

Ounce of Prevention Fund
Grant Interim Report to the Oscar G. and Elsa S. Mayer Family Foundation

- 1. Refer back to the table completed in your Request for Proposal (Section IV, Outcomes and Evaluation) and provide a brief summary on the overall progress for the project and each major outcome listed in the table.**

In December 2010, the Oscar G. and Elsa S. Mayer Family Foundation awarded the Ounce of Prevention Fund a generous \$100,000 grant to support the Educare Intervention Model Project at Educare of Chicago and our Center-Based Training Institute. Over the last seven months, we have expanded our Intervention Model Project at Educare and incorporated lessons from this work to successfully inform the design and pilot of our Training Institute. Highlights of our progress across each initiative are provided below.

Educare Intervention Model Project:

Objective 1: Expand the use of data-driven interventions for children at Educare. Over the past few months, we have expanded the Project at Educare by developing a uniform approach to identify children at greatest risk for poor school readiness outcomes. This approach uses a comprehensive set of data that includes health, cognitive, and environmental/family factors. We are working with staff to use this data to inform the following individualized strategies and interventions at the earliest opportunity:

- Therapeutic Play Group: Eight children were systematically selected to participate in Educare's therapeutic play group at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year based on concerns about their behavior (e.g. separation anxiety, aggression, lack of ability to verbalize emotions, etc.). *By the end of the school year, seven of the eight children were displaying developmentally-appropriate social-emotional skills, as measured by the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA).* The one child whose DECA scores did not improve continues to receive additional support in the classroom and one-on-one sessions with Educare's Special Education Teacher.
- Special Education Screenings/Referrals: *During the 2010-11 school year, 28 children were referred to special education screenings.* As a result of these screenings, four infants and toddlers received an Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP) and seven preschoolers received an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Both plans provide children with Chicago Public Schools Instructional Classroom and Blended Classroom services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language services, developmental therapy, social work, and counseling services. Educare's Special Education Teacher is working with classroom teachers to support children who were referred for an IFSP and IEP but are ineligible. These children are receiving individualized classroom instruction to support their development of self-help, interpersonal, communication, motor coordination, and cognition skills.

Objective 2: Support teachers and parents in effectively fostering children's healthy development and school readiness. As mentioned above, this year we implemented an interdisciplinary process to identify children at risk for poor developmental outcomes. As part of this process, Educare leadership and research staff partnered with classroom teachers and Family Support Staff to use data for making intervention decisions. In addition, we continued to provide families with more opportunities to support children's learning at home. As part of these efforts, we launched our Parent Discussion Group this year to provide families with information and a forum to dialogue and learn from each other different strategies to effectively support their children's growth and learning. We successfully held two of these Groups this year – one in fall 2010 and a second in spring 2011 – each of which was attended by approximately 12 parents.

Center-Based Training Institute:

Objective 1: Expand the cadre of qualified, birth-to-three experts to deliver ongoing training and technical assistance to programs participating in the Center-Based Training Institute. We identified five consultants to work with programs during the Training Institute's pilot phase. While these consultants have experience

in working with infant-toddler programs, they received intensive training over several months on the Ounce's relationship-based approach to technical assistance, including the use of video in reflective practice. The consultants were also involved in the design of the Institute's training modules, which leveraged their prior knowledge, and increased their understanding of, enthusiasm for, and fidelity to our approach.

Objective 2: Implement and evaluate a pilot phase of the Center-Based Training Institute with a small group of programs that will receive enhanced training and technical assistance on the use of data-driven practices. In 2010 we launched a two-year planning and pilot process to conceptualize and design our Training Institute. This included: (1) an in-depth literature review to help us determine the evidence-based practices and components of high-quality early childhood education to include in our training and technical assistance model; (2) productive discussions with a broad range of stakeholders; and (3) focus groups with center-based program staff that yielded valuable information. In combination, our meetings and the literature review helped to inform our development of a unique approach to technical assistance and training that we believe will effectively help early childhood teachers working in center-based settings and enhance child outcomes.

Eleven programs applied last fall to participate in the Training Institute's first pilot phase, and we used an extensive selection process to assess organizational capacity and structure to determine programs that are best positioned to successfully participate in the pilot. We launched a year-long pilot of our Training Institute with four geographically- and ethnically-diverse programs in January 2011: Trinity UCC Child Care Centers, Inc. (Washington Heights); Children's Center for Creative Learning (Ashburn); El Hogar del Nino (Pilsen); and Children's Home and Aid – Schaumburg. Our pilot is directly impacting participating classrooms at these centers, totaling *141 infants and toddlers*, and *56 teachers, staff and administrators*. In addition, as program administrators and supervisors will be participating in the many trainings and peer learning opportunities, we believe that the knowledge and skills they gain will positively impact non-participating classrooms at these centers that comprise *an additional 84 children* from birth to age three, and *six teachers and staff*.

The goal of the pilot is to help these early childhood programs improve child outcomes through a relationship-based and reflective approach that focuses on four key areas: (1) responsive care giving; (2) family engagement; (3) systems of staff; and (4) program development. Since January, 56 pilot participants have received 21 hours of training and coaching from an experienced consultant. We are pleased that initial feedback from the participating programs has been quite positive. Moreover, there has been interest in our model from the Illinois State Board of Education and the Chicago Public Schools and we are optimistic that public funding may be able to largely sustain the Training Institute over the long term.

2. Share any unanticipated developments, changes or challenges your project and organization have experienced.

We continued to refine the implementation of the Educare Intervention Model Project this year, by adding the Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment. This evaluation uses observation, documentation, and reporting to gauge children's development across the areas of social-emotional, language, literacy, math, and cognitive development. We believe the addition of the GOLD will strengthen our pool of data for determining interventions and services for Educare children and their families.

In addition, the assessments for the Center-Based Training Institute confirmed the need for additional supports beyond formal training to achieve desired change in teacher practices. As such, we are planning to extend the original model of our Training Institute beyond a year – as originally envisioned – to include another six to twelve months of support to pilot sites. We believe regular intervals of coaching and reflection would help ensure that teachers are implementing and sustaining best practices for effectively promoting growth and learning among low-income children.