**This State Plan is the result of the collaborative efforts of: Department of Health, Department of the Family, Department of Education, Department of Housing, Department of Labor, Department of Recreation and Sports, the Head Start Office of Collaboration, the Puerto Rican Education for Early Childhood Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics—Puerto Rico Chapter, United Way, the University of Puerto Rico, the Dentistry School of the University of Puerto Rico, Private Child Care Centers Associations, Puerto Rico Municipalities and other important associates.**

# UNT's five essential working components:

**Medical Home** is the term for a medical practice that is accessible, family centered, continuous, and culturally sensitive.

**Parent Education** empowers families of children ages 0 to 5 by providing them information and helping them understand the importance of a positive early childhood development.

High quality **Child Care and Early Education Centers** support healthy early childhood development and helps children be ready to learn upon entering school.

By helping families and providers support a healthy **Mental Health and Social Emotional Development** we promote a healthy early childhood.

**Family Support** is offered by creating public awareness of available services and help families, with young children, identify their needs and barriers for a healthy development.



# Access to Health Insurance and Medical Home

Our goal is to ensure the physical well-being and adequate development of all children ages 0 to 5 in Puerto Rico.

## OUTCOMES:

- † Increase the number of children ages 0 to 5 who receive health care services in a Medical Home.
- † Increase the number of health providers that transform their practice and adopt the Medical Home model.
- † Gather statistical data on early childhood issues.
- † Increase the use of screening instruments to detect early developmental delays in the Medical Homes.
- † Increase the use of screening instruments to identify maternal depression and detect alcohol use, particularly among pregnant women and mothers of children ages 0 to 5.
- † Increase the application of fluoride varnish on children's teeth ages 1 to 5 teeth.
- † Increase the number of children ages 0 to 5 with a medical insurance plan.
- † Increase the number of children identified with developmental delays that receive Early Intervention Program Services.
- † Increase health provider's knowledge of early childhood services.

## INDICATORS:

- † Increased number of satisfaction surveys (pre and post) administered.
- † Increased number of self-evaluation surveys (pre and post) administered.
- † Analysis of the data obtained through surveys.
- † Increased the use of the Ages & Stages Screening Instrument.
- † Increased number of health providers that receive certificates of continuing education by participation in trainings offered.
- † Increased number of mothers with children ages 0 to 5 screened for perinatal depression.
- † Increased number of pregnant women screened for alcohol use.
- † Percentage of children's teeth applied with fluoride varnish.
- † Increased number of insured children ages 0 to 5.
- † Percentage of children ages 0 to 3 with developmental delays that participate in the Early Intervention System Services.
- † Increased number of Children receiving services from a Medical Home.

## STRATEGIES:

- † Facilitate the access to Medical Homes Services.
- † Administer satisfaction and self evaluation surveys at the Pediatrics Centers.
- † Establish a data baseline with the results of the surveys administered.
- † Train health providers in the use of the Ages and Stages screening instrument.
- † Train health providers in the use of screening tools to detect maternal depression and alcohol use in pregnant women.

Our main strategy for this working component is the **ABCD Screening Academy Initiative.**

- † Train Medical Home personnel on preventive pediatric dental services topics, such as use of fluoride varnish for children ages 0 to 5.
- † Determine the percentage of uninsured children ages 0 to 5 as a baseline for future statistical comparison.
- † Identify children in special education who were not enrolled in the Early Intervention Program.



# Parenting Education

Our goal is to educate parents and families to promote a positive early childhood development.

## OUTCOMES:

- † Increase the number of families who participate in educational programs that elevate their understanding of what constitutes optimal development of young children and encourage early childhood readiness for when they start school.
- † Increase the number of parents and families that use the United Way 2-1-1 information line to obtain information or assistance in solving problems.
- † Increase the knowledge the parents and relatives have regarding early childhood development.

## STRATEGIES:

- † Organize and provide educational activities for parents and other family members.
- † Distribute newsletters in Medical Homes, Child Care and Early Education Centers and waiting rooms to promote the 2-1-1 information hotline.
- † Distribute the Parent's Activity Guide booklet to promote the linguistic, physical, motor, social, emotional, creative and cognitive development in young children.

Our main strategy for this working component is the **Early Childhood Information Centers**.



## INDICATORS:

- † Educational activities attendance lists.
- † Programs and Curriculums (topics, courses, workshops) of the educational activities.
- † Increased number of 2-1-1 calls received.
- † Number of Parent's Guide distributed.
- † Evidence of signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOU).

- † Establish a collaborative agreement with the Office of the First Lady of Puerto Rico Read & Dream Program (PR- Lee y Sueña) to promote early literacy.

- † Establish Early Childhood Information Centers (*Centros de Información de la Niñez Temprana / CINT*) in several municipalities of Puerto Rico.

The **Early Childhood Information Centers** are located in spaces that are accessible to the general public, such as City Hall and public libraries. They have been specifically designated as a place where parents can access information about early childhood such as books, directories, newsletters, educational videos, brochures, and digital information. They also can be used for workshops and educational activities.



# Child Care and Early Education

Our goal is to assure that children have high quality early care and education services by educating and supporting daycare providers and early education teachers and enabling them to help the early childhood population become healthier, develop to their maximum capacity and be ready to learn when they start school.

## OUTCOMES:

- † Increase the use of early developmental screening tools in Child Care and Early Education Centers in order to detect developmental delays.
- † Promote children’s health in early care and education programs.
- † Increase the number of Child Care and Early Education Centers that offer high quality services.
- † Establishment of a Quality Rating System.



## STRATEGIES:

- † Train Child Care & Early Education providers in the use of the Ages and Stages screening instrument.
- † Train Child Care & Early Education Center nurses, social workers and other staff in the use of screening instruments to detect maternal depression or alcohol use during pregnancy.
- † Follow Healthy Child Care America Standards.
- † Offer continuous education to daycare providers, early education teachers and teachers’ assistants in the following areas:
  - early literacy
  - appropriate practices in early childhood centers
  - child development
  - health in early education programs and child care.

## INDICATORS:

- † Increased number of Ages and Stages Screening Instruments administered.
- † Number of Child Care and Early Education Centers that meet the Quality Rating System Standards.
- † Increased number of Child Care and Early Childhood providers that receive certificates of continuing education.



Our main strategy for this component is the elaboration of a **Five Star Quality Rating System** in collaboration with the Department of Health, Early Head Start, Head Start, Department of Education, Department of Family, Universities, PR -NAEYC, among others.



# Mental Health and Social-Emotional Development

Our goal is to empower direct service providers and families to support and recognize healthy mental health and social-emotional development in early childhood.

## OUTCOMES:

- ‡ Increase the use of screening instruments to identify early social-emotional developmental delays in children ages 0 to 5.
- ‡ Increase the number of direct service providers in Medical Homes, Child Care and Early Education Centers and Early Head Start and Head Start Centers who receive continuing education credits on the topics of mental health and social-emotional development in early childhood.
- ‡ Increase families' knowledge on normal social-emotional development in early childhood and ways to promote their children's mental health.



## STRATEGIES:

- ‡ Use a social-emotional development screening instrument with children ages 0 to 5.
- ‡ Train direct service providers on:
  - the use of a social-emotional screening instrument
  - provide continuing education credits on healthy mental health and social-emotional development in early childhood.
- ‡ Use Interagency Agreements (MOU) to assure resources for trainings.
- ‡ Distribute educational materials about healthy social-emotional development in early childhood.

## INDICATORS:

- ‡ Number of Ages and Stages Social Emotional Development screening instruments administered.
- ‡ Number of children ages 0 to 5 referred for evaluation and treatment.
- ‡ Number of direct service providers with Continuing Education Credits in mental health.
- ‡ Number of signed MOU documents.
- ‡ Number of brochures, newsletters and articles distributed.

**Our Mental Health and Social-Emotional State Team** is currently working to ensure mental health services are available for children ages 0 to 5 and making these services more accessible to these children and their families.





# Family Support

Our goal is to assure that by using a systems based approach, UNT is able to provide families with the support and knowledge they need to access the services required to help their children achieved their optimal development and be ready to learn.

## OUTCOMES:

- ↑ Increase the participation of families, communities, municipalities, state agencies and private organizations in our efforts to establish a systems approach to help the early childhood population achieve its maximum potential.
- ↑ Increase public awareness and understanding of the importance of the first five years of life for the future development of a human being.
- ↑ Provide basic needs for children ages 0 to 5 and their families (food, housing, clothing and employment).



Our main strategy for this working component is the **Seven Regional Boards**

## STRATEGIES:

- ↑ Establish seven Regional Boards that will identify resources, services, needs, barriers, solutions and establish collaborations and systems based approaches to solve the situations that prevent the early childhood population from reaching their maximum potential.
- ↑ Establish a Sub Committee to increase public awareness on the importance of early childhood development.
- ↑ Create a public awareness campaign focused on:
  - ↑ The importance of using screening instruments in medical homes, daycare and early education centers to detect:
    - developmental delays, maternal depression and alcohol use in pregnant women
    - benefits of receiving services in a medical home
    - the importance of early prenatal care
    - the importance of administering a developmental screening during well baby visits
    - empowering parents to become the primary educators of their children
    - the importance of attending school
    - the value of early literacy in children ages 0 to 5
    - need for pregnant women to obtain their high school diploma.

## INDICATORS:

- ↑ Meeting Invitations.
- ↑ Agendas.
- ↑ Attendance lists.
- ↑ Agreements.
- ↑ Advertisements in billboards, radio, TV and newspaper.
- ↑ Conferences, symposiums, meetings and educational materials used to disseminate information.



# UNT's Partners and Stakeholders:

## FAMILY SUPPORT

- 👤 Puerto Rico Early Childhood Comprehensive System/ PR-ECCS (Unidos por la Niñez Temprana/UNT)
- 👤 Department of Health (DOH)
- 👤 PR-ECCS Planning Committee
- 👤 Communications Office of the PR-DOH
- 👤 Maternal Child Health Division of the PR-DOH
- 👤 Sub-Committee of Public Awareness Campaign
- 👤 Department of Education
- 👤 Department of Recreation and Sports
- 👤 Department of the Family
- 👤 Department of Housing
- 👤 Department of Labor
- 👤 Child Care and Early Childhood Education providers
- 👤 Early Head Start (EHS)/ Head Start (HS)
- 👤 Medical Homes
- 👤 Dental Home and Health providers
- 👤 Community Based Organizations
- 👤 Families of children ages 0 to 5
- 👤 Faith Based Ministries
- 👤 American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
- 👤 PR-National Association for the Education of Young Children (PR-NAEYC/APENET)
- 👤 Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Services of the University of Puerto Rico (CSREES)

## Access to Health Insurance and Medical Home

- 👤 Federal Qualified Health Centers (330 Centers)
- 👤 Medical Homes
- 👤 IDD
- 👤 Kids Count
- 👤 ASES
- 👤 Health Insurance Commissioner
- 👤 Medicaid Office
- 👤 Early Intervention System
- 👤 Department of Education EHS/HS
- 👤 Early Childhood Families
- 👤 Health Providers
- 👤 Pregnant Women
- 👤 Dental Home of the Dentistry School of the University of Puerto Rico
- 👤 Independent Practice Association (IPA)
- 👤 AAP
- 👤 DOH:
  - 👤 State System Development Initiative (SSDI)
  - 👤 Healthy Start
  - 👤 Pediatric Centers
  - 👤 Children with Special Health Care Needs
  - 👤 Comprehensive Adolescent Health Program (PR-SISA)

## PARENT EDUCATION

- 👤 PR-ECCS Regional Boards
- 👤 CSREES
- 👤 PR United Way (Fondos Unidos)
- 👤 DOH
- 👤 PR Office of the First Lady
- 👤 DEHONITE
- 👤 ASES
- 👤 Department of the Family
- 👤 Department of Housing
- 👤 Department of Labor
- 👤 Medical Homes
- 👤 Child Care and Early Education Centers
- 👤 Department of Education
- 👤 Department of Recreation and Sports
- 👤 Puerto Rico Municipalities
- 👤 APENET
- 👤 University of Puerto Rico
- 👤 AAP

## CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION

- 👤 Early Care & Early Education providers
- 👤 DOH
  - 👤 Healthy Start Program
- 👤 Nurse, social worker or the person responsible at each Early Care and Early Education Centers
- 👤 EHS/HS
- 👤 Department of the Family -Administration for the Child Care and Integral Development of Childhood (ACUDEN)
- 👤 Developmental Disabilities Institute (PR-IDD)
- 👤 Department of Education
- 👤 Health Care Administration (PR-ASES)
- 👤 Medical Homes
- 👤 Holistic Development in Early Childhood (PR DEHONITE)
- 👤 PR-APENET
- 👤 Puerto Rican Association of Reading and Writing (APULEC)
- 👤 "Éxito a los Seis" (United Way " Success at Six )
- 👤 University of Puerto Rico
- 👤 EHS/HS Collaboration Office

## Mental Health and Social—Emotional Development

- 👤 Medical Homes
- 👤 Child Care and Early Education Centers
- 👤 Department of the Family
- 👤 EHS/HS Collaboration Office
- 👤 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (PR-ASSMCA)
- 👤 Department of Education
- 👤 Department of Labor
- 👤 Department of Housing
- 👤 PR-ECCS Planning Committee
- 👤 ASES
- 👤 DOH
- 👤 Private Mental Health Clinics
- 👤 Faith Based Ministries with a Mental Health Focus
- 👤 Private Child Care Centers
- 👤 Medical Insurance Companies (4)