



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 20, 2011

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## **Michigan receives \$2.3 million in ARRA funding to boost child care quality**

*Trainers will coach local providers, meaning better care for kids*

LANSING – More than \$2 million in funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) will create a select team of quality improvement specialists to train and coach child care providers across Michigan, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) announced today.

The one-time funding – totaling \$2.3 million - will be administered by Michigan’s Great Start Regional Child Care Resource Centers, which are part of ECIC’s [Great Start Child Care Quality Program](#).

The money enables resource center directors to hire up to 15 specialists statewide to work directly with individual caregivers to help them improve the quality of their care, with an emphasis on infants and children under age three, said Karen Roback, director of the quality program.

“The brain develops the most in the first five years of life, and most of that growth happens really quickly in the first three years,” Roback said. “This is when it’s so important for infants and toddlers to have enriching experiences with caregivers in order to develop to their full potential.”

Judy Samelson, chief executive officer of ECIC, called quality care "vital to children."

“After home, child care is often a child’s most important learning environment,” Samelson said. “So it’s critical we do everything possible to help child care providers with the resources and tools they need to help young children learn and grow.”

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Each resource center will hire one or more specialists depending on its region's size. Four specialists are being hired in the Detroit area, for example. Besides paying for specialists' salaries, the appropriation directs \$100,000 to each regional resource center to purchase supplies and materials needed by providers.

Roback said the specialists are the next step in the Quality Program's effort to improve child care across Michigan. Last year, the program trained 20,000 "relative and aide" child care providers in CPR and first aid. The training was mandated by the state Legislature.

Roback said the specialists will also contribute to the proposed development of a statewide "Quality Rating and Improvement System" for the state, which will give parents a way to evaluate and compare the services and backgrounds of child care providers.

A plan to develop a voluntary rating system in Michigan is under review by Michigan's [Early Learning Advisory Council](#).

The specialists will be hired this month to begin work immediately. Ongoing costs for the specialists will be borne by local resource centers once the grant expires. Their efforts will become part of the scope of work for each regional resource center, Roback added.

Pam Smith, director of the [Great Start Regional Child Care Resource Center in Southeast Michigan](#), said that by enhancing services already offered families with young children, the federal dollars will help focus attention on the "development of the whole child."

"In early childhood we know we must keep children physically healthy and we must do everything we can for their brain development. Socially, we need to do everything we can to nurture them and build feelings of trust, love and emotional support."

Her office, based in Ann Arbor, serves seven surrounding counties.

Parents, Smith added, are likely to applaud the hiring of the specialists. In a study by the [National Association of Childcare Resources and Referral Agencies](#), 38 percent of parents surveyed rated child care quality as their highest concern, followed by the cost of child care.

*The Early Childhood Investment Corporation is a public/private initiative building a high quality child care system for Michigan as part of its work to restructure the state's investment in children from birth to five through state and local community efforts. For more information about ECIC and its efforts, go to <http://greatstartforkids.org/>*