

## Great Start Parent Coalition Overview

*"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."*

*Rachel Carson*

Across the state of Michigan, ECIC and the Great Start Collaboratives have convened a network of Great Start Parent Coalitions (GSPC). Serving as advocates, cheerleaders, thought-leaders, teachers, students, coaches and team-members, these parents have formed strong coalitions to lend voice and hand to the belief that every child from birth to age four needs and deserves a Great Start in life.

### **Great Start Parent Coalitions:**

**Are key advocates on the issues of early childhood in their community, their state--even nationally.** For example, some advocate for sustainable, permanent funding to support the promotion of social and emotional health in all young children. Others identify and recognize "family-friendly" workplaces in the Great Start Collaborative area. They may educate others in their community about the importance of brain development, the need to act early when developmental issues arise, and the need for a coordinated network system of early childhood services and supports.

**Develop and execute a cohesive annual work plan** to keep the needs of Michigan's youngest citizens where they should stay: front and center!

**Are parent-driven, composed of parent volunteers, and have a flexible approach to building a diverse membership.** The parent members create the vision, plan of work and agendas for GSPC activities and meetings. A key element of support for the Great Start Collaboratives, they help advance local activities and initiatives by lending support and expertise. Each local GSPC is composed of parent volunteers--- members are not paid to participate. The membership and leadership of the local GSPCs strive to represent the wide diversity of the parents of young children in their community-- including but not limited to cultural, socio-economic, geographic, and gender.

**Are members of the ECIC learning community.** Each Parent Coalition has a Parent Liaison/Coordinator, who is a member of the ECIC learning community for Parent Liaisons. ECIC Parent Liaison learning community members share their successes, challenges and lessons learned with each other at technical assistance meetings scheduled throughout the year. A learning community is composed of peers, and seeks to honor the individual unique gifts/talents/culture of each community, while recognizing that there are similarities that make learning together helpful to the success of all.

**Are supported by the Early Childhood Investment Corporation.** Support may come in the form of staffing to assist in executing the parent coalitions' mission, removing barriers to participation, hospitality for meetings, childcare for sponsored meetings and events and/or professional development and training.