

# 3 Commitment

## Communities make early childhood a priority and act to support children’s health, learning, and well-being

### SYSTEM PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOR COMMITMENT

Measurement	Resources needed	System stakeholder engagement	Data collection requirements	Timeframe
				Level of Effort
<b>3.1 Public Understanding*</b>				
Assesses presence of public outreach activities and the extent they are effectively influencing public understanding of the importance of early childhood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation of EC system representatives</li> <li>• Facilitator (optional)</li> <li>• Data analyst/evaluator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agencies across the system (leaders)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder convening</li> </ul>	1-6 months Low to Moderate
<b>3.2 Leadership Engagement</b>				
Assesses engagement with and support of early childhood by leaders from other sectors in the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation of EC system leaders</li> <li>• Facilitator (optional)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agencies across the system (leaders)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder convening(s)</li> </ul>	1 month Low
<b>3.3 Policy Change*</b>				
Fosters community conversations about the policy changes and early childhood investments a community would like to see and enables tracking of progress to that end.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation of EC system and non-EC system stakeholders</li> <li>• Facilitator (optional)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agencies across the system (leaders)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy data or briefings</li> <li>• Stakeholder convenings</li> </ul>	3 months Low to Moderate

\* Measure is in development (i.e., not piloted) but included due to its importance in measuring system performance.

## 3.1 Public Understanding

### *Level at which early childhood systems effectively engage in efforts to increase public understanding of the importance of early childhood and the public's role in supporting children and families*

#### THIS MEASUREMENT IS IN DEVELOPMENT

##### Purpose

This measure seeks to gauge the extent to which systems are able to build public understanding of the importance of early childhood development and of what actions on the part of parents, neighbors, and community institutions are most likely to support the healthy development of all children in the community. Results help early childhood system leaders assess their efforts to educate the community about the importance of early childhood and, when possible, assess the effectiveness of that outreach. The expectation is that improved public understanding translates to improved parent, caregiver, and community attitudes and behaviors toward young children as well as the development of community advocates who will support investment in early childhood initiatives.

##### Definition

This measure provides a preliminary tool for a team of system leaders to self-assess the extent to which they are collectively able to build public understanding of the importance of early childhood development.

As detailed below, the tool helps communities gather information and evaluate their current public outreach efforts in terms of:

- ▶ Message content
- ▶ Message dissemination
- ▶ Two-way communication
- ▶ Evaluation, adaptation, and impact

Taking into account the ratings of each of these four factors, communities then assign themselves an overall rating of Level 1 (limited activities to build public support) through Level 4 (responsive activities and measurable improvement). After assigning a level, communities are encouraged to identify what, if any, activities or changes they want to commit to based on this self-evaluation.

##### Implementation

###### Tool or Survey

The tool at the end of this section is preliminary; communities will want to consider the elements within this model and innovate or customize.

###### Summary of Steps

- 1. Set intention:** Decide your communities' goals with respect to measuring public outreach and engagement.
- 2. Identify and engage stakeholders:** Communities identify which system leaders should participate in collaboratively completing the self-assessment tool.

##### Measurement Option: Public Opinion or Community Norms Polls

For communities with an existing positive community norms initiative, or a community-level survey or poll data about public attitudes about early childhood, communities can use these data to track change in attitudes and behaviors over time, potentially in response to their public outreach efforts.

- 3. Refine tool:** Communities may wish to refine or format the tool to facilitate implementation and to ensure the criteria are locally appropriate.
- 4. Convene meeting and rate:** The tool can be completed collaboratively at an in-person meeting.
  - a.** Using consensus facilitation methods, self-rate based on four topic areas in the tool.
  - b.** Taking all the ratings into account, rate performance based on the Level 1 through Level 4 overall scale.
- 5. Interpret:** Communities should interpret results using question prompts provided in the Interpreting Results section.
- 6. Plan:** Determine what action should be taken as a result of the results, and record in action planning guide. Use this assessment as an entrée to a larger conversation to support efforts to influence public opinion about early childhood.

##### Stakeholders

The self-assessment tool should be completed by a small group of early childhood community leaders, or an existing early childhood system collaborative body.

##### Data Sources

Data are collected from system leaders participating in the self-assessment tool.

##### Limitations

This measure is preliminary. To date, the self-assessment tool has not been piloted, although the format was based on similar tools that were piloted over the course of the initiative.

##### Opportunities

Additional opportunities include the following:

- ▶ Find relevant population-level surveys in place in communities, states, or internationally to create a question bank for communities to use in the development of their own community-level survey.

## Resources

▶ [Introduction to Positive Community Norms by the Montana Institute](#)

Public awareness-building is a key strategy of the community norms field, which examines community values, perceptions, and knowledge as compared to actual behaviors, in an effort to promote positive behaviors. The difference between what the public understands about early childhood and the support they are willing to provide, or how they behave with young children offers important information for stakeholders seeking to close gaps between knowledge, values, and actions.

▶ [Meta-Analysis of Public Opinion Data on Support for Early Childhood Services by Fairbank](#), Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3), January 29, 2018

This resource analyzes the results of 21 separate surveys conducted in California related to public attitudes about investments in early childhood. It provides recommendations on messages that are compelling to the public, as well as those that are not.

▶ [Early Learning Community Progress Rating Tool](#)

Communities will find helpful rating tools within Building Block #1 (Community Leadership, Commitment and Public Will to Make Early Childhood a Priority), Target #1.3: Community members support and understand the importance of early childhood health, learning, and well-being.

▶ These articles discuss the link between knowledge and behavior; parents with more knowledge are more likely to engage in positive parenting practices, whereas those with limited knowledge are at greater risk of negative parenting behaviors.

• [Association Between Knowledge of Child Development and Parenting: A Systematic Review](#), September SJ, Rich E, Roman N. (2018) *The Open Family Studies Journal*, volume 10

• [Parenting knowledge and its role in the prediction of dysfunctional parenting and disruptive child behavior](#), Morawska A, Winter L, Sanders MR. (2009) *Child: Care, Health and Development*, Mar;35(2):217-26

• [Parenting Matters: Supporting Parents of Children Ages 0-8](#), Breiner H, Ford M, Gadsden VL, editors. (2016) National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education; Board on Children, Youth, and Families; Committee on Supporting the Parents of Young Children, Washington (DC): National Academies Press

### 3.1 Public Understanding: Rating Tool

For each of the four topics below, communities make a preliminary rating on the following four-point scale:

- 1—Not yet meeting any of these standards
- 2—Initial progress on some of these standards
- 3—Meets several of these standards, with work still to be done.
- 4—Meets most or all of these standards

<p><b>1.</b> Message content. Higher ratings should reflect these standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Content is well-grounded in scientific findings.</li> <li>▶ Content includes: the importance of early childhood beginning with the earliest years; actions by parents that support healthy development; and actions by family members, neighbors, and community members that support healthy development of all young children.</li> <li>▶ Content is developed with a grounding in effective framing and social messaging, emphasizing positive, actionable messages.</li> </ul>	<p>1    2    3    4</p>
<p><b>2.</b> Message dissemination. Higher ratings should reflect these standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Culturally relevant messages are tailored to the needs of different segments of the community.</li> <li>▶ A dissemination plan that takes into account numerous ways of transmitting and reinforcing the key messages.</li> <li>▶ Messages are consistent across multiple early childhood sectors.</li> </ul>	<p>1    2    3    4</p>
<p><b>3.</b> Two-way communication. Higher ratings should reflect these standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Numerous opportunities exist for community members to provide feedback about the messages, to discuss what they need and want in order to succeed, and engage in dialogue about issues related to early childhood.</li> <li>▶ Evidence that this information from the community influences the system.</li> </ul>	<p>1    2    3    4</p>
<p><b>4.</b> Evaluation, adaptation, and impact. Higher ratings should reflect these standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ An evaluation plan, identifying the type of data that will be collected to gauge the impact of the effort to build public understanding and support for early childhood.</li> <li>▶ Evidence that the system has adapted its approaches based on what it learns from the data.</li> <li>▶ Evidence from the data that the messages are having an impact on public understanding and support for early childhood.</li> </ul>	<p>1    2    3    4</p>

Taking into account the ratings of each of these four factors, communities should assign themselves an overall rating of Level 1 through Level 4:

**Level 1**—Limited activity to build public understanding and support for early childhood development, with little evidence of impact.

**Level 2**—Information about developmental science, early health and learning, and parenting is disseminated to the community, with messages that are accessible and relevant to different cultural groups.

**Level 3**—The messages described in Level 2 are provided consistently across multiple early childhood sectors in a coordinated effort that has developed strategies to reach all sectors of the community. Communication is in two directions, as families are engaged in providing feedback about the messages and in communicating to early childhood leaders what they need in order to be successful. The system has begun to gather data to evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts.

**Level 4**—The system is adjusting its activities based on its evaluation findings. The activities described in Level 3 have led to measurable improvement in public understanding and support for early childhood development.

## 3.2 Leadership Engagement

### Level at which community leadership is engaged in supporting children and families

#### Purpose

One of the markers of a well-functioning early childhood system is that leaders throughout the community understand the importance of early childhood and are engaged in efforts to make the community more supportive of young children and their families. This tool is designed to help early childhood system leaders: set intentions for the leadership engagement they are seeking; assess how engaged those leaders are in their community's early childhood efforts; identify strengths and areas for growth; and articulate goals and next steps. The tool is designed to be completed by an individual or small group in a leadership or convening role for the early childhood system. When desired, this tool can be used to guide a conversation to gather input from key partners and spur action planning for how to engage new stakeholders in early childhood work or to deepen the engagement of existing partners.

#### Definition

This tool assesses engagement in early childhood issues by sector. Since communities differ, each must define which sectors and groups should be included in the assessment. The assessment includes the level of actual sector leadership engagement in early childhood issues; the level of desired engagement or engagement goals; sector champions; who still needs to be engaged; and next steps. Possible sectors for assessment inclusion are:

- ▶ Business (e.g., the Chamber of Commerce, large employers in your area, associations of business owners)
- ▶ Non-profit sector (e.g., private human services providers, advocacy groups, intermediary organizations like the United Way)
- ▶ Higher education (e.g., public or private universities, community colleges)
- ▶ Health care (e.g., hospitals, clinics, a local chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, managed care organizations)
- ▶ Faith-based / clergy (e.g., individual clergy members, congregations, interfaith alliances)
- ▶ Elected officials (e.g., mayor, county executive, city council, county board, state and federal representatives)
- ▶ Government agencies (e.g. department of health and human services, department of education)
- ▶ Local philanthropy (e.g., local community foundations, family foundations, major donors, United Way)
- ▶ Service organizations (e.g., Rotary, Junior League, Optimists)
- ▶ Housing (e.g., public housing, private housing developers and owners, shelters, homelessness service providers, affordable housing advocates)

(Note that a different set of questions apply for assessing how well parents are engaged in your community's early childhood system. That assessment is contained in system performance measure 4.1 *Parent Engagement*.)

The tool describes ways that leaders within the sector may demonstrate engagement and commitment, and includes a rating scale for each of those dimensions of engagement, as well as an overall assessment of the sector's engagement. The dimensions of engagement are defined as:

- ▶ *Well represented in early childhood group(s)*: Leaders from this sector are members or leaders of one or more groups focused on early childhood and/or convened by early childhood leaders and advocates. This may include sitting on the boards of early-childhood-focused organizations.
- ▶ *Demonstrates commitment to early childhood issues in own work*: Organizations, individual leaders, and/or collaborative groups within the sector have made early childhood a priority; this may include employers that have implemented family-friendly workplace policies.
- ▶ *Devotes resources to early childhood issues*: Organizations, individual leaders, and/or collaborative groups within the sector invest time, space, money, or other resources in work related to early childhood. For example, this might include charitable donations earmarked for early childhood efforts, sponsorship of events, or dedicated staff time.
- ▶ *Efforts are aligned with others*: Whether formally participating in collaborative groups or not, organizations, individual leaders, and/or collaborative groups within the sector are aligning their early childhood efforts with others in the community, an example being signing on to a community-wide effort. The absence of alignment could mean that a sector is investing resources into efforts that do not seem to connect to any other early childhood work in the community, such as a business that provides on-site child care for its employees but is not engaged in community-wide efforts.
- ▶ *Invites participation from the early childhood sector in its own collaboratives and initiatives*: Early childhood leaders and advocates, including parents, are included as members of work groups, invited to speak at events, and/or consulted about decisions in this sector.
- ▶ *Advocates for policy changes*: Organizations, individual leaders, and/or collaborative groups within the sector take a stand on policy issues related to early childhood. This may include signing on to letters or petitions, writing op-eds, speaking out publicly, or lobbying for specific policy changes that benefit young children and their families. All levels of advocacy—whether local, state, or national—are considered.
- ▶ *Overall assessment for this sector's engagement*: Given your rating on each of the dimensions, what is your overall sense of how engaged this sector is in early childhood work?

Participants rate each sector on all seven dimensions of engagement according to a four-level scale from 1 (little or no engagement) to 4 (strong and widespread engagement). If giving a rating of 1 or 2, communities should consider the extent to which this reflects a lack of outreach from the early childhood sector, a lack of response from the other, or a combination of the two.

After considering each sector individually, assess how well your engagement efforts are going across sectors and how well that engagement has led to concrete action to accomplish your early childhood agenda.

## Implementation

### Tool or Survey

Communities are invited to use the template on the following page for each sector they wish to evaluate, and then to discuss the “overall” questions at the end of the tool.

### Summary of Steps

- 1. Set intention:** Decide your community’s goals with respect to measuring leadership engagement.
- 2. Stakeholder engagement:** Identify early childhood system leaders or representatives to participate in the assessment process. With the stakeholder group, affirm or revise intentions. Collectively decide: What does successful engagement look like in our community? What type of engagement would have the greatest impact? Who do we most need to engage?
- 3. Select sectors:** Collectively identify the sectors for assessment. Make a copy of the rating tool on page 47 for each of the sectors to be assessed.
- 4. Complete tool individually (optional):** The early childhood system representatives participating in the assessment may complete the tool individually before meeting and discussing as a group.
- 5. Convene stakeholders:** Convene the group to review individual assessments (if completed in advance), determine consensus assessment, reflect on the results, and determine what to do next with the information/analysis. Identify sectors where early childhood system leaders would like to increase engagement, which may be sectors where engagement is currently low or where it is uneven.

- 6. Plan:** Determine who will reach out to the selected sector(s) and what steps will be taken to initiate or deepen the engagement. Communities can use the action plan template in this toolkit to help plan next steps.

### Stakeholders

Leaders of the early childhood system should be involved in this assessment process. Ideally this would be led by someone in a convening or coordinating role for the system, along with close partners.

### Data Sources

This performance measure uses a self-assessment tool, which may be completed by individuals in advance of meeting as a group. At the group meeting, participants would arrive at a consensus rating for each dimension for each sector. No additional data sources are needed to complete this assessment.

### Limitations

The value of the tool for local communities lies primarily in clarifying the sectors to prioritize for strengthening engagement and the type(s) of additional engagement desired. It is not intended for cross-community comparison since the landscapes differ in terms of sectors, current engagement, desired engagement, resources, priorities, and how early childhood systems are conceptualized.

### Opportunities

Additional opportunities include the following:

- ▶ An individual sector score may not represent the range of engagement within a sector. Additional thinking about how to accommodate varied engagement within sectors may help the tool evolve.

### 3.2 Leadership Engagement: Rating Tool

Make a copy of this page for each of the sectors you are assessing. First, complete questions 1 through 6 for each identified sector in your community using this rating scale:

- 1—Little or no evidence of engagement
- 2—A few strong early examples, not yet widespread
- 3—A significant number of leaders/organizations in this sector demonstrate engagement
- 4—Engagement strong and widespread

**Sector:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>1.</b> Who represents this sector in your community?				
<b>2.</b> Assessment of engagement:				
Well represented in early childhood group(s)	1	2	3	4
Demonstrates commitment to early childhood issues in own work	1	2	3	4
Devotes resources to early childhood issues	1	2	3	4
Invites participation from the early childhood sector in its own collaboratives and initiatives	1	2	3	4
Advocates for policy changes	1	2	3	4
Overall assessment for this sector's engagement	1	2	3	4
<b>3.</b> What do you most want to accomplish in terms of engagement from this sector?				
<b>4.</b> Who are the champions?				
<b>5.</b> Who still needs to be brought along?				
<b>6.</b> What will you do next, and who will do it?				





## 3.3 Policy Change

### Level at which communities identify, advocate for, and achieve policy changes that improve conditions for young children and their families

#### THIS MEASUREMENT IS IN DEVELOPMENT

##### Purpose

In a community that is committed to supporting young children and their families, policies will be in place that make it easier, not harder, for parents to raise children and for families to access the services they need. A well-functioning early childhood system can bring together stakeholders to identify and advocate for policies that improve conditions for young children and their families. While individual early childhood providers may have their own policy agendas, they may not be comprehensive or aligned with the agendas of other parts of the early childhood system. In the face of competing political and funding demands, collaborating to build a common policy agenda and advocacy alliance could improve influence, impact, and funding.

##### Definition

This preliminary measure has two components. First, communities conduct a self-assessment to understand the level at which they have the infrastructure in place to implement a common policy agenda. This tool is designed to prompt an informal assessment by early childhood stakeholders of how well various players are working together to identify, advocate for, and achieve policy changes that improve conditions for young children and their families. Second, based on the findings from the tool, communities decide whether they will engage in a collaborative process to identify, track, and report progress on selected policy areas.

Policy changes may take place at the level of agency and system-level policies and procedures; local policy; state legislative, administrative, or regulatory policy; or federal policy and regulations. Advocacy may be proactive (arguing for a new or changed policy to improve conditions) or reactive (opposing a proposed change or new policy that would be harmful to children and families).

##### Self-Assessment of Infrastructure to Support a Common Policy Agenda

As described in detail within the Tool or Survey section, the self-assessment tool asks a set of questions designed to determine the community's current level of policy advocacy and collaboration, from Level 1 (minimal attention to policy change across the early childhood system) to Level 4 (coordinated advocacy has led to policy change).

##### Common Policy Agenda Development

Communities that score a Level 1 or 2 may decide to take the next step of identifying common policies and targets. The process involves gathering stakeholders to identify common policy priorities, setting targets, and tracking progress. Individual states or communities will have different priorities, values, and strategies for how to best support young children and their families. The menu below of pro-child/pro-family policies, programs, or investments, which is neither prescriptive

nor exhaustive, provides examples of policy initiatives that some systems have chosen to pursue:

##### *Policies aimed at helping families with young children succeed in the workforce*

- ▶ Easing of “benefits cliffs” so that families don’t lose subsidies and other benefits with a minor or seasonal increase in income
- ▶ Paid family leave policies
- ▶ Universal Transitional-K or Pre-K<sup>7</sup>
- ▶ Requirements or incentives for family friendly workplace policies (e.g., lactation rooms, onsite childcare, flexible hours)
- ▶ Increased supply and affordability of infant/toddler care and afterschool care through a variety of policy levers

##### *Policies aimed at improving the quality of services used by young children and their families*

- ▶ Increased reimbursement rates for organizations providing ECE services
- ▶ Wage increases for ECE staff and/or wage equity for ECE staff compared to K-12 educators
- ▶ Requirements or incentives for ECE providers to participate in Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS)
- ▶ Baby-Friendly Hospital designation
- ▶ Incentivize and reduce barriers to secure, privacy-compliant data sharing across public and private agencies

##### *Policies aimed at making communities more supportive of the needs of young children and their families*

- ▶ New parks, mobile parks (truck with play equipment), and/or recreation programs with stimulating activities for young children
- ▶ Public information campaigns on child-friendly issues, such as child abuse prevention, positive parenting practices, the value of well-child checks/developmental screenings, and the overall importance of early childhood in human development
- ▶ Establishment of playgroups to help families connect with each other
- ▶ Library or community center programming for young children
- ▶ Respite care for caregivers of young children

## Implementation

### Tool or Survey

Communities are invited to use the tool at the end of this section to assess their current level of early childhood policy advocacy alignment. Steps are provided for communities scoring at 1 or 2 to collectively develop a common policy agenda.

<sup>7</sup> Transitional Kindergarten is a way to provide a bridge between preschool and kindergarten in states where children must be age five by the start of kindergarten, or early September. It offers enrollment in an age-appropriate, modified kindergarten setting for four-year-olds who will turn five by December.

## Summary of Steps

- 1. Set Intention:** Decide whether the goal is to assess your community's level of working together on common policy priorities, to identify a common agenda and track progress, or both.
- 2. Stakeholder engagement:** Reach out to stakeholders likely to have common policy priorities and set a time to review the process tool. See Stakeholder section below.
- 3. Assess level of collaboration:** Using the process tool, ask and collaboratively answer the questions posed and determine a level rating based on those responses.
- 4. Policy selection:** For communities scoring at a Level 1 or 2, use consensus methods to select policies or programs that are appropriate for your community to advocate for and track. Selection criteria to consider:
  - a.** Achievement of the policy or program would have substantial positive impact on young children and their families.
  - b.** The policy or program is ambitious but realistically achievable for the community or state, considering resources and political climate.
  - c.** There is substantial energy around the policy or program. For example:
    - i.** Community or state agencies are already actively considering the policy or program (e.g., bills or ordinances are in front of, or being drafted for, elected bodies)
    - ii.** Community or state agencies and advocates are actively promoting the policy or program.
  - d.** Selection for tracking would build awareness and potentially motivate city, school, or state actors to take specific actions to achieve the policy or program. It may also sharpen the focus of system stakeholders on actions necessary to promote the policy or program.
  - e.** There is an existing statewide early childhood policy agenda that includes this policy and we want to align with that common agenda.
- 5. Set targets:** Determine baselines and set targets for each of the selected policies or programs. In setting targets, communities should ensure the target is:
  - a.** clear (e.g., we will know when it has been achieved.)
  - b.** measurable (e.g., we can gather the information needed to determine the baseline, milestones, and achievement.)
  - c.** achievable (e.g., we feel the target is achievable.)
  - d.** time-bound (e.g., we want to accomplish this by a particular year.)
- 6. Plan:** How will the various stakeholders work toward achievement of the identified targets? Use the action planning template to identify steps.
- 7. Monitor:** Track progress on targets and action items.

## Stakeholders

Select system stakeholders likely to have similar policy priorities. Also consider engaging with partners not traditionally considered part of the early childhood system, such as business organizations, faith-based organizations, or universities. While not traditionally considered part of the early childhood system, these and other partners may be motivated to affect policy that is friendly to working families, or they may already be providing services or supports for their employees with young children, such as onsite child care, child care subsidies, or other family-friendly benefits. This external engagement may be for particular issues within the policy agenda or part of an action plan to build alliances.

## Data Sources

- ▶ Newly developed survey or existing political poll that includes questions about voters' support for early childhood investments of interest.
- ▶ Community assessment of state or local existing early childhood policies and investments, as well as assessment of early childhood policies and investments that are lacking. Assess at outset of analysis to obtain a baseline and assess at specified intervals to determine whether there has been change over time.

## Limitations

This measure is preliminary and has not been pilot tested.

Some public early childhood agencies are restricted from lobbying for particular bills, and limited in the amount or type of advocacy they can participate in. For private non-profits, these limits are not as restrictive as many assume. It is important to understand what those limits are for your organization and other partners in your coalition and to find appropriate ways to support policies that will advance the organization's mission.

Tracking performance on legislation or funding can be challenging. Information may be difficult to obtain, particularly investments in early childhood by organizations outside the stakeholder group. Legislation may be unwieldy, such that it may address certain targets but not others or is partially related to the community's identified policy goals, but not completely. As such, this measure should be viewed as a tool for fostering community conversations about the early childhood investments you would like to see and enabling broad tracking of progress to that end.

## Resources

- ▶ [Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance](#)
- ▶ [National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds: 2018 Public Policy Agenda](#)
- ▶ [First 5 Network Strategy](#)
- ▶ [Link to First 5 Legislative Priorities 2017-2024](#)

### 3.3 Policy Change: Rating Tool

Participating stakeholders collaboratively respond to the following prompts:

- 1. Policy focus:** To what extent do individual agencies and stakeholders within the early childhood system have a policy focus? This could mean that agencies and organizations have: developed a policy agenda; dedicated staff and board member time and other resources to policy advocacy; intentionally built relationships with policymakers; or participated in policy-focused groups at the community, state, or federal level.
- 2. Shared policy agenda:** To what extent do agencies and organizations across the early childhood system have a shared policy agenda? This could mean that multiple organizations have aligned their individual policy agendas toward shared goals or focus areas; or that multiple organizations have signed on to the same policy agenda.
- 3. Joint advocacy:** To what extent do agencies and organizations across the early childhood system and the community work together to advocate for or against specific policy changes? This could mean: coordinating letter-writing campaigns, legislative outreach, or direct actions; mobilizing community members to vote, march, or testify on a particular issue; signing on to each other's efforts; or jointly reaching out to community members and decision makers.
- 4. Evidence of impact:** To what extent have agencies and organizations within the early childhood system had success in achieving policy wins? This could include getting an issue discussed in legislative committee; introduction of legislation; passage of positive policies or changes to administrative rules and regulations; or stopping a proposed change that would have caused harm to children and families.

After considering the domains above, communities can evaluate the current performance of their early childhood system on this measure. Levels are defined as follows:

- Level 1**—There is minimal attention to policy change across the early childhood system.
- Level 2**—Stakeholders have begun to identify a common policy agenda; initial advocacy efforts may be underway, but may not be very coordinated.
- Level 3**—A policy agenda has been identified and there is robust advocacy activity coordinated across multiple stakeholders in the early childhood system and the community.
- Level 4**—Coordinated advocacy efforts by stakeholders in the early childhood system have resulted in desired policy changes or other effects.