

Illinois State Board of Education Birth to 3 Prevention Initiative Program Monitoring

“The goal of this project is to improve home visiting program practices throughout the state, leading to better well-being among children and stronger parent-child relationships that support healthy development.”

— Jon Korfmacher, Ph.D., principal investigator for the ISBE program monitoring project

Erikson Institute researchers are studying all home visiting programs for children from birth to age 3 funded by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to better understand aspects that work well and where improvements can be made. The five-year study, which began in the fall of 2014, uses a quality measurement tool developed by Dr. Korfmacher to explore the effectiveness of in-home programs that make it possible for at-risk families to access parenting support and community services to help improve the social-emotional health of young children.

Responding to a Need

Before collaborating with Erikson, ISBE did not have a process to monitor program quality and provide feedback to the home visiting programs it funds. ISBE chose to partner with Erikson and fund its work based on Erikson’s reputation and expertise in the field of child development and the research experience of its faculty and staff, including Erikson’s earlier work for ISBE evaluating the agency’s Early Childhood Block Grant initiatives. The experiences of families and outcomes of children can vary dramatically from program to program throughout the state. Through this research, Erikson is collecting data that will help determine why and what changes can be made so the programs can become more effective.

Quick Facts

- The five-year study is the **first comprehensive initiative** to monitor the quality of all home visiting programs that receive ISBE funding. It is aimed at **improving program practices**.
- The home visiting programs serve children from birth to 3 and families **across Illinois**.
- The initiative’s principal investigator is Dr. Jon Korfmacher, an **internationally renowned expert** on home visiting programs and research.
- Erikson was chosen to lead the study based on the research **experience** of its staff and faculty and its **leadership** in the field of child development.

Erikson's Unique Approach

Because the intention of home visiting programs is to strengthen family relationships, provide avenues to access resources, and ultimately help young children thrive on a social-emotional level, an understanding of child development in the context of family, culture, and society is important in evaluating their effectiveness. Not only is Erikson a leader in the field of early childhood, but Dr. Korfmacher is internationally renowned for his research on home visiting, having consulted on programs in South America and Europe in addition to his studies of programs in the United States.

What is the Impact?

ISBE's more than 150 home visiting programs for families with children from birth to age 3 span the state of Illinois. Programs are required to focus services on families with children considered most at-risk for later school failure and in greatest need of help and support. Most of these families are low-income, and many also struggle with other issues, including teen parenting, housing instability, mental health challenges, and illiteracy.

Looking Ahead

The programs that are part of this initiative represent the largest network of home visiting programs in Illinois that are being evaluated using a single quality measurement tool. The initiative also is the first widespread use of Dr. Korfmacher's home visiting quality measurement system, which could be used in the future as a model to evaluate other programs in Illinois and elsewhere.