

FACT SHEET

- There are 46,000 children in Kent County under the age of 5. Twenty-one percent live in poverty; 33% rely on Medicaid; 21% are born to a mother with less than a 12th grade education. (U.S. Census Bureau and Kids Count in Michigan)
- Poverty disproportionately affects children of color. Fifty-five percent of young black children in Kent County live in poverty; 43% of young Hispanic children in Kent County live in poverty; 8% of young white children in Kent County live in poverty. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2007 American Community Survey)
- The brain is not fully developed at birth, and the early years are critical. The most rapid brain development occurs in the first three years of life. (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child)
- Prolonged and persistent stress—which can come from family tension or financial hardship—harms the developing brain, jeopardizing a child’s future success. (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child)
- A study by the RAND Corporation found early childhood programs lead to significant economic returns to the community—anywhere from \$1.26 to \$17.07 for every \$1 invested. (RAND Corporation)
- The return on investment comes from a reduced need for welfare, prison, special education, and job training. The return increases if the programs focus on at-risk children. (Numerous studies including the National Institute for Early Childhood Education Research and High/Scope Perry Preschool Project)
- The average cost of full-time child care in Kent County is \$522 per month. That’s 16% of the average wage in Kent County and 42% of the minimum wage. (Kids Count in Michigan)
- More than one quarter of children entering kindergarten in Kent County are unable to recognize at least half the letters of the alphabet or identify rhyming words, skills fundamental to early literacy. (Kindergarten Assessment funded by the Early Childhood Children’s Commission)
- Publicly insured children in Michigan are twice as likely to be admitted to the hospital as those who are privately insured. (*Insurance-associated Disparities in Hospitalization Outcomes of Michigan Children*, pending publication)
- A study commissioned by First Steps found Michigan would save hundreds of millions of dollars if children on Medicaid have the same hospitalization rate and emergency room usage as children who are privately insured. (*Insurance-associated Disparities in Hospitalization Outcomes of Michigan Children*, pending publication)
- The early education industry in Michigan generates 45,000 jobs and contributes \$1 billion to the state economy. (Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth)
- The early education industry is expected to grow 12.2% between 2004 and 2014, more than the 7.7% growth projected for the total state workforce. (Michigan DLEG)
- The early education industry in the Grand Rapids area generates 3,800 jobs and \$103 million annually. (Michigan DLEG)



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The Great Start Collaborative of Kent County is a major partner of First Steps.