

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE

1:00pm, EDT

Thursday, January 6, 2011

### **Infant Toddler Awareness Day Event Focuses on School Readiness**

AUGUSTA, Maine (January 6, 2011) — A new report on how Maine’s youngest children fare in terms of readiness for school is being presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Infant Toddler Awareness Day event at the State House in Augusta.

Birth to age 5 is a critical period for a child’s future development. Maine is doing well in some respects but falls behind in others when it comes to addressing the needs of children during their early years, according to the report issued by the Maine Children’s Alliance (MCA) on behalf of the Maine Children’s Growth Council.

“Maine is ahead of the curve in providing pre-natal care to pregnant women,” says Judy Reidt-Parker, MCA early childhood specialist who authored the report. “In contrast, only a very small number of Maine child care providers meet the highest standards for quality early care and education. These types of findings help the Maine Children’s Growth Council determine how to best maximize our children’s future success.”

The 2011 School Readiness Report will be presented as part of Infant Toddler Awareness Day at the Hall of Flags in the State House, January 6, 2011, from 1 pm to 3 pm. A press conference will begin at 1:15 pm. Featured speakers include: Dana Connors, president of Maine State Chamber of Commerce; Rep. Meredith Strang Burgess (R-Cumberland); Rep. Seth Berry (D-Bowdoinham); and Ed Cervone, co-chair of the Maine Children’s Growth Council.

Several organizations with an interest in early childhood issues will have display tables at the event. The event also includes a “diaper drive”—attendees are encouraged to bring diapers or donations that will be delivered to a local charity.

Maine’s Infant Toddler Initiative Team was formed to ensure that all infants and toddlers in Maine grow and learn in a safe, nurturing, healthy environment in order to reach their highest potential. The multi-disciplinary team—representing a wide range of organizations—has hosted the annual Infant Toddler Awareness Day in the Hall of Flags since 2004.

The Maine Children's Growth Council is comprised of business leaders, higher education representatives, legislators, philanthropists and early childhood professionals dedicated to improving the systems that serve Maine's youngest citizens.

*The Maine Children's Alliance is a statewide, non-partisan advocacy organization committed to improving the lives of all Maine children, youth, and families. By collecting and analyzing data on children and their health, economic and demographic status, MCA seeks to link research to practice and public policy. To learn more, visit [www.mekids.org](http://www.mekids.org).*

*For more information, contact:*

Judy Reidt-Parker, Early Childhood Specialist, Maine Children's Alliance  
Phone (207) 215-9556  
[jreidtparker@mekids.org](mailto:jreidtparker@mekids.org)

Karen White, Infant Toddler Initiative Team  
Phone (207) 749-7638  
[kwhite@usm.maine.edu](mailto:kwhite@usm.maine.edu)

###