

# WHAT EVERY RESIDENT SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE READY BY FIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD MILLAGE



## THE BASICS

### What is the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage?

*The Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage was approved by Kent County voters in November 2018. It provides dedicated and stable funding of approximately \$5.7 million a year, for six years, for community-based programs and services that are proven to improve the health, school readiness, and well-being of children under age five. It helps ensure Kent County children are healthy and ready to learn when they start kindergarten.*

### Why is the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage necessary?

*Children who start ahead stay ahead. Every baby and toddler in Kent County deserves to be healthy and ready to learn by kindergarten. Kent County is fortunate to have many great early childhood programs in our community, but they lack the resources to serve all the families that need and want them. Ready by Five allows many more children to participate in programs that are proven to work.*

### What types of services are funded as part of the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage?

*The Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage:*

- *Supports new parents so they can ensure their children are healthy and ready for kindergarten;*
- *Increases access to high-quality early learning experiences that build a strong social, emotional, and intellectual foundation; and*
- *Supports early identification of speech and hearing impairments, autism, or delays and disabilities so kids get the treatment they need.*

*This includes supporting services such as home visiting, play and learn groups, screenings, and environmental health programs. The millage also supports outreach and navigation services to help parents and caregivers know what services are available in the community and how they can access them.*

### What impact will the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage have on young kids in Kent County?

*Studies conclusively show most of a child's brain develops by his or her third birthday, making these early years a critical time for learning and developing skills. A healthy childhood and early learning experiences build a strong social, emotional, and intellectual foundation that is critical for success in school and beyond. Investing in an early childhood system that helps ALL children and families thrive will lead to a community in which EVERYONE can fully participate and contribute.*





## THE DETAILS

### **Who is served by the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage?**

*Ready by Five benefits children under age five who live in all corners of Kent County. There are services and programs that are universally available to all young children and their families, as well as those targeted to families and children with the greatest needs.*

### **How will the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage advance equity?**

*Data clearly show health and education outcomes for children from economically disadvantaged households and children of color are not meeting overall community outcomes. Ready by Five is reducing disparate outcomes by increasing access to early childhood services and ensuring culturally relevant services are inclusive of all families. Some Ready by Five resources are specifically targeted to communities that are traditionally underserved based on race and/or ethnicity, zip code, or cultural factors.*

### **Who decides what programs, services, and organizations get funding?**

*An independent Resident Proposal Review Board comprised of parents, Kent County Commissioners and staff, a community early childhood expert, and a First Steps Kent Commissioner review proposals submitted by community-based organizations and make funding recommendations. Those recommendations must be approved by the First Steps Kent Commission (board of directors) and the Kent County Board of Commissioners. This process is modeled after the successful Kent County Senior Millage.*

### **What is the role of First Steps Kent?**

*First Steps Kent is responsible for administration and oversight of the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage. That includes:*

- *Soliciting, reviewing, and awarding millage funds;*
- *Establishing expectations for how funds will be spent and supporting grantees to ensure those expectations are met;*
- *Conducting ongoing assessments of unmet needs among young children and their families to ensure millage funds are going where they can have the greatest impact;*
- *Evaluating the impact of Ready by Five and reporting it to the community.*

*The Kent County Board of Commissioners selected First Steps Kent for that role following a competitive bid process.*

### **How will county government and any programs funded by this millage be held accountable?**

*All millage dollars are publicly reported and will go through an independent financial audit every year to ensure taxpayer funds are spent wisely. Programs and services will be evaluated to measure effectiveness to ensure transparency and accountability by a third party.*