

2024-2025 Progress Report

# STRENGTHENING THE GRID



EXCEL  
BY EIGHT

# A Stronger Start: Celebrating Five Years of Impact

In 2025, Excel by Eight celebrates five years since the launch of our more comprehensive focus to improve health and education outcomes for Arkansas children – from before birth through age 8.

While 2020 marked the beginning of this sharpened mission, our commitment to improving outcomes for Arkansas children goes back to 2011. For nearly a decade, we were known as the Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, advancing family and community engagement, school readiness, classroom instruction, attendance, and summer learning. In 2020, we expanded our approach to better address the root causes that prevent children from thriving.

Today, Excel by Eight is dedicated to improving the systems that shape children’s earliest experiences. We know that while families across Arkansas want the best for their children, not all have access to the resources that help them get there. That’s why our network continues to grow and evolve, grounded in a collaborative approach we describe as our “three-legged stool”:

- We invest in and partner with local **communities** across the state.
- We advocate for **policy** change at the state level.
- We build **public will** around the importance of the earliest years of a child’s life.

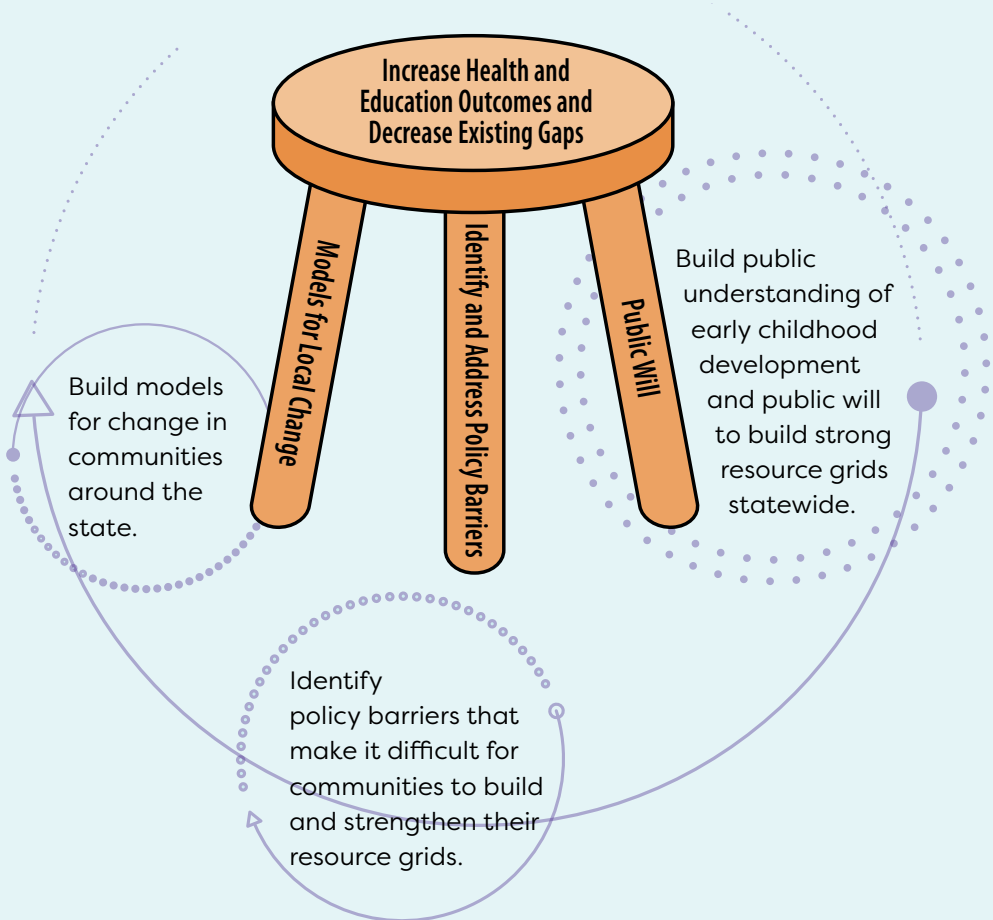
Together, we’re working to ensure that every child in Arkansas – no matter where they’re born – has what they need to reach their full potential.

# Our Mission

Excel by Eight partners with families and communities to improve health and education outcomes for Arkansas children prenatal to age 8.

# Our Vision

Arkansas is a state where all children have a strong start to reach their full potential.

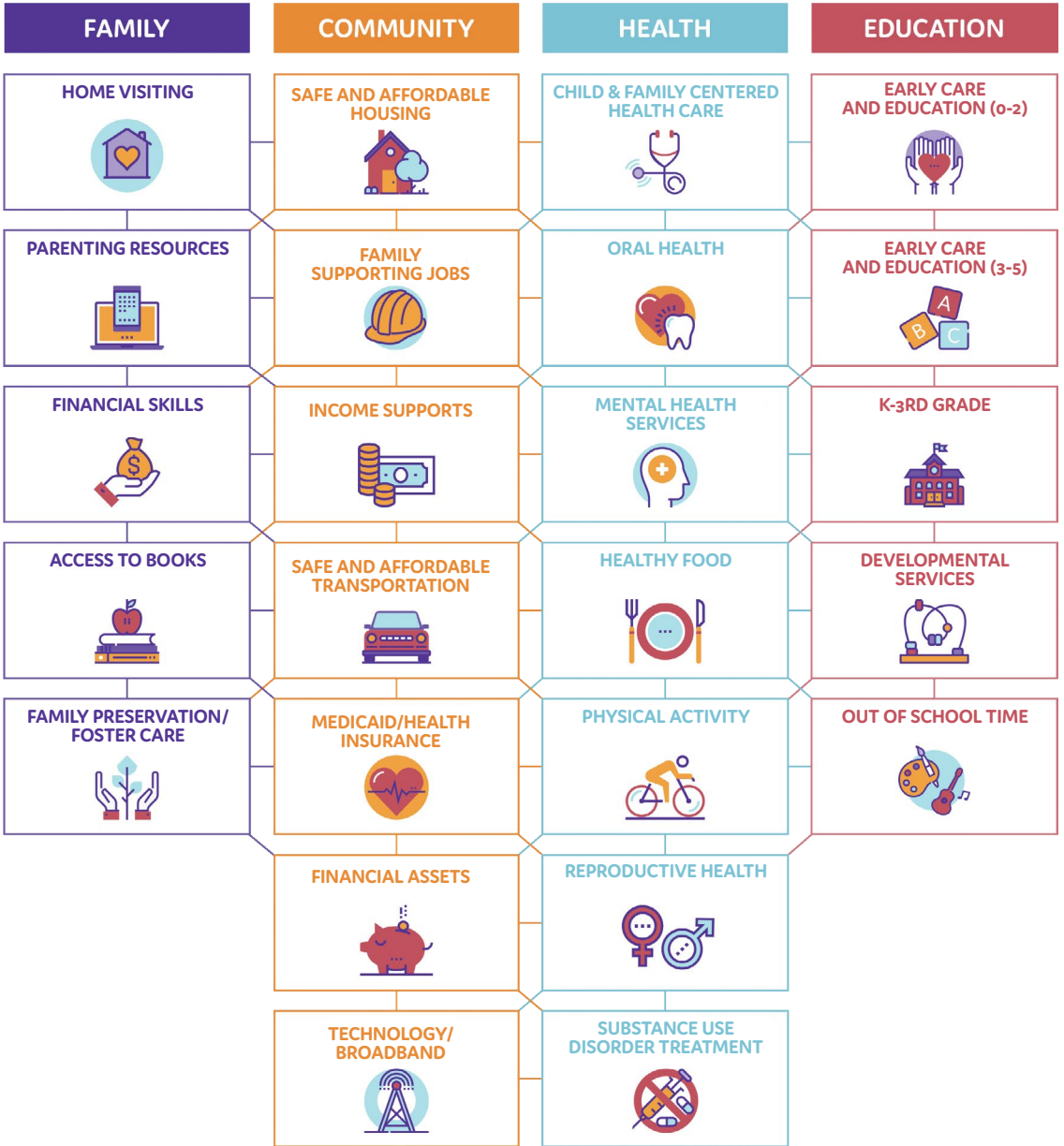


# Resource Grid

The resource grid works like a power grid, with many connections working together. An unreliable or patchy flow of resources to the grid can result in a range of child development problems that can have long-lasting consequences for children's health and well-being.

Through our partnerships with families, communities, policymakers, and businesses, we can work together to power a strong and reliable resource grid for children in Arkansas.

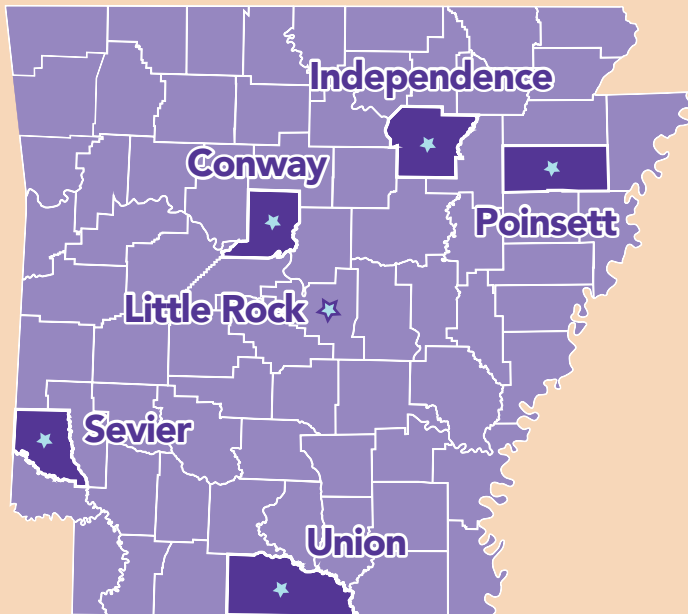


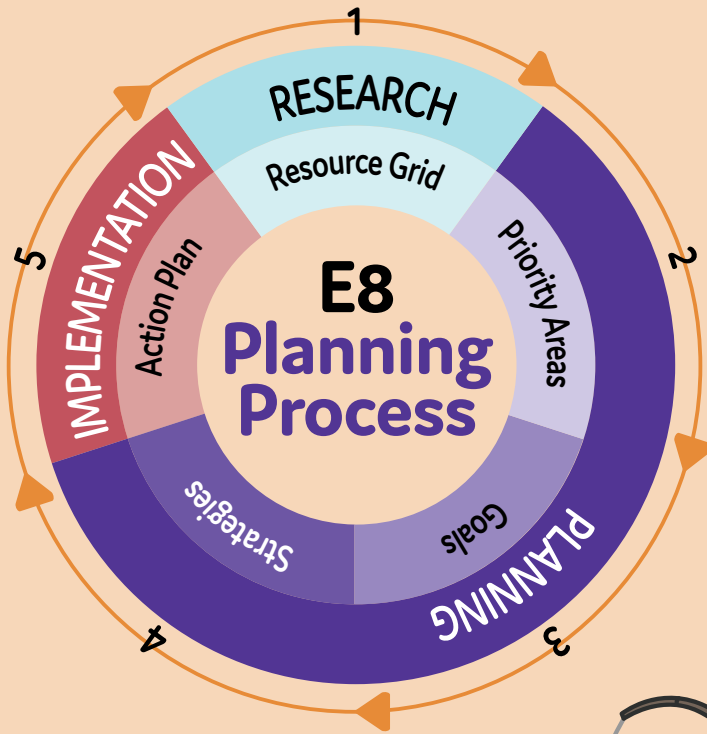


# Local Communities

Across Arkansas, E8 communities are creating solutions to help children thrive. Guided by strategic priorities and local leadership, each one offers a unique example of how partnerships and on-the-ground approaches can strengthen systems while serving as a model for others working to support young children and their families. Excel by Eight partners with six communities in this effort: Conway County, Independence County, Little Rock, Poinsett County, Sevier County, and Union County.

Each community follows a five-step planning process that begins with assessing the local **Resource Grid** to identify strengths and gaps. From there, they determine **priority areas**, set **goals** that directly address the issues, identify targeted **strategies**, and develop and implement an **action plan**. This structured yet flexible process ensures that every solution is informed by local data, shaped by community insight, and designed for long-term impact.





# Conway County

**Timeline:** Implementation

**Community Lead:** Conway County Community Foundation

**Joined E8 Network:** 2018

**Priority Areas:** Family engagement, literacy, and early childhood mental health

## 2024 Community Highlights:

- Created an outreach campaign to gather more insight and participation from community-based organizations that serve families
  - Revisited/updated a needs assessment, since the original data walks and priority-setting happened before the pandemic
  - Includes materials, stories, and examples that local community partners can use to reach out to other area organizations and spread awareness about Conway County's priorities as an E8 Community
- Expanded LENA® to Conway County child care centers
  - Since 2022, LENA has supported more than 800 children across local school districts and one private facility.
  - Conway County partners set LENA as a priority in 2022 as well, and in 2024 were able to join the effort to strengthen oral language development through an awareness of conversational turns.
  - Three child care centers enrolled their infant and toddler classrooms in LENA through the University of Arkansas's Early Care and Education Projects, which provides the program at no cost to Arkansas-based providers
- Launched a two-year project to expand behavioral health supports in early childhood classrooms
  - Supported by UA Little Rock School of Social Work
  - Includes classroom observations and a local strengths and needs assessment
  - BehaviorHelp serves as a key partner in expulsion prevention

*Meet the steering committee, explore community goals, and see what's happening in Conway County at [excelby8.net/conway-county](https://excelby8.net/conway-county).*

# Independence County

**Timeline:** Implementation

**Community Lead:** Batesville Area Chamber of Commerce and IMPACT Independence County

**Joined E8 Network:** 2018

**Priority Areas:** Language and literacy, child care availability, social-emotional development, physical development, oral health, maternal health

## 2024 Community Highlights:

- Coordinated stakeholders to strengthen early childhood systems as a LEARNS Local Lead organization
- Focused on improving oral language development through LENA®, a professional development program for early educators
  - Children who started out experiencing fewer conversational turns than their peers saw a **55% increase** in turns per hour after the LENA Grow program.
  - Children in “low talk” environments saw a **65% increase** in conversational turns per hour.
  - Regardless of where children started, conversational turns per hour increased by **16% overall**.
  - Spanish-speaking children closed the gap in conversational turns by the end of the program.
  - Over **90% of teachers** reported feeling more confident and more satisfied in their roles as a result of the LENA Grow program.

*Want to dig deeper?  
Explore community goals, local stories,  
and the people leading the way  
at [excelby8.net/independence-county](https://excelby8.net/independence-county).*



### Did You Know?

Through the LENA Grow program, children wear vests with special “talk pedometers” that collect data on the classroom talk environment. Teachers regularly review the data reports with coaches to master techniques for increasing interactive talk with their students.

# Little Rock

**Timeline:** Planning to Implementation

**Community Lead:** City of Little Rock

**Joined E8 Network:** 2019

**Priority Areas:** Digital equity, child care affordability, food security

## 2024 Community Highlights:

- Strengthened systems of support for families as a LEARNS Local Lead organization
- Completed a child care mapping project showing that only 6% of infants and toddlers in the city’s four highest-density ZIP codes have access to high-quality care
- Launched a quality improvement initiative for 12 child care programs representing **717 child care slots** in underserved neighborhoods
  - Supported by a grant from the National League of Cities
  - Directors received stipends, group training, and coaching
  - **7 of 12 programs improved** their Better Beginnings rating to 3 or 4 stars
  - Programs saw a combined annual revenue **increase of \$557,000** through the School Readiness Assistance Program
  - Reinforced child care as a core part of the City’s economic development strategy

*Learn more about Little Rock’s work – including local leaders, goals, and recent updates – at [excelby8.net/little-rock](https://excelby8.net/little-rock).*



### Story of Impact

Dual-language center Lovely Sunshine Learning Center was one of 12 child care providers to participate in a focused cohort aimed at raising their Better Beginnings quality ratings. Lovely Sunshine now has a four-star rating, becoming the first bilingual center in southwest Little Rock to achieve this designation. Scan the QR code to read *Leveling Up Child Care in Little Rock*.

# Poinsett County

**Timeline:** Research

**Joined E8 Network:** 2024

**Current Focus:** Building local partnerships and setting a foundation for long-term impact

## 2024 Community Highlights:

- Hosted a Data Walk to center community voices in identifying local needs
  - Parents and residents reviewed early childhood data and shared insights
  - Input from participants will help shape priority areas for the coalition

*The next step for our newest community is to develop shared goals to improve outcomes for Poinsett County's youngest children. Visit [excelby8.net/poinsett-county](https://excelby8.net/poinsett-county) to get the latest and see how the community is taking shape.*

ideas



# Sevier County

**Timeline:** Planning to Implementation

**Community Lead:** E8 Sevier County Alliance

**Joined E8 Network:** 2018

**Priority Areas:** Healthy food access, early literacy, early care and education, behavioral health

## 2024 Community Highlights:

- A community-led research effort identified food insecurity as a key barrier to child well-being, affecting **18% of children**
- Seamless Summer meal program expanded with support from No Kid Hungry
  - Horatio and DeQueen School Districts partnered to grow capacity
  - 28,736 meals distributed in 2024 – **a 1,642% increase** from 2022
- Sevier County Libraries served as meal sites and summer reading hubs
  - Program participation increased by **62%**
  - Children read **240+ books** in just two months
- Partnered with **Cornerstone Counseling** to embed behavioral health in summer programs
  - Horatio School District launched a **Prevention Pilot Program** with DHS
- Serves as a **LEARNS Local Lead** and participating in **AEDC's 75Strong cohort** to build early childhood and economic infrastructure

Want to explore community priorities, partnerships, and progress in Sevier County? Visit [excelby8.net/sevier-county](https://excelby8.net/sevier-county) for updates.

1

2

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### This Work Counts

In 2024, 28,736 meals were distributed in Sevier County during Seamless Summer, a 1,642% increase over 2022. Scan the QR code to watch a video about Sevier County's collaborative efforts to end hunger in their community.



# Union County

**Timeline:** Research

**Community Lead:** El Dorado–Union County Chamber of Commerce

**Joined E8 Network:** 2021

**Priority Areas:** Child care availability, mental health, parent and family resources, affordable housing

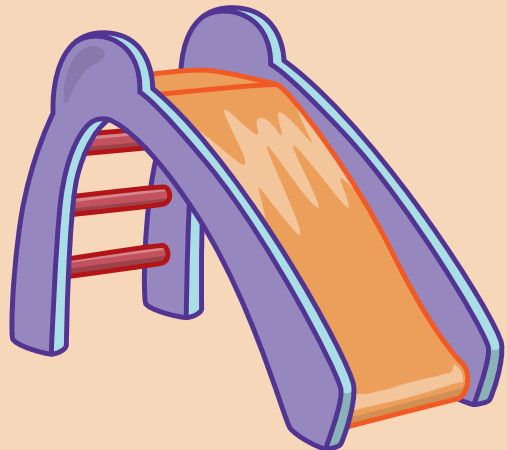
## 2024 Community Highlights:

- Gathered input to establish shared goals and improve outcomes for families with young children
- Advanced child care policy solutions through their involvement in the statewide Excel by Eight Business Coalition
- Partnered with South Central Arkansas Education Cooperative to align planning and strengthen early childhood infrastructure
- Collaborated with the City of El Dorado on Mattocks Park renovations, using EDI data to ensure upgrades support early childhood development

Visit [excelby8.net/union-county](https://excelby8.net/union-county) to follow the progress and see how the community is coming together for children and families.

### Did You Know?

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a measurement tool that helps communities understand how young children are developing across five domains: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, and communication skills and general knowledge. Data from the EDI helps guide local efforts to improve outcomes and school readiness. Learn more at [arc.arkansas.gov](https://arc.arkansas.gov).



# E8 Foundations

## Shaping Stronger Foundations Through Policy

Improving systems for children and families takes sustained policy change, public support, and coordination in local communities. The Excel by Eight Foundations Collaborative works to advance state-level policies that strengthen health and education outcomes for infants and toddlers during these foundational, first three years.

Over the past 18 months, our collaborative helped drive momentum across four areas: Maternal Health, Supported Families, Healthy Beginnings, and High-Quality Child Care and Early Learning. Working alongside partners, we secured policy wins, expanded programs, and strengthened alignment between community priorities and state systems.

*To explore more stories and media coverage from this year's work, visit [excelby8.net/news](https://excelby8.net/news).*



# Maternal Health

In August 2024, a group of Arkansas doulas formed the Doula Alliance of Arkansas (DA-AR), a statewide organization dedicated to elevating the role of doulas through advocacy, education, and collaboration. Supported by a \$250,000 seed grant from Ingeborg Initiatives that was facilitated by the Arkansas Community Foundation, DA-AR quickly became a key driver in maternal health policy and systems change. Excel by Eight served in an advisory role during DA-AR's formation and continues to support its work during the policy implementation process.



## Goal 1:

All women are able to receive complete, high-quality preconception, prenatal, and postpartum care.

## 2025 Legislative Progress

A series of bills passed during the 2025 legislative session reflect growing momentum for maternal health improvements in Arkansas:

- **Act 965: Community-Based Doula Certification Act**
  - Establishes a state-recognized certification process for community-based doulas
  - Requires reimbursement through Medicaid and private insurance
  - Makes doula care more accessible for families and financially sustainable for providers
  - Championed by the Doula Alliance of Arkansas, with support from Excel by Eight throughout the legislative process
- **Act 124: Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies Act**
  - Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders' plan to improve maternal health in Arkansas from prenatal to postpartum care
  - Expands presumptive Medicaid eligibility
  - Unbundles prenatal, delivery, and postpartum services
  - Takes effect mid to late 2025
- **Act 627: Mandates Coverage for Breastfeeding and Lactation Consultant Services**
  - Allows providers to bill Medicaid for services under either the mother or infant's ID
  - Creates billing flexibility that supports integrated models like HealthySteps, where trained staff offer lactation support in pediatric settings

- **Act 435: Community Health Worker Act**

- Establishes a statewide definition and role for community health workers (CHWs) in maternal care
- Enables Medicaid reimbursement
- Recognizes CHWs as trusted community members who support families through medical, behavioral, and social services during the perinatal period

### Looking Ahead

These organizational and legislative developments reflect a more holistic vision for maternal health in Arkansas. By investing in professionals who walk alongside families from preconception through postpartum, Arkansas is building a stronger, more sustainable system of care for women and babies across the state.



“The maternal health crisis in Arkansas is complicated, and there’s unfortunately not just one solution that will fix the problem. The creation of the Doula Alliance of Arkansas is a positive step in the right direction. By bringing together doulas and healthcare providers, we can create a more integrated approach to maternal care that benefits all mothers and families in Arkansas and will help us create a lasting impact.”

**Dr. Nirvana Manning**

*Professor and Chair, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology  
UAMS College of Medicine*



## Supported Families

Launched in November 2024, the Maternal Life360 program is the state’s move to embed home visiting into the health care system, using Medicaid as a vehicle for funding and accountability. Structured as a contract between DHS and hospitals, the program provides evidence-based home visiting services to pregnant women who are Medicaid-eligible and medically high-risk. These services continue until the child’s second birthday.

**Four Maternal Life360 programs** are now operational, serving a combined enrollment capacity of up to **245 high-risk beneficiaries**.

- White River Health, Batesville
- St. Bernards Medical Center, Jonesboro
- Baptist Health (two locations), Little Rock and North Little Rock

While each hospital is the lead provider, many are working with home visiting programs such as Parents as Teachers and Healthy Families America to deliver services. One model, introduced by Baptist Health, uses the Maternal Infant Health Outreach Worker approach, bringing a new evidence-based model to Arkansas.

### Looking Ahead

While implementation is still early, the state is already tracking metrics related to social determinants of health, including housing, food access, and WIC enrollment. The long-term goal is not only to improve maternal outcomes, but to demonstrate how cross-system integration — especially between Medicaid, public health, and early childhood — can yield more sustainable results for families.



#### Goal 2:

All expecting and current parents are able to receive parenting supports that address comprehensive health, wellbeing, and development topics and are tailored to individual family needs.



“Our home visits consist of everything: from coaching to empowering to educating. Whatever that mom needs — and whatever stage of pregnancy or postpartum she’s in — we meet her there.”

**Kalena Jones**

*Director of ARHOME Programs  
Baptist Health*



## Healthy Beginnings

The road to bringing HealthySteps to Arkansas began in 2019 when the Arkansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and Excel by Eight saw an opportunity to strengthen pediatric care by introducing the model to the state. Around the same time, clinics affiliated with the Arkansas Children’s Care Network were exploring a broader implementation.

What began as parallel conversations quickly turned into a shared effort. By 2021, the partners – along with the HealthySteps National Office – secured grant funding to launch the program at seven sites and build a path toward long-term sustainability. Since then, continued coordination has led to statewide Medicaid funding, a robust data system, and growing demand from clinics across Arkansas.

### This Work Counts:

- **Medicaid policy changes are making HealthySteps more sustainable.** In partnership with the Arkansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Excel by Eight supported advocacy efforts that led to the passage of Act 513 in 2023. The law created a supplemental per-member, per-month Medicaid payment for clinics using pediatric practice transformation models like HealthySteps.
- **Medicaid is now reimbursing for key screenings, and return on investment is strong.** Developmental and caregiver depression screenings were approved for Medicaid reimbursement in 2022, and developmental screenings have been added as a quality metric for the Patient-Centered Medical Home program beginning in 2025. These updates have generated growing interest in HealthySteps across academic sites and private practices statewide. Preliminary analysis shows a substantial fiscal ROI for every Medicaid dollar invested in the program.



#### Goal 3:

Every family of infants and toddlers is able to receive social, developmental, and behavioral screening and referrals to needed health care and community supports.

- **The model is already showing measurable impact.** Since launching in 2022, HealthySteps has served more than 27,000 patients across Arkansas. Of these, nearly 3,800 children received more intensive Tier 2 or Tier 3 services. Immunization rates increased from 22% at baseline to 59% in two years.
- **Demand and impact are growing.** With increased interest from clinics across the state, HealthySteps is on track to expand from the seven original sites to 19 by the end of 2025. This growth reflects strong demand for the model and sustained commitment from partners to strengthen pediatric care statewide. The Transforming Pediatrics for Early Childhood grant at UAMS has helped implement HealthySteps in several UAMS Regional Programs sites that train family physicians. They have also developed robust data infrastructure to capture the impact of HealthySteps.
- **Referrals are connecting families to essential services.** Screening data from July 2023 to July 2024 offers a snapshot of the needs Arkansas families are experiencing during the earliest years of their children’s lives. When a need is identified, HealthySteps Specialists work closely with families to coordinate referrals and ensure follow-through. Between March 2022 and May 2024, clinics made more than 4,200 referrals to community resources addressing food insecurity, financial assistance, maternal depression, early intervention, and adult health care.

HealthySteps has served

**27,171**

Arkansas children  
as of January 2025.

Of those patients, **3,758** or

**13.8%**

received more intensive  
Tier 2 or Tier 3 services.

#### **Most Common Needs**

Food Insecurity

Maternal Depression

Early Intervention

Financial Assistance

## Looking Ahead

Through HealthySteps, Arkansas is building a sustainable model for pediatric practice transformation and becoming a national example of early childhood systems change.

# High-Quality Child Care and Early Learning

## 2025 Legislative Progress

A major step forward for Arkansas's early childhood workforce came with the passage of Act 587. This new law allows all licensed child care providers to participate in the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System, a long-overdue recognition of early childhood educators' role in both educational outcomes and economic infrastructure. By aligning early educators with the same retirement benefits available to their K-12 counterparts, Act 587 strengthens workforce retention and affirms the value of those who care for and educate the state's youngest children.

The 85-plus members of Excel by Eight's Business Coalition championed House Bill 1435, a child care tax credit proposal designed to incentivize employer investment in child care. Included in the Department of Commerce's legislative package and sponsored by Senator Jane English and Representative Brandon Achor, the bill would have replaced an outdated program with a more flexible model offering tax credits to businesses that contribute to employees' Dependent Care Assistance Program (DCAP) accounts or directly support licensed providers. Although the bill did not pass this session, it reflects growing interest in public-private partnerships to address affordability and workforce participation.

## Expanded access to high-quality child care

Arkansas has implemented several changes to the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) subsidy program to improve access to high-quality child care for working families:

- Reduced the work requirement for families from 30 to 20 hours per week
- Expanded eligibility to include child care workers and adoptive families
- Streamlined the application process for both the state's Arkansas Better Chance program and the federal CCDF grant program



### Goal 4:

Quality child care is affordable and accessible for all families.



### Goal 5:

All early childhood educators are well-prepared for the complexity of child development and receive commensurate compensation and benefits.

These changes not only expanded access for working families but also bolstered the financial sustainability of providers. Since taking effect on July 1, 2024, **more than 2,600 additional children** can now access high-quality early care through CCDF programs. **This raises the number of children in quality settings to more than 18,300.**

## Local Leads expand statewide

To ensure that statewide systems translate into local impact, Arkansas has invested in the Local Early Childhood Leads initiative. With the selection of a third cohort in partnership with the Arkansas Department of Education, every county in the state now has a designated organization responsible for developing comprehensive, community-specific early childhood plans. In Excel by Eight's six communities, these local leads are playing a critical role in building stronger infrastructure for early learning.

## Looking Ahead

From legislative wins to local initiatives, these efforts reflect a coordinated statewide approach to meeting the dual goals of improving access to quality, affordable child care and strengthening the early childhood workforce.



Parents who have suitable child care for their children tend to have higher job satisfaction and increased loyalty to the company...Any good faith effort to support employees who are parents will not only earn employers the admiration of their communities, but will also help them create sustainable models for future growth and success."

**Randy Zook**

*President and CEO*

*Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce /  
Associated Industries of Arkansas*



# Our Network

Excel by Eight is powered by a growing statewide network of partners working to ensure every child has a strong start. Visit [excelby8.net/about](http://excelby8.net/about) to explore the individuals, community organizations, and businesses contributing to this work across Arkansas.

## Excel by Eight Team

**Rebecca Berry**, Communities Manager, Excel by Eight

**Angela Duran**, Executive Director, Excel by Eight

**Sanci Richardson**, Communities Manager, Excel by Eight

**Tori Scott**, Communities Manager, Excel by Eight

**Anna Strong**, Executive Director, Arkansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

**Beth Tody**, Sevier County Regional Consultant, Excel by Eight

**Jamie Ward**, President, Arkansas Association for Infant Mental Health

**Adena White**, Communications Director, Excel by Eight

**Alison Williams**, Coalition Director, Excel by Eight

**Jessi Rice Woods**, Communities Director, Excel by Eight



## Leadership Team

The E8 Foundations leadership team was formed in late 2022 to oversee Excel by Eight's yearlong planning process. Creating a leadership team made up of family advisors and key collaborative members has been critical in moving toward a process that is led by collaborative members rather than staff.

## Family Advisor Council

The Family Advisor Council is a diverse group of parent and family leaders across Arkansas who advise, collaborate, and lead efforts that support the mission and vision of Excel by Eight. Excel by Eight's Family Advisor Council lends their authentic voices as parent leaders in sharing lived experiences, engaging others, and informing solution-oriented strategies to ensure a strong start is available for every child.

## E8 Communities

Excel by Eight partners with communities across Arkansas to build local models for change. Each E8 Community is led by a local steering committee that identifies gaps in their community's resource grid and develops and implements strategies to improve outcomes for young children.



## Excel by Eight Foundations Collaborative







The Excel by Eight Foundations Collaborative is the group that helps us develop and implement our policy agenda to improve health and education outcomes for infants and toddlers.

## Business Coalition






Excel by Eight has mobilized more than 80 Arkansas businesses to identify workable solutions that address the three critical elements of the child care crisis – accessibility, affordability, and quality – and its impact on the state's current and future workforce. Access our child care toolkit at **[ArkansasEmployerToolkit.com](https://arkansasemployertoolkit.com)** to explore how businesses can better support the child care needs of their employees.


# Excel by Eight Milestones

| FAMILY   | BASELINE                    | PROGRESS                    | GOAL                         |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
|  Number of funded home visiting slots <sup>1</sup>                                | <b>2018-19</b><br>8,221     | <b>2023-24</b><br>8,320     | <b>2030</b><br>30,000        |
|  Children receiving books through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library <sup>2</sup> | <b>2019</b><br>30,031/month | <b>2024</b><br>83,000/month | <b>2030</b><br>191,000/month |

| HEALTH  | BASELINE                | PROGRESS                | GOAL                 |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
|  Medicaid recipients 3, 4, and 5 years of age who had one or more well-child visits with a primary care provider during the year <sup>3</sup>  | <b>2017</b><br>57%      | <b>2023</b><br>62%      | <b>2030</b><br>70%   |
|  Medicaid recipients birth to 5 who received any dental or oral health service <sup>4</sup>  | <b>2018</b><br>33%      | <b>2023</b><br>34%      | <b>2030</b><br>35%   |
|  Medicaid recipients receiving dyadic mental health services <sup>5</sup>  | <b>2018-19</b><br>1,421 | <b>2023-24</b><br>1,087 | <b>2030</b><br>TBD   |
|  Statewide participation in free and reduced-price school breakfast compared to lunch <sup>6</sup>  | <b>2018-19</b><br>63%   | <b>2023-24</b><br>66%   | <b>2030</b><br>70%   |
|  Child food insecurity rate <sup>7</sup>   | <b>2017</b><br>23%      | <b>2022</b><br>24%      | <b>2030</b><br>20%   |
|  6 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> , and 12 <sup>th</sup> graders who ever used any drug, including alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, and other illegal drugs <sup>8</sup> | <b>2018</b><br>20%      | <b>2024</b><br>15%      | <b>2030</b><br>18.5% |

MEASURES

| EDUCATION  | BASELINE  | PROGRESS  | GOAL  |
|--|---|---|---|
|  <p>Child care vouchers paying for a slot in a Level 3 Better Beginnings rated program<sup>9</sup></p>  | <p><b>2018-19</b><br/>                     Infants &amp; Toddlers: 2,086<br/>                     3-5 years of age: 3,649</p> | <p><b>2023-24</b><br/>                     Infants &amp; Toddlers: 7,346<br/>                     3-5 years of age: 7,739</p> | <p><b>2030</b><br/>                     All vouchers pay for slots in Level 3 programs or higher.</p> |
|  <p>Children receiving at least one ASQ or Brigance screen at 9, 18, and 30 months<sup>10</sup></p>   | <p><b>2018-19</b><br/>                     NR</p>   | <p><b>2023-24</b><br/>                     12,053</p>   | <p><b>2030</b><br/>                     32,025</p>  |
|  <p>3<sup>rd</sup> graders meeting reading readiness benchmark on the ACT Aspire (2018-1019)/levels 3 and 4 on the ATLAS (2023-2024)<sup>11</sup></p> | <p><b>2018-19</b><br/>                     38%</p>  | <p><b>2023-24</b><br/>                     36%</p>  | <p><b>2030</b><br/>                     80%</p>   |
|  <p>4<sup>th</sup> graders reading at proficient or above according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress<sup>12</sup></p>               | <p><b>2019</b><br/>                     31%<br/>                     Arkansas ranks 43<sup>rd</sup></p>                       | <p><b>2024</b><br/>                     28%<br/>                     Arkansas ranks 38<sup>th</sup></p>                       | <p><b>2030</b><br/>                     Arkansas ranks in the top 25 states</p>                       |
|  <p>Students receiving dyslexia interventions<sup>15</sup></p>  | <p><b>2018-19</b><br/>                     4.8%</p>   | <p><b>2023-24</b><br/>                     7.4%</p>   | <p><b>2030</b><br/>                     20%</p>   |

| COMMUNITY   | BASELINE   | PROGRESS   | GOAL   |
|---|--|--|--|
|  <p>Children (0-18) under 200% of poverty who are uninsured<sup>14</sup></p> | <p><b>2019</b><br/>                     7.6%</p> | <p><b>2022</b><br/>                     6.7%</p> | <p><b>2030</b><br/>                     5.0%</p> |

# Take Action

Across Arkansas, effective programs and practices are in place to improve health and education outcomes for young children. However, many families face barriers to accessing the health, family, education, and community resources they need.

Excel by Eight brings together families, policymakers, providers, and business leaders to strengthen resource grids across the state, ensuring all children have a strong start. We invite you to take action and join the E8 network.

Visit [excelby8.net/take-action](https://excelby8.net/take-action) to find ways to get plugged in.



# References

- 1 Arkansas Home Visiting Network and Save the Children.
- 2 Arkansas Imagination Library, <https://arkansasimaginationlibrary.org/>.
- 3 Annual EPSDT Participation Report. Form CMS-416. Fiscal Year 2023. Arkansas. <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/benefits/early-and-periodic-screening-diagnostic-and-treatment/index.html>.
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