



*Invest in Children
Evaluation Projects Summary
2006-2007*

Since its inception, Invest in Children (IIC) has demonstrated a core commitment to the role of evaluation. The Center on Urban Poverty & Community Development of the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences has served as IIC's lead evaluation partner since 1999, responsible for ongoing independent evaluation. The evaluation is used to both demonstrate the results of the programming and also inform efforts to improve program quality. This is a summary of several evaluation-related reports completed by Case during 2006-2007. Five specific studies summarized here are: Child well-being study, Child tracking study, Early learning study, Child care capacity study, and the Child care quality study.

Child Well-Being Study

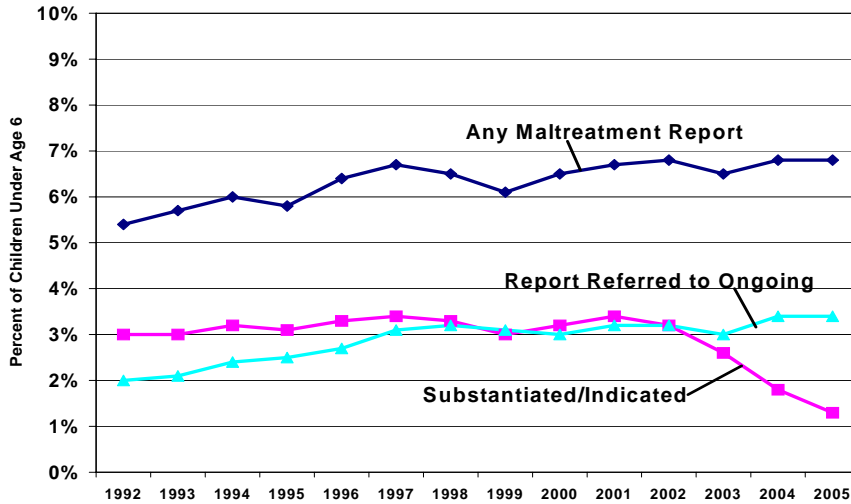
Claudia Coulton, Paige Hardy, and Nina Lalich (September 2006)

This report presents a high level view of early childhood social and health indicators in Cuyahoga County. This study has been underway since 2000 and seeks to describe: (1) the context for young children in the County; as well as, (2) IIC's efforts in delivering services to this population. The study draws on data from the U.S. Census, Ohio Department of Health, Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services, Cuyahoga Employment & Family Services, as well as Starting Point and Help Me Grow (HMG).

Over time, many of the child indicators show positive trends but some are mixed or their interpretation is unclear. With respect to early care and education, families are availing themselves of the increased supply of regulated child care and using child care subsidies at a growing rate. Children's access to medical care has improved and the access to prenatal care for pregnant women has also improved in recent years. Rates of child maltreatment, which rose during the first four years of IIC, showed a significant drop in 2003 to 2005 period. However, newly developed related indicators (number of children reported for abuse/neglect; families referred to ongoing services), suggest that the level of risk remains steady. The persistence of high rates of low birth weight births, despite the decline in teen and non-marital births, supports IIC's expansion to include prenatal services. Specific trends include:

- Pregnancy and births: The percentage of women with adequate prenatal care has risen to approximately 80%. However, the low birth weight rate rose significantly to 9.9% (latest data available are from 2002).
- Child maltreatment: The percent of children under 6 with a substantiated/indicated abuse or neglect report has continued to drop dramatically since 2002 to 1.3% in 2005, a statistically significant change from the past. However, examination of other indicators such as the proportion of children

who were the subject of a child abuse/neglect report to the 696-KIDS hotline and children transferred to ongoing services at the Department of Children and Family Services have remained steady since 1996 (an indication of the level of risk exhibited by the family). These suggest that the overall risk for children has not changed appreciably. It is important to note the strong correlation between indicators of child maltreatment and measures of poverty and economic hardship. This relationship suggests that efforts to impact maltreatment should be understood in their broader socio-economic context. The chart below illustrates these trends beginning in 1992.



- **Health insurance:** A large improvement occurred in health insurance coverage for young children between 1998 and 2001, with the estimated percent of uninsured children under age six falling markedly from 10.5% to 2.1%. By 2004, the percent uninsured rose slightly to 4.4%, but the change was not statistically significant (latest data available).
- **Child care and pre-school enrollment:** Enrollment of children under age three in regulated child care increased by 35% since the inception of IIC. In 2004, 60% of three and four year-olds were enrolled in preschool, including Head Start, which is an increase since this was first measured in 2001 and compares favorably to a national enrollment rate of 52%.
- **Early identification of special needs:** Since the start of IIC, children with developmental delays and/or disabilities are being identified and assessed at earlier ages. In 1997, 443 children were identified in their first year of life and this number had more than doubled by 2004. Also, the percentage of children born receiving early intervention services by three years of age has increased from 4.5% in 1997 to 10.1% in 2002.

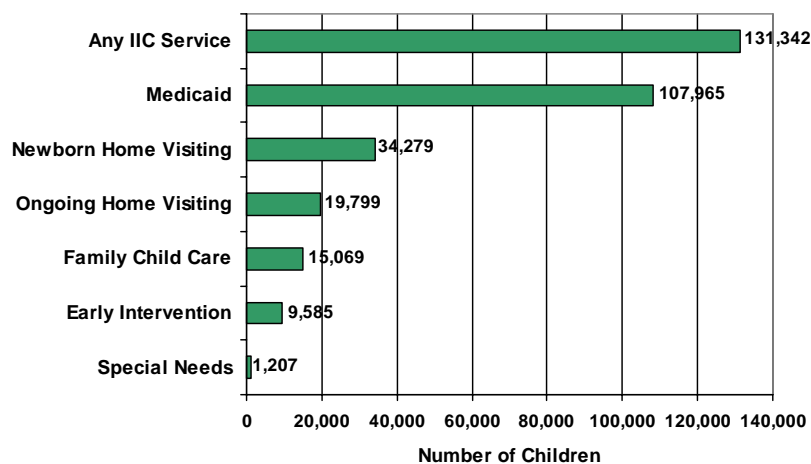
Child Tracking Study

Rob Fischer & Nina Lulich (September 2006)

This report looks specifically at the children and families served by the programs of IIC to assess both scope and reach. The study draws on the matching of child-level participant data records on IIC services, such as home visiting and Medicaid, as well as other public benefits (e.g., Food Stamps, cash assistance). Since the inception of IIC, the scale of its programs has continued to grow and the services have achieved considerable scope. Programmatic elements of IIC now reach the vast majority of newborns and their families in the county. IIC continues to solidify a system that combines breadth and

depth in its efforts to meet the needs of young children and their families in Cuyahoga County. Data for this analysis are available through December 2004.

- In its first 5.5 years (1999-2004), the programs of IIC reached over 131,000 Cuyahoga County children prenatal to 6 years of age. The number of children served annually has grown to over 65,000 across all programs. (See Figure below)



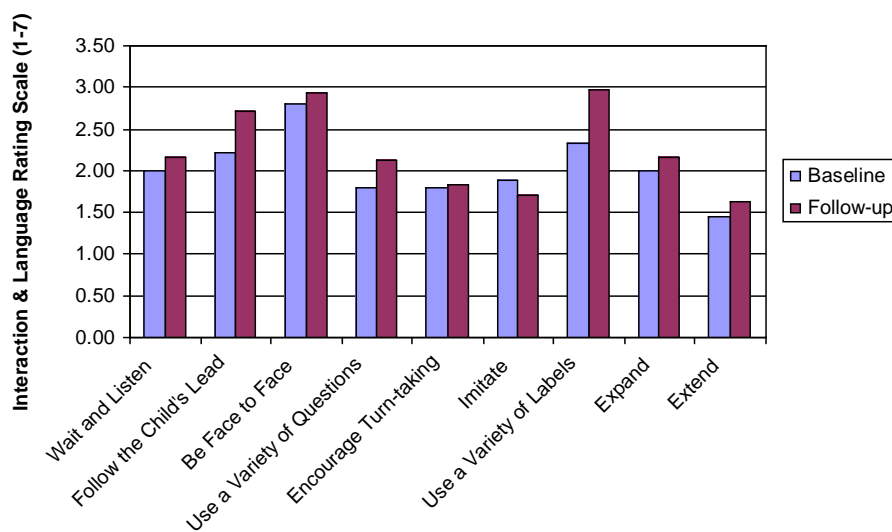
- Approximately 75% of children born between July 1999 and December 2004 have received one or more IIC services. Among older children age-eligible for services (born July 1993-June 1999) 40% have received one or more IIC services.
- Infants are being served earlier in life over time. For the most recent birth cohort on which complete data are available, 71% had contact with at least one IIC service before 6 months of age.
- There is greater evidence of IIC families engaging multiple IIC services over time. All children under six and infants under 1 year old who are touched by IIC rely upon services from more than one of the components, and the extent of cross-program usage within IIC has increased sharply over the first 5 years. Of particular note is the steady increase of cross program use among recipients of the newborn home visit (from 31% to 47%). As a key gateway program for first-time and young parents, this trend shows enhanced linkages to other services.
- IIC families also rely on a number of other public services but these rates have fluctuated over time. In some cases there has been a decline in receipt over time - cash assistance Ohio Works First (OWF) (from 35% to 25%) and child care vouchers (from 21% to 15%). Food Stamp participation by IIC families dropped from 46% in 1999 to 39% in 2000 but has steadily increased to 47% in 2004. The overlap with other public systems is greatest for families using ongoing home visiting and Healthy Start/Medicaid.
- In regard to having involvement with the Department of Children and Family Services, the proportion of children having involvement in the six months following an IIC service has remained at approximately 11% from 2000-2004. These rates have declined since 2002 for children served through early intervention and through special needs child care.
- The programs of IIC have reached considerable geographic spread throughout the County. Overall, 60% of the children reached by IIC were residents of the City of Cleveland and 40% were residents of the County outside the City. In programs of IIC targeted to at-risk families more than two-thirds of the families served resided within the City of Cleveland. Other programs serve larger numbers of families outside the City (up to 60%), reflecting greater geographic dispersion in the families they target.

Early Learning Study

Rob Fischer & Liane Grayson (August 2006)

In 2004, IIC received a federal Early Learning Opportunities Act Grant to promote early literacy among families with young children and family child care home providers. This grant supported a broad range of activities including early literacy home visits, training for child care providers and community literacy events. The evaluation of Cuyahoga County’s Early Learning Project involved documenting the extent to which the early language and literacy activities precipitated changes in the language interactions of parents and family child care providers. This report addresses the evaluation of two components of the Early Learning Project: (1) the home-based language and literacy training program for families who enrolled in ongoing home visiting services through Help Me Grow and (2) the Super Saturday program, an early language and literacy training for family child care providers, administered by Cuyahoga Community College in partnership with Starting Point and Employment & Family Services. Collectively, the project’s strategies sought to enhance the capacity of parents and family child care providers to promote the early learning of young children.

Results indicate that the home-based early language and literacy program increased parent understanding of the importance of a child’s early language and literacy skills and promoted greater use of language enhancing strategies by parents. Data also show that the program met the desires of parents as most parents expressed satisfaction with the program they received. Three themes emerged from analysis of parent responses, suggesting that parents in the evaluation sample increased their awareness of the importance of children’s early learning and the role they as parents play in fostering that early learning. First, parents reported that they learned that children learn through play and that everyday activities and routines are good times to use strategies such as naming and repeating with their child. Second, parents stated that parents and children need to interact with one another. Getting eye-to-eye with their child encourages interaction. Parents noted that reading to a child need not be a passive experience. Third, parents indicated that they learned that there are skills they need to develop, skills such as patience and attentiveness to their child’s behavior and interests, that would help their child learn more. Overall, most parents expressed surprise about how much infants can learn and how infants learn best - through play.



Based on direct observation of parents and children, data reveal that parents demonstrated an increase in the use of language enhancing interaction strategies with their children from baseline to follow-up generally six months later (See Chart above). Nine interaction strategies were identified as

promoting infant and toddler language development and it was the parent's use of these strategies and the frequency of the use that was recorded during observations. Strategies include, 1) waiting and listening, 2) following the child's lead, 3) getting face-to-face, 4) using a variety of questions, 5) encouraging turn-taking, 6) imitating, 7) labeling, 8) expanding language, and 9) extending language. While gains were not large, results indicate that the frequency of use of these strategies at follow-up was significantly higher than at baseline.

For family child care home providers, the Early Learning Project offered the Super Saturday program, a series of five consecutive workshops presented in two-hour sessions on Saturday mornings. The evaluation Super Saturday relied on a phone interview conducted approximately three months after completion of the workshops. The interview probed the extent to which child care providers expressed an increased awareness of the importance of supporting the language and literacy skills very young children and whether child care providers report an increased use of strategies to promote early literacy. A random sample of 98 family child care providers was contacted about participating in the study and 56 providers agreed to be interviewed. Participants were asked about their Super Saturday experience, their family child care home, their current literacy practices, and about their personal characteristics.

Analysis of the interviews with providers who attended the Super Saturday program indicated that they had a new appreciation for the learning potential of babies. Providers praised their teachers for helping them to better understand what they needed to do to help the youngest children in their care be ready for school. Almost all of the providers reported that they never realized how many words children should know by the time they begin school and that in order to learn those words, children need to be read to and talked to when they are babies. Like the parents that were interviewed, providers noted that they learned that children learn through play and that activities like reading should be active, rather than passive, activities.

Providers readily named or described the types of strategies they now use with young children to promote early language and learning. Providers reported using strategies such as repetition, getting face-to-face/eye-to-eye, rhyming, labeling/naming, and describing. Many providers talked about using songs to encourage language learning, incorporating more art projects in their daily plans, using more written language with the children, and most importantly, talking to and interacting with the children. Some providers described how they now not only read to the children, but read with expression. Still other providers talked about the importance of pretend play for children's learning. Finally, many providers noted that they learned that being patient with children is important for each child's emotional development.

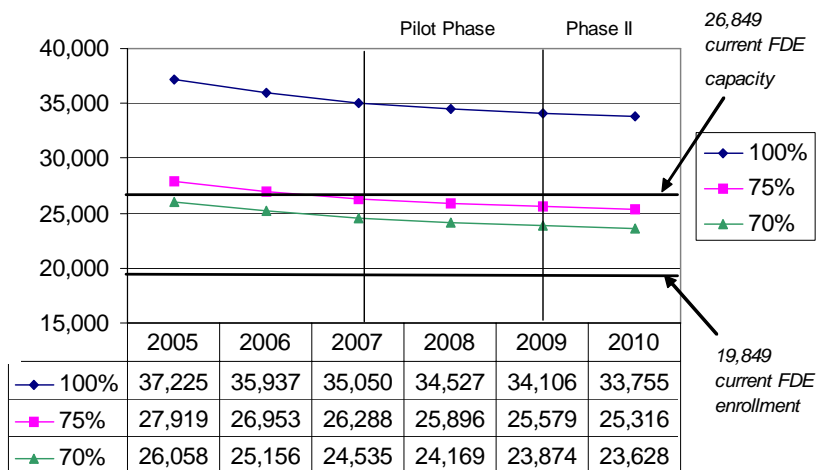
Child Care Capacity Study

Rob Fischer, Lisa Nelson, Kristen Mikelbank, & Claudia Coulton (October 2006)

In preparation for the planning of a Universal Pre-kindergarten system for Cuyahoga County, Case was commissioned to prepare a comprehensive and detailed analysis of child care capacity. That study found that the early care and education system in Cuyahoga County is diverse and has substantial capacity to meet the care needs of young children both currently and going into the future. The analysis considered care in five settings – Head Start, public preschool, private preschool, private childcare, and in two types of home settings – and for four age categories of children – infants (0-17 months), toddlers (18-35 months), preschoolers (3 – 5 years, not in kindergarten), and school-age (5 years, in kindergarten, to 10 years). The overall findings include:

- The population of young children (0-10) in Cuyahoga County is projected to decline by 6.7% between 2005 and 2010 (from 188,786 to 176,085). For preschool age children specifically (age 3-5, not in kindergarten), the decline over this period is projected to be 9.3% (to 33,755).
- As of the fall of 2005, among the 1,918 programs serving children in Cuyahoga County, 399 were center-based (Head Start, private child care), 195 were school-based (public preschool, private preschool) and 1,324 were home-based (Type A and B homes).
- Geographically, there are substantial variations across the County in regard to the ratio of current use of slots to the capacity, depending on the child age group and the type of slot. General areas of high ratios of slot use to existing capacity in Cuyahoga County are on the western and southern portions of the County and in portions of the eastern side of Cleveland and first-ring eastern suburbs.
- The projected slots needed vary substantially by neighborhood, based on slot-use data and Census-based estimates of need for early care slots (using family structure and work/school status of caregivers). For example, in regard to preschoolers, county-wide there are 6,875 slots currently vacant; yet, as many as 2,600 additional slots are projected to be needed based on Census data.
- Using data on participation rate by parents of universal pre-kindergarten slots in other locales (i.e., New Jersey, Oklahoma, and Georgia), the projected slot demand among 3-5 year olds county-wide could range from a slot surplus of approximately 300 to a slot gap of approximately 6,300 (assuming that all existing slots for this age group are considered to be eligible for UPK). (See figure below showing projections involving 100%, 75%, and 70% participation))

**UPK Demand Projections by Participation Rates
(3-5 year olds not yet in school)**



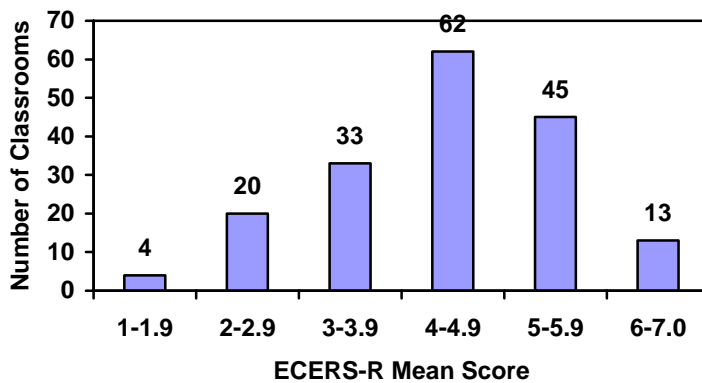
Child Care Quality Study

Rob Fischer, Liane Grayson, Donna Bryant, Ellen Peisner-Feinberg (forthcoming)

This research involves a two-component study of the quality of caregiving in early care and education settings in Cuyahoga County. The work examines the quality of caregiving in center-based programs and in home-based child care programs in Cuyahoga County. The goal is to understand the variations in the early care and education experiences of 3-to5 year olds in Cuyahoga County specifically to aid in plans aimed at improving the quality of care in order to meet Ohio pre-kindergarten standards.

Ultimately, these higher standards of early care and education should lead to a reduction in disparities in school readiness skills and help to improve the educational outcomes of children in the County.

In the study of center-based care, data were collected from a random sample of 177 center-based early care and education classrooms in the County. The design included a 3-4 hour observation by a trained data collector to assess classroom quality using two standardized measures - classroom practices (ECERS-R), and teacher sensitivity (CIS), and collection of program, classroom and teacher characteristics via Teacher and Director surveys. Overall, the average quality of center-based programs is in the medium range (4.3) but quality scores do vary (14% in low range, 54% in medium range, 33% in high range). See Chart below. Average quality was comparable across urban and suburban areas. In addition, the scores on the level of interaction between teachers and students seem higher than other areas.



In the study of home-based care, data were examined from a prior study of family child care in Cuyahoga County as well as quality rating data collected by technical assistance staff over 2000-2006 and supplied by Starting Point. These data suggest that the quality in family child care has increased somewhat in recent years. The data on higher quality providers (scoring 5 or above on the FDCRS) is likely more reliable given verification procedure used for this group. Finally, though many homes struggle with quality, the existing group of higher quality homes is sufficient (~200) to provide basis for inclusion in UPK planning.

Evaluation Moving Forward

The ongoing evaluation of the work of Invest in Children will continue the most useful aspects of the prior studies and expand in areas where new approaches are warranted. The evaluation will explicitly seek to build on strengths from first 7 years, such as continuing to add to the powerful child registry of all children born in County since 1992 and served by IIC and others, and solid experience in measuring parent and caregiver knowledge, attitudes, and behavior and the quality of care settings to which children are exposed. In addition, the evaluation will expand collection of data beyond caregivers to focus on measures of the children themselves, for example child development. Moreover, the evaluation will integrate more rigorous comparative evaluation designs as opportunities arise (e.g., roll-out of new services) than were used previously. Lastly, the next phase of the evaluation will seek to assess functioning of the system beyond simply the scope and reach of services, and work toward understanding the impact of IIC services through the implementation of longitudinal study of children. Collectively, these efforts will enhance the understanding of the effectiveness of the strategies of IIC and inform future program planning and development.

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Members of the Evaluation Team in 2006-2007

Claudia Coulton, Ph.D., Lillian F. Harris Professor and Co-Director, Center on Urban Poverty & Community Development

Rob Fischer, Ph.D., Research Associate Professor and Associate Director, Center on Urban Poverty & Community Development

Leila Jackson, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, School of Medicine

Liane Grayson, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate, Center on Urban Poverty & Community Development (now serving as consultant to the Center)

Paige Hardy, M.A., Research Assistant, Center on Urban Poverty & Community Development

Bob Herman, M.A., M.S.W., Research Assistant, Center on Urban Poverty & Community Development

Nina Lalich, M.S.P.H., Programmer/Analyst, Center on Urban Poverty & Community Development

Kristen Mikelbank, M.A., Research Assistant, Center on Urban Poverty & Community Development

Lisa Nelson, M.P.A., Associate Director, Center on Urban Poverty & Community Development (now Senior Advisor for Applied Research, Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland)

Shalay Murray, B.A., Research Assistant, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics

Curtis O'Neal, B.A., Administrative Coordinator, Center on Urban Poverty & Community Development

Jessie Rudolph, B.A., Secretary, Center on Urban Poverty & Community Development

Matt German-Lortie, B.S., Student Assistant, Center on Urban Poverty & Community Development

Carissa Lucas, B.A., Graduate Student Assistant, Center on Urban Poverty & Community Development

Karyn Wheeler, B.A., Student Assistant, Center on Urban Poverty & Community Development

Consultants

Donna M. Bryant, Ph.D., Senior Scientist, Frank Porter Graham Institute for Child Development, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Ellen Peisner-Feinberg, Ph.D., Senior Scientist, Frank Porter Graham Institute for Child Development, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Ellen Cyran, M.S., Senior Programmer/Analyst, Northern Ohio Data and Information Service, Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs, Cleveland State University

Mark Salling, Ph.D., Director, Northern Ohio Data and Information Service, Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs, Cleveland State University

Sharolyn Colley, independent contractor for child care center observations

Meg Fernando, M.A., independent contractor for data analysis

Vinaya Menon, M.A., independent contractor for child care center observations

Margaret Montano, B.S., independent contractor for child care center observations

Ellen Neebes, B.A., independent contractor for child care center observations

Jen Nichols, B.A., independent contractor for child care center observations

Cynthia Troutman, independent contractor for child care center observations

More information on the evaluation of IIC including reports on the studies described here are available at -

<http://povertycenter.case.edu> or
<http://www.investinchildren.cuyahogacounty.us>