

# **PERSPECTIVES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS: HIGHLIGHTS FROM INTERVIEWS OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN WASHINGTON STATE**

*Prepared at the request of*

*The Build Initiative and  
Washington's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative (ECCS)*

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*ORS gratefully acknowledges Jill Sells, M.D., Early Childhood Consultant, for her contributions to data collection and the preparation of this summary report.*

# I. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

At the request of the Build Initiative and Washington's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative (ECCS), researchers conducted interviews with twelve key stakeholders in early childhood systems in Washington (informants are listed in **Appendix A**). The purpose of these interviews was to reflect on early childhood systems-building in the state - "a quick look back and guidance for the future."<sup>1</sup> This final report will be shared with all informants, the national Build Initiative, the Washington State Build team and the lead for Washington's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems initiative.

Informants were selected because of their expertise and roles in early childhood systems-building in Washington. This report summarizes the issues raised and opinions expressed by the stakeholders interviewed. The purpose of this report is to help inform early childhood planning and systems building efforts in Washington, including, but not limited to, Build and ECCS. Clearly, there are important perspectives and opinions beyond those of the 12 stakeholders interviewed. This report is intended to be a starting point for early childhood systems planning and development efforts in early 2009.

# II. METHODOLOGY

A list of potential interviewees was compiled by the ECCS/Build leadership. Organizational Research Services contacted each individual to ascertain their willingness to participate. When permission was given, interviews were then scheduled with one of the researchers. Interviews were done by phone or in person to meet the needs of the interviewee. Researchers conducted the interview using a script (see **Appendix B**). All interviews were conducted in October 2008, prior to the November 4th election.

The five interview questions focused on key achievements, priorities that need more attention, key opportunities and barriers to progress related to early childhood systems building in Washington. The questions were intentionally open-ended and relatively non-specific. The goal was to obtain stakeholder's individual thoughts around their priorities, so that the information could be summarized and then analyzed to see whether common themes arose.

Interview Questions:

- In your opinion, what have been the key early childhood achievements in Washington in the last 1-2 years?
- What are important systems-building priorities in early childhood that aren't being addressed or that you think need more attention?
- Why do you think these aren't being given sufficient attention/funding? What have been barriers?

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<sup>1</sup> From the introduction script of the Interview Protocol.

- What do you think are key areas of opportunity for early childhood systems-building in Washington? Can you tell me about three areas of opportunity you see for the state?
- Thinking more specifically about current conditions in the state, what positive changes might be able to be accomplished in the short term? (What will make a difference and is also “do-able” in the short-term?)

Researchers took notes and submitted typed transcripts to ORS staff, who then compiled and analyzed the data to create this report. *Please note that any informant quotations are based on the written notes of researchers and are close, but not necessarily exact, quotations.*

### III. SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS, NEEDS, BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The data were first summarized as individual questions. The following table highlights the key points identified by stakeholders in each area. Given the diversity of perspectives and the long-term nature of systems-building work, it is not surprising that some areas identified as achievements also appeared as barriers or opportunities.

<b>STRENGTHS AND ACHIEVEMENTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State-level infrastructure development (e.g., DEL and Thrive by Five)</li> <li>• Successful collaboration among stakeholders (e.g., Early Learning Advocacy Alliance)</li> <li>• A broadened understanding of services and systems that support early childhood learning/development (e.g., to include health, mental health, family support, FFN care providers, to encompass 0-5, etc.)</li> <li>• Increased funding for early learning</li> <li>• Local early learning collaborations, including development of systems and services</li> </ul>
<b>AREAS THAT NEED MORE ATTENTION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication and coordination (e.g., at the state level among various agencies responsible for early childhood services, between state and local efforts, among local direct service providers, among stakeholders with different frameworks and definitions)</li> <li>• Services and supports that successfully support diverse populations (e.g., children and families using informal care; or families across the spectrum of risk levels or needs)</li> <li>• QRIS (e.g., ensuring that a QRIS has the intended impact on quality of care)</li> <li>• Parent engagement/parent leadership</li> <li>• Health (e.g., ensuring access to quality health care for kids with special needs)</li> <li>• Mental health/social emotional health (e.g., support for child care providers caring for children with behavioral problems)</li> <li>• Funding for early childhood services and systems</li> </ul>

<p><b>BARRIERS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of public awareness of the positive role that services and systems play in early childhood and lack of public will for investment in early childhood services</li> <li>• Lack of shared understanding of “early childhood system” and the breadth of possible areas to include (e.g., Is it a universal system or targeted? Does it focus on 0-5, 0-8 or pre-school?)</li> <li>• Diverse perspectives and different disciplines’ approaches to early childhood make it challenging to come to a common agreement about how best to impact early childhood and early learning (e.g., through early childhood education, through family support, through community organizing, etc.)</li> <li>• Challenges of the current economic context (e.g., simply preserving past achievements will be difficult)</li> <li>• Different perspectives about parenting and child development among different cultures</li> <li>• Difficulties associated with state level leadership and collaboration (e.g., a lack of clarity about roles, the pursuit of individual rather than common agendas, a lack of transparency and lack of attention to building collaborative relationships)</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance and continued development of the Early Learning Action Alliance</li> <li>• Better, simpler, clearer and more direct messages (create greater understanding and acceptance of the community and public roles related to early learning and child development. (e.g., data-driven, science-driven, visual and anecdotal messages)</li> <li>• Greater integration and coordination among systems and services at all levels</li> <li>• Increased parent engagement and parent leadership</li> <li>• Evaluation capacity-building</li> <li>• Using BUILD and other opportunities to learn from peer states and national experts</li> </ul>
<p><b>SHORT-TERM OPPORTUNITIES</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a statewide Early Learning Plan that includes a shared vision for an early learning system, a needs assessment, connection to existing services, and outcomes and indicators</li> <li>• Clarify partnership and collaborative roles among systems stakeholders</li> <li>• Increase coordination among existing services</li> <li>• Agree upon and pursue a handful of tangible and meaningful changes (e.g., reaching parents and families through primary care health providers; build upon existing systems like WIC; change the use of Child Care Development Block Grant funds)</li> <li>• Increase public understanding and public will regarding investments in early childhood and prevention</li> </ul>

## IV. ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS: OVERALL SYSTEM ISSUES AND SPECIFIC SYSTEM ELEMENTS

When the responses of interviewees were reviewed, some themes began to develop. Reflecting the diversity of perspectives and the complexity of the issues, stakeholder comments ranged between overall system issues and issues related to specific elements within the overall system. There are achievements, needs, barriers and opportunities related to both types of issues. The key overall and specific system issues that arose are identified in the table below. More detailed summaries of comments related to each of these are found in the following sections.

OVERALL SYSTEM ISSUES	SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF THE SYSTEM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System-level infrastructure, including leadership and collaboration</li> <li>• Definition of “the system” – the degree to which there is a shared vision of the overall system, the breadth and boundaries of the overall system</li> <li>• A statewide Early Learning Plan</li> <li>• Integration of and connections between service elements</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Monitoring progress, including indicators related to the system, to families and to children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocates</li> <li>• Public will</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Early learning/child care (including the resource and referral system, a quality rating system, quality improvement, and increased availability of and access to quality child care and early learning opportunities)</li> <li>• Family, friend and neighbor care (FFN)</li> <li>• Home visiting</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Mental health</li> <li>• Local systems development and their interaction with state-level systems</li> </ul>

## **A. OVERALL SYSTEM ISSUES**

Whether described as an achievement, a priority that needs attention, a barrier or an opportunity, the stakeholders we interviewed identified the following six overall system elements:

1. System-level infrastructure
2. Definition of the system
3. A statewide Early Learning Plan
4. Integration of and connections between service elements
5. Funding
6. Monitoring progress

These elements are related and inter-connected, and identified within the current context of Washington state's economic situation and political context. Many stakeholders identified the statewide Early Learning Plan and its development process as an opportunity to articulate these systems elements and suggested that similar efforts undertaken in other states could inform Washington's plan. (Note: the Department of Early Learning and the Early Learning Advisory Council were charged by the legislature to create an Early Learning Plan). Stakeholders' concern and uncertainty related to the budget shortfall ("In terms of opportunities right now, it's unclear.") was mitigated by optimism about low-cost/no-cost opportunities and chances to lay groundwork for post-recession systems change efforts. Several stakeholders expressed optimism that the state could make progress on collaborations, vision and infrastructure, even under unusual fiscal constraints. One informant said:

*"It's totally do-able to work out the partnership and collaborative roles among the players...(and) It's totally do-able to create an overarching shared vision and to identify what we mean by an early learning system...in two years"*

### **1) System-Level Infrastructure**

The formation of the Department of Early Learning (DEL) and Thrive by Five Washington (Thrive) stands out among informants as key achievements. The cabinet-level agency focused on early learning and a public-private venture with the support of the Gates Foundation and other private funders brought unprecedented attention to early childhood issues, along with a promise of systems-level change. Many informants greeted the recent selection of Nina Auerbach to become the new CEO of Thrive by Five with optimism and enthusiasm. The formation of the Early Learning Action Alliance, the Early Learning Advisory Council, and the P-20 Council were also identified as positive achievements in systems-building in Washington state. One informant said "We've done well keeping this bi-partisan in Washington."

Alongside those achievements and signs of progress, difficulties associated with leadership and collaboration among the new entities stand out as barriers to progress.

*“There are so many different pieces, programs that should be linked and integrated...there are lots of places where the energy has started, but figuring out how to coordinate and communicate is a challenge.”*

Stakeholders complain that “too many cooks in the kitchen,” a lack of clarity about roles, the pursuit of individual rather than common agendas, a lack of transparency, and lack of attention to relationships hindered the state’s progress in building an early learning system. One informant suggested that early learning stakeholders should “check their egos at the door...and share the kudos at the end.” Another said these new entities are still in the foundational process and that progress has taken longer than everyone expected.

Despite these barriers, stakeholders are optimistic. They are hopeful about the new leadership at Thrive by Five Washington and hopeful about the state Early Learning Plan. Many suggest the importance of immediately taking the opportunity to “look at all the players and figure out how those players work in collaboration and coordination.” Another said, “either a lead group or a collaborative approach would be fine. It just needs to be clear, and commonly understood.”

## **2) Definition of the System**

*“I’m not clear that we’re all taking about the same thing when we say ‘systems change.’”*

Informants expressed uncertainty about the definition and boundaries of an early childhood system. Questions raised included the need for, or relationship between, universal and targeted systems and services; the ages included in “early childhood;” and the range of services and systems included in discussions about early childhood systems.

Some stakeholders heralded the expansion of early childhood systems thinking beyond child care – inclusive of family support, mental health, family friend and neighbor care, etc. – as a great success. However, comments related to this theme largely identified the lack of a shared vision of “the system” as a barrier and something that needs attention. One said, “We don’t have a true early learning, early childhood development system. We need an overarching vision of the ‘system’....and a shared understanding of [what we’re trying to bring about].” Another, hopeful that local communities could build on past accomplishments, said, “if we had a shared vision, locals would have a larger vision and framework...Kids Matter has provided this in the vacuum,” but, they went on to say, a vision shared by the new early childhood leadership would help local early childhood stakeholders “feel more secure” and in alignment with statewide efforts.

Input from one stakeholder provides a detailed example of the complexity, and thus the need for a “big vision:”

*“There are several doors through which you can enter the early learning/early childhood/child development field:*

- Early childhood education door - formal settings, licensed child care, preschool.
- Community development door - how do you make the community safe for families? How do you build up the community in areas where you have lots of risk factors?
- Family support door – work with parents, because if we help parents that will change everything else.
- Child development door - focus on the child in the context of the family and in the context of the community, and focusing on child outcomes.

*We have to decide where we're entering, what we're doing in WA. If we want a comprehensive, holistic picture that includes all of the doors, then the question becomes where do we put our emphasis within that comprehensive picture? Those are the conversations that I think we need to have."*

### **3) A Statewide Early Learning Plan**

Some informants specifically discussed the (legislatively mandated) Early Learning Plan. Others expressed desires for elements and products of a comprehensive plan, such as clear early learning priorities, a thoughtful policy agenda and an assessment and common understanding of both what currently exists and what needs to be changed or built. In their different ways, stakeholders described a need to compare the current reality to the vision of an early childhood system, and to identify the steps to get from here to there in a comprehensive plan.

*"(We need to take) the time to really be sure we have a shared understanding of what the systems and infrastructure that exist today are, and that we really have a common understanding of what we're trying to change."*

Many see a needs assessment as a necessary step to developing a much-needed plan that incorporates a range of strategies (e.g., impacting public perceptions, advocating for legislative change, working with communities) into staged priorities, perhaps guided by some state-level "policy-only entity, that sets priorities for state, local communities, etc."

The formation and work of the Early Learning Action Alliance (ELAA) are viewed as a strength and an achievement, a successful collaboration across traditionally siloed interests. ELAA has agreed on a short-term policy agenda, and is in the process of completing a 10 year policy vision and plan. ELAA will be "extremely useful," according to stakeholders.

Some stakeholders view the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) of DEL, and its mandate to develop a statewide early learning plan optimistically. Others expressed some skepticism, "ELAC and the P-20 Council...don't feel connected to what is actually going on. ELAC...only meets four times a year and only 25% of the people come. So in terms of creating a statewide plan, that's very ambitious and they may not be able to do it."

Stakeholders hope for a plan that goes beyond any one agency.

*“I want to distinguish between a plan as it might be conceptualized and implemented by DEL according to the statutory requirements, and something that is less linked with DEL and more articulating the vision for early childhood, that creates lots of different roles and opportunities for participation and support by lots of different entities.”*

Stakeholders noted that over the past few years there has been a lot of work and energy related to specific elements (such as home visiting or QRIS) but a vision of how these areas fit into an overall plan is lacking.

#### **4) Integration of and Connections Between Service Elements**

Communication and coordination among different systems-building efforts (like the P-20 Council and ELAC) and among the different early learning systems elements (like health and mental health; or child abuse and neglect prevention and parent support) are on stakeholders’ system-building “to do” list.

*“(There are) so many different pieces, programs that should be linked and integrated. (For example,) DOH does lots of things (related to early learning) and there is no statewide mechanism to harness those.”*

*“There has not been a good mechanism of how we work together and integrate the work that’s being done at the statewide level, so we can all benefit and leverage what we’ve got.”*

*“DEL was established to try to focus on (communication and coordination). It hasn’t got there yet.”*

Integration and collaboration are seen as areas of short term opportunity to make progress, integrating efforts to achieve greater impact at less cost.

#### **5) Funding**

*“We don’t have a mechanism for financing early learning. If we don’t have that, the rest is a moot point.”*

In the area of funding for early learning systems and services, stakeholders identified the involvement of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; the expansion of home visiting and the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP); and the state’s award of the federal Project Launch grant as positive developments over the past few years. Current state funding challenges will likely impact systems-building activities. Longer-term funding challenges related to early learning are ever-present in some stakeholders’ thoughts.

## 6) Monitoring Progress

*“One really crucial thing is our own awareness of the important data pieces across the spectrum....There are pieces like Casey and the UW do in KIDS COUNT data, but that doesn’t focus on zero-to-five.”*

Several stakeholders suggested that indicators and performance measures related to early childhood systems are an area of need and opportunity. Stakeholders described the benefits of collecting data on indicators that are consistent across all communities; that describe child well-being across a spectrum of physical, social/emotional, educational, familial and community issues; and that provide relevant information for program and policy change. Stakeholders noted the need for data at multiple levels: system, families and children.

More than one stakeholder pointed out the connection between early childhood indicators and a shared vision for early childhood systems in the state. One said to identify indicators and performance measures “you have to say, ‘indicators and performance measures of what?’ So, hopefully that will lead to creating a shared vision, so that we can identify what outcomes we want (and) identify indicators and performance measures for those outcomes.”

Some informants observe increased momentum supporting the identification of early childhood indicators and performance measures for Washington. One identified three factors merging to create this increased momentum:

- A group of legislators and public/private partners participated in the National Symposium on Early Childhood Science and Policy at Harvard University in June 2008. Among other positive developments, they returned particularly motivated to work on early childhood indicators.
- The Department of Early Learning and the Early Learning Advisory Council are required to produce a state early learning plan, and they are talking about the inclusion of early childhood indicators.
- The state Department of Health will be applying to participate in Phase 3 of the federal Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grant. That grant will require an increased focus on early childhood indicators across a spectrum of relevant areas of development, systems and services.

## B. SPECIFIC SYSTEM ELEMENTS

As described above, many comments and opinions expressed by the early childhood stakeholder informants focused on an overall system that organizes and connects different early childhood services and system elements (or the lack of, need for and/or opportunity to create such a system). Stakeholders also discussed particular elements of such a system and the strengths, achievements, needs and opportunities related to those elements, and those are summarized here. Specific elements of early childhood systems discussed were (in no particular order):

1. Advocates
2. Public will
3. Parents
4. Early learning/child care (including the resource and referral system, a quality rating system, quality improvement and increased availability of and access to quality child care and early learning opportunities).
5. Family, Friend and Neighbor care (FFN)
6. Home visiting
7. Health
8. Mental health
9. Local systems development and their interaction with state-level systems

Stakeholder comments related to each of these areas are briefly summarized below.

### **1) Advocates**

The formation of the Early Learning Action Alliance (ELAA) and the work of that group clearly emerged as a positive achievement and hopeful sign for future progress. Stakeholders recognize the challenges associated with creating such an alliance, see the positive utility of ELAA, and expressed both optimism about ELAA's potential and concern about the unusual pressure the fiscal crisis will place on this advocacy collaboration.

### **2) Public Will**

Informants recognized positive achievements in the past few years related to attracting “unusual suspects”—for example new allies among business leaders and law enforcement—to early learning and receiving increased media coverage of early learning issues. However an ongoing need for increased understanding of early learning and willingness to act among the general public and policymakers emerged as a strong theme. Several stakeholders suggest that there is an ongoing need to shift cultural norms to create greater understanding and acceptance of the community and public roles related to early learning and child development. Others see parallels between early childhood and efforts to create greater understanding, actions and investment in prevention in general. Several see a need for better, simple, clear and direct messages. They suggest exploring data-driven, science-driven, visual and anecdotal messages. Public will is seen by some as essential to effectively addressing the overall funding issue.

### **3) Parents/Parent Engagement, Involvement and Leadership**

Many stakeholders discussed needed changes related to the engagement of parents in early learning, both in their direct parental roles, and as parent participants in systems-building efforts. Some noted achievements in this area related to DEL's partnerships with CHILD Profile, FEL and Talaris. Stakeholder comments, however, revealed diverse perceptions of the role of parents

and desired directions for their role in an early childhood system. Some reflect a perception of parents as an important means to create changes for children, often characterized by messages that parents are children's first and most important teachers. One comment reflecting that perception was: "How do you sensitively and respectfully guide parents from a variety of backgrounds and belief systems (to do) what academics think they need to do to support their children?" Another suggested that finding ways to prevent, diagnose and treat parent depression is an important element of early childhood systems.

Other comments reflect a perception of parents as potential (and essential) partners in systems-building.

*"We keep creating institutions and processes without vehicles for parent voices."*

They recognize that parents in this role have different needs, styles and cultures than many of the other systems partners at the table. For example, "The kind of systems/institutions we have in place have not been traditionally organized to facilitate parent leadership and engagement. When do we talk about systems development? We meet in the middle of the day, when parents are working...it's really counter-productive to bringing parents to the table." And, "It's also cultural. ...parents come in all shapes/sizes/forms/cultures. Some cultures are not as oriented towards putting forth big fat documents full of difficult words as a way to express their desires."

#### **4) Early Learning/Child Care**

Specific issues within the topic of Early Learning/Child care included:

- QRIS (Quality Rating and Improvement System)
- Quality improvement of child care and early learning settings (including professional development)
- Increased availability of quality child care/early learning slots
- R&R system/child care providers

The expansion, funding, and quality improvements for ECEAP; the transformation of the Child Care Resource and Referral system; the "statutory framework" for QRIS, and increased subsidies for child care were seen as achievements. Continued work on QRIS, professional development, K-12 linkages, oversight of part-time pre-schools, and a national conversation about the Child Care Development Block Grant were identified as priorities and/or opportunities.

#### **5) Family Friend and Neighbor Care (FFN)**

Washington's achievements and recognition related to FFN care are seen as positive progress over the past several years. Through the support of Kids Matter and Build, local communities were able to pilot FFN programs with the support of state FFN leaders. These developments attracted additional public and private investment in FFN.

The new money and increased understanding of FFN were seen as achievements and also as ongoing needs. Increased understanding of where kids are cared for, why their families have chosen informal care, and what contributes to quality early learning in informal care settings are identified as information needs.

## **6) Home Visiting**

The recent expansion of evidence-based home visiting services for at-risk children was identified as a key achievement and is perceived to have bi-partisan interest. Stakeholders also discussed home visiting in the context of finding effective ways to reach all parents.

## **7) Health**

Comments related to health reflected some different views of the relationship between health and early childhood systems, and the boundaries of early childhood systems work.

Some stakeholders addressed access to high quality health care as an element of an early learning system. One identified progress on “Cover All Kids” as a positive achievement; others believe that integrating health into an early childhood systems is an important “to do.” Another honed in on the specific population of children with special needs and the need for quality care, support, and early intervention. Another pointed out health care access disparities between urban and rural areas of the state.

Addressing health from a different angle, some stakeholders identified health care settings and primary care providers as potentially effective and cost-efficient delivery methods for early learning messages (e.g., delivering printed materials about children’s development and learning and/or actively modeling desired parenting behaviors, etc.).

## **8) Mental Health**

While several stakeholders discussed early childhood systems and mental health, they expressed diverse ideas and revealed different perspectives on mental health and early childhood.

From a systems perspective, one stakeholder identified having an early learning stakeholder group in the Mental Health Transformation project as a positive accomplishment. Others discussed the need for early identification of very young children’s mental health issues paired with appropriate referrals, access to care, and access to family support. One said that supporting very young children in adverse circumstances (e.g., CPS-involved home, foster care or other) is the “next horizon.”

Others discussed the importance of positive social-emotional development within the context of early learning: “Social-emotional learning...is a competency, not something magical, and it doesn’t require a mental health therapist. Teachers can attend to social-emotional development just like they can attend to reading and math.”

Finally, some stakeholders discussed the mental health of parents and framed women's health and mental health as primary prevention strategies for young children's learning and well-being.

## **9) Local Systems Development and Interaction with State-level Systems**

Informants lauded successful examples of local work (some attributing much of that success to the Kids Matter framework) and some believe that community-level work offers key shorter term opportunities for achievements.

Stakeholders acknowledged the need to balance “policies, resources and practices so that what you get across the whole state is something with which each community can align, based on the specific characteristics, needs and context of that community.”

# APPENDIX A: INFORMANTS

1. Vaughnetta Barton, Foundation for Early Learning
2. Brenda Blasingame, Thrive by Five Washington
3. Elizabeth Bonbright Thompson, Resource & Referral Network
4. David Brenna, Mental Health Transformation Project
5. Leslie Dozono, Children's Alliance
6. Leslie Goldstein, Washington State Governor's Office
7. Lorrie Grevstad, Washington State Department of Health Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative
8. Maxine Hayes, Washington State Department of Health
9. Ruth Kagi, Washington State Legislature
10. Amie Lapp Payne, Department of Early Learning
11. Joan Sharp, Council for Children & Families
12. Bob Watt, Civic Volunteer

# APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

## Fall 2008 Build System-Builders Interview Guide

(Finalized October 8, 2008)

### Notes for interviewer:

- Interview should last 30 minutes (as requested by email)
- All interviewers will be provided with a list of informants with unique codes assigned to each informant. Please use the unique informant code, rather than the name of the informant, on all interview notes, tapes, summaries, etc.

### Intro Script:

- Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, I am working with Organizational Research Services (known as ORS), on behalf of the Build Initiative and the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative. This conversation should last about 30 minutes.
- The purpose of this interview is not to evaluate Build/ECCS efforts (though ORS does serve as evaluator for BUILD and ECCS), but rather to look at early childhood systems-building in the state overall. We're looking for a quick look back and guidance for the future. Because of your expertise and role in early childhood systems-building in Washington, we would like to speak with you to learn more about your perspectives on this topic.
- **Please read - relates to human subjects:** There are 10 potential interviewees for this project. The data summary will list the names of interviewees, however individual responses will be kept confidential and will not be associated with a specific name within the summary. We may use individual quotes in the summary. If we do, the individual who provided the quote will not be identified, and will be given the opportunity to review the quote before it is used. We will strive to present findings in ways that maximize confidentiality. However, if you express views or perspectives known to be unique, it may be possible for others to identify your input. *You are free to limit your answers or choose not to answer any questions that could potentially raise politically sensitive issues, or that you otherwise prefer not to answer.*
- The data summary will be shared with those who were interviewed, and with members of the national and state Build teams. It will also be shared with the funder, the Department of Health. Recordings and transcripts of this interview will not be associated with your name or other identifying information.

- I will be asking 5 questions to learn what you think about early childhood systems building efforts over the last 2-3 years, and about the future of those efforts looking ahead to 2009.
- **If applicable:** If it is okay with you, I would also like to tape-record this phone conversation to make sure I accurately hear your comments. Is it okay with you if I begin tape recording?
- By “Early Childhood Systems” I mean a coordinated system of programs, policies and services that respond to the needs of children and families. I don’t have a particular set of elements in mind (there are several different frameworks defining elements), but some examples of early childhood systems elements include governance, professional development, quality standards and financing that support programs, policies and services related to health and mental health, early learning, family support and early intervention.

**Interview Questions:**

- I. In your opinion, what have been the key early childhood achievements in Washington in the last 1-2 years?
- II. What are important systems-building priorities in early childhood that aren’t being addressed or that you think need more attention?
- III. Why do you think these aren’t being given sufficient attention/funding? What have been barriers?
- IV. What do you think are key areas of opportunity for early childhood systems-building in Washington? Can you tell me about three areas of opportunity you see for the state?
- V. Thinking more specifically about current conditions in the state, what positive changes might be able to be accomplished in the short term? (What will make a difference and is also “do-able” in the short-term?)