

Promising Practices Supporting Early Childhood Transitions in Wisconsin



CASE STUDY: FIRST 5 FOX VALLEY

December 2023

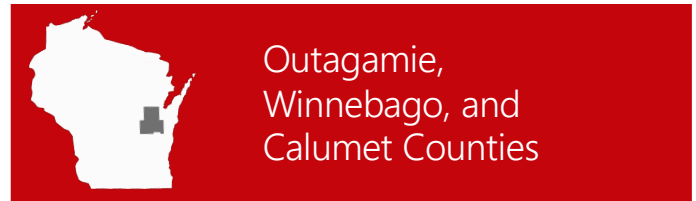
About First 5 Fox Valley

First 5 Fox Valley is based in Outagamie, Winnebago, and Calumet counties and has a long history of collaborative work related to early childhood. What started in 2012 as the Fox Valley Early Childhood Coalition has grown into an effort to create systems change for the benefit of all children aged 0-5. Using the national Help Me Grow model, First 5 Fox Valley promotes cross-sector collaboration through a network of Family Resource Navigators. As the Wisconsin affiliate for Help Me Grow, the model is now expanding beyond the Fox Valley.

Help Me Grow Family Resource Navigators work through Birth to Three, home visiting, and other programs to connect families to developmental services and information. First 5 Fox Valley supports the initiative with a centralized access point for information, a resource directory, and databases that can share developmental screening results and support referral and follow-up with families. In addition to Help Me Grow, First 5 Fox Valley also supports the Welcome Baby Fox Valley program, developmental screenings, and early childhood advocacy. In the near future, First 5 Fox Valley will also be opening a new Family Resource Center in Outagamie County.

Supporting Early Childhood Transitions

By embedding Help Me Grow Navigators in organizations that families interact with, offering free developmental screenings, and providing information through their website and resource directory, First 5 Fox Valley removes barriers to accessing services. Through the referral database, they offer families seamless connections between providers. Family Navigators approach families with dignity and give the information and support



Promising Practices that Support Transitions

- | | |
|---|---|
| Make things easier by removing barriers | ✓ |
| Leverage institutional roles | ✓ |
| Make seamless connections between services | ✓ |
| Affirm families' dignity, agency, and choice | ✓ |
| Meet the health and learning needs of the child | ✓ |

Key Features

- Wide-reaching network and long history of organizational collaboration
- Navigators are embedded in local organizations to reach families where they are
- Warm referrals of families to services across coalition partners
- Centralized access point for information
- Services are interconnected through a referral database and resource directory
- Backbone support that includes grant writing for partners and data sharing

needed to utilize the services families seek.

First 5 Fox Valley sustains these efforts through a commitment to robust backbone support. This includes ongoing grant writing efforts that secure funds for coalition partners, which expands organizations' capacity to secure funds and eliminates unnecessary competition. First 5 Fox Valley also maintains communication and supports use of shared data to better coordinate partners.



Promising Practices Supporting Early Childhood Transitions in Wisconsin

CASE STUDY: FIRST 5 FOX VALLEY



The Preschool Development Grant Early Childhood Transitions Project

The Early Childhood Transitions Project is a partnership between the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies (the CommNS). The project seeks to understand how communities can better support families as they navigate various transitions in the early years (prenatal through age 8) by learning from promising practices and well-aligned systems for transitions in Wisconsin. The project was funded by the Preschool Development Grant (PDG), a federal grant that supports Wisconsin in improving early childhood outcomes in a comprehensive, equity-focused manner for the state's most vulnerable, underserved, and rural populations.

To understand more about how organizations and collaborative efforts support families experiencing transitions, the project team convened a statewide advisory group and gathered insights to identify eight promising case studies in Wisconsin. For each case study, we interviewed leaders of the effort, such as organization directors, initiative leads, or founding members, for a total of 34 interviews. We also conducted seven focus groups with staff, board members, parent advisory group members, or other key stakeholders. To gain further context we also interviewed key informants, such as public health and school employees, who were able to speak to the experiences of families of young children in the communities of the case studies. We also gathered and reviewed relevant websites and documents. As a team, we analyzed data within and across the case studies to identify promising practices to best support families in the transitions of early childhood.

The UW-Madison Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies (the CommNS)

The CommNS is a hub for faculty, students, and community partners to collaborate on research, practice, and evaluation that examines the well-being of communities and the civic and nonprofit sectors. Co-Create is an initiative within the CommNS in which staff and student researchers design and carry out applied research and evaluation projects to advance the missions of nonprofit organizations, community groups, governments agencies, and others.

