



## 2024-25 READY BY FIVE FUNDED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Thirty-one early childhood programs and services were awarded funding for the Oct 1, 2024 – Sept. 30, 2025, fiscal year. Below is a description of all programs, divided by service area and program categories.

### -- OUTREACH AND NAVIGATION --

Ready by Five millage funding has allowed for the creation of an Outreach and Navigation network by developing a multi-agency strategy to reach and engage families in a coordinated way. Outreach aims to increase the usage of early childhood programs and community resources by engaging future parents and families with young children who are not currently involved or aware of available services. As needs are identified, navigation helps address barriers to accessing services, information, and resources.

- Family Futures Connections Program helps families track their child's milestones at home through developmental screenings and then provides monthly activities and age-specific materials to promote the child's learning and growth. Through Connections, each family can also access a Family Support Navigator to answer questions about their child's development and connect the family to community resources.
- Through an extensive network of community partnerships, Health Net of West Michigan, offers outreach, consultation, and care coordination to ensure parents fully access community resources for basic needs, health care, and early childhood programs.

Child Care Navigation through Kent ISD works with community partners to direct families to find the child care that's right for them. Child care navigators discuss needs and preferences with families and then direct them to quality, licensed child care providers that match the criteria have current availability.

### -- EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS --

High-quality early learning experiences nurture a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Programs in this area ensure all children have access to quality learning opportunities and to build literacy and language skills. Multiple programs are offered to ensure groups are available to families living in all areas of Kent County.

**Play and Learn Communities** guide parents and/or caregivers with young children through group and individual play activities that build an understanding of child development. Ready by Five Play and Learn providers include:

- Little Learners playgroups are for caregivers, parents, of children ages 0-5. Groups are offered through partnerships with child care providers (family, relative, licensed homes), schools, and community-based settings. The Little Learners programming integrates child development strategies along with literacy enhancements into a play-based context that nurtures a child's cognitive, language, literacy, social and emotional development. This program is run by [Vibrant Futures](#).
- Therapeutic Play and Learn Groups are inclusive playgroups offering activities that are tailored to nurture the development of all children – including children ages 0-5 with a developmental disability. Groups are facilitated by trained pediatric therapists from across a variety of disciplines that ensure caregivers and parents are equipped with the knowledge and skills to better understand how to support their child's growth at home. This is a program of the [Comprehensive Therapy Center](#).
- Play and Learn GRCC groups are collaborative, community-based playgroups that strengthen the skills of parents and caregivers using household materials and daily routines to support their child's developmental milestones. Playgroups include materials and activities that support approaches to learning, language and literacy, creative arts, math, science, social studies, and technology. These play-to-learn groups are run by [Grand Rapids Community College](#).
- Bright Beginnings offers playgroups throughout Kent County to foster social connections and build community among families in three primary areas: parent-child interaction, development-centered parenting, and family wellbeing. Playgroups offer an organized setting for families to interact with one another, share common experiences, learn about child development, and best of all, learn through play. [Bright Beginnings](#) is a program of Kent ISD.

### -- HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS --

Healthy Development programs focus on improving the lives of families in Kent County through healthier pregnancies and births, overall child health and well-being, and ensuring children are developmentally on track.

**Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR)** provides insight and understanding of the factors that contribute to infant mortality, as well as understanding the factors that contribute to the disparities with mortality rates among babies of different race and ethnicities.

- The Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) is a collective community effort working to ensure Kent County is addressing the social, equity, economic, and health factors that contribute to healthy births in Kent County. [The Kent County Health Department](#) leads

the action-oriented FIMR to bring together local health providers, parents, advocates, and leaders.

**Developmental, Social Emotional Screening and Referral** – Programming promotes positive social emotional development that also ensures that children have regular developmental screenings to identify concerns as early as possible as well as follow-up referrals to services, and information.

- Arbor Circle's [Keep Early Education Positive](#) (KEEP) behavioral health supports partners with parents, teachers, and child care providers when children aged 0-5 face challenges in child care or preschool. The program provides intervention and support that promotes positive social-emotional development and ensures successful early learning experiences.
- Arbor Circle's [Infant Toddler Developmental Services](#) (ITDS) provides home-based support and clinical interventions to families with young children to build strength and skills, increase bonding between the parent and child, and create a sense of emotional security within the family. Through counseling and other hands-on interventions, parents learn more about themselves and their children and receive guidance for various behavioral concerns and parental issues.

**Niche Family Supports.** Each specialized family support service has experience in reaching out and helping families in unique situations. They support families who may not typically be reached through regular programs and who could benefit from culturally responsive or specialized services.

- Bethany Christian Service's [Hands Connected Program](#) offers Early Childhood Navigation. This program connects children and families with a Refugee Navigator, who provides comprehensive support to families recently resettled in the United States. The Navigator welcomes these families and guides them to available community resources.
- Families with children who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness are connected with Early Childhood Specialists who ensure that families with young children are connected to early-childhood-specific resources and trauma-informed support. This service is provided by [Family Promise of West Michigan](#).
- The PlaygroundGR uses play therapy and theraplay-based research models to support ongoing healing through weekly strategies and tools in pre-K and child care settings. The program focuses on various play therapy strategies, addressing brain stem, midbrain, limbic, and cortical levels of play. It is designed to meet the community's need for trauma-informed and mental health-focused play therapy.
- The YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids offers the Child and Family Advocate Program to families of children in early childhood education programs in partnership with Grand

Rapids Community College, Hispanic Center of West Michigan, Refugee Education Center, and Steepletown Neighborhood Services. Child and Family Advocates offer programming that is co-located within early education classrooms that provides culturally responsive assessments, individualized goal setting with families, intentional community resource referrals, and family engagement opportunities.

- Family Support Services through the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan works with expectant mothers and parents with young children. There is a focus on the whole family as they assess social determinants of health needs, address barriers to accessing resources by guiding families through complex systems.

**Environmental Home Health.** Environmental health hazards in the home can contribute to elevated blood lead levels in young children and expecting parents, which can lead to birth defects, delays, and more. These Ready by Five providers work to educate families on how to prevent lead exposure by identifying hazards as early as possible while also supporting families who have a child with confirmed elevated levels of lead in their system.

- Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan provides an in-home screening to identify possibly sources for lead, poor air quality, and accidental injury risk, with a trained Healthy Housing Specialist. Families are provided with education, supplies to reduce exposure to the hazard(s) in the home, and referrals to other community organizations as needed.
- Kent County Health Department offers comprehensive Lead Inspection Risk Assessments that confirm the source of lead hazards in a home. If lead-based hazards are found, professionals connect residents with financial resources help with home hazard repairs. Services are available to families in owner-occupied or rental homes. Funding also supports community education and increasing awareness around the dangers of lead paint throughout Kent County.
- Kent County Health Department also offers a Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. This program provides nursing case management and health services for children with elevated blood lead levels. Nurses are trained to visit with families at their home to discuss ways to help lower their child's elevated blood lead level.

**Healthy Development - Network Training and Education.** Training opportunities are offered to all service professionals funded by Ready by Five and their direct supervisors to cultivate a network that is responsive to the needs of families and young children in Kent County.

- Health Net of West Michigan's Care Model Training Series© teaches core skills for frontline staff delivering care to families with young children. The model is centered on equity and empowerment with a structured approach that equips professionals to improve client engagement and access to services.

## -- PARENTING EDUCATION AND SUPPORT --

Parent Education and Support programming ensures parents have the knowledge and skills to support their children's health, development, and learning. Services provide in-home and/or community-based support and education. Programs offer parent education through home visiting as well as ancillary support that addresses the preventable causes of infant and child mortality.

**Home Visiting Services** offer parents support and information from trained professionals, such as nurses or parent educators. Appointments occur in your home or any comfortable meeting place that is requested by the family. Ready by Five funds multiple programs that ensure a continuum of support across all ages and community needs is met. Millage-funded Home Visiting programs include:

- Ready by Five funding enhances Cherry Health's Maternal Infant Health Program (MIHP) by offering additional nutrition and lactation consultation for expecting and new parents. Services are provided by a team and can be offered in the home, office, or community setting. Parents must be a current patient with Cherry Health to participate. (Prenatal - 2 years old)
- Corewell Health's Strong Beginnings offers support, education, discussion groups, counseling, breastfeeding cafes, and referrals for pregnant and postpartum Black and Latinx persons to promote racial equity in maternal and child health. A fatherhood initiative offers services to male partners. Services are offered at home or other locations convenient to clients by culturally responsive community health workers. (Prenatal - 2 years old)
- MomsBloom's Postpartum Support program provides hands-on and emotional support to parents after they bring home a newborn. Services are available to all families throughout Kent County. (Birth – 6 months old)
- The Early Childhood Attachment program at D.A. Blodgett - St. John's serves caregivers and their young children to strengthen the parent-child relationship and promote healthy development. This service facilitates opportunities for parent-child interaction and play; guidance in regard to child development; and provides specialized supportive counseling for biological, foster, kinship, and adoptive families. Services are available to all families throughout Kent County. (Prenatal – 5 years old)
- Kent ISD's Bright Beginnings Home Visiting program provides proven methods that help caregivers understand their child's early development, identify possible developmental concerns, and build a foundation for later academic success. Services are available to all families throughout Kent County. (Prenatal – 5 years old)

- Corewell Health's Baby Scholars is an 11-week home visiting program designed to support parents as they teach their children, specifically African American and Latinx families in the City of Grand Rapids. A certified Parent Coach will come to the home weekly and show how positive parent and child interactions can help the baby's language, social, and brain development. (Birth – 3 years old)
- The Little Scholars Program, brought to you by Vibrant Futures, is a one-on-one coaching service for parents and caregivers with young children in their homes. Little Scholars focuses on supporting parents and caregivers in understanding the power of responsive parenting, providing positive interactions and knowledge of their child's development. Services are available to all families throughout Kent County. (Birth – 5 years old)

### **Translation and Interpretation Services**

Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funds translation and interpretation for programs supported by the millage. Bethany Christian Services and the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan provide written translation and interpreters for phone and video calls with families or in-person meetings.