



Assuring a Sturdy Foundation:
The Status of Young Children, produced by the
Great Start Collaborative – Saginaw County

Research shows that high quality early childhood programs result in the following:

- Improved school readiness and academic achievement results throughout school.
- Decreased special education participation.
- Decreased truancy, behavioral and later criminal activity.
- Higher skilled, better trained labor force.
- Economic development for the community.



Assuring a Sturdy Foundation: Status of Young Children: Saginaw County, MI

The first five years of a child's life are a time of great opportunity. The young child's early experiences and environments directly impact the developing architecture of his or her brain. Everything children see, every word they hear, everything they do...from their first breath, shapes the rapidly developing architecture of their brains. We now know that by age four, ninety percent (90%) of the brain's architecture will be built and the foundation for language, social behavior, problem solving ability, and emotional health is determined.

To be successful in school, life, and Michigan's future knowledge-based and service economy, young children must grow up in an environment that develops self-confidence, critical thinking skills, positive social emotional skills, and a love for learning. There is much that communities can do to make sure that every young child has this foundation. Leaders in communities across our state are working together in new ways so that every infant, toddler and preschooler has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

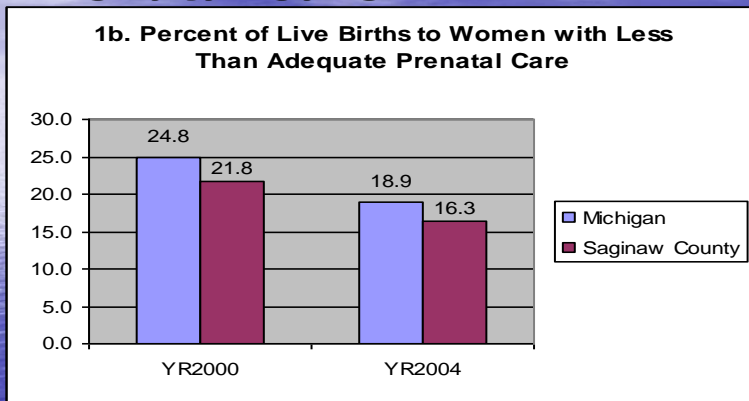
Community leaders in Saginaw County who understand the vital importance of investing in young children have come together to form our Great Start Collaborative. The Great Start Collaborative – Saginaw County is funded by, and working in partnership with, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation to prepare, and then implement, the *Saginaw County Early Childhood Action Agenda*. Our *Early Childhood Action Agenda* will lay out the actions we need to take going forward to ensure that every child enters kindergarten healthy and eager to learn.

For our community to make wise decisions about the future of our children, we need to know what the current status of young children is in Saginaw County. This report presents current community data in six areas, each of which makes a critical contribution to the optimal brain development, health and early learning.

Healthy children are more able to engage in the full range of life experiences that promote healthy learning. A lack of preventative health care or delays in treating children's health problems can negatively affect their development, sometimes with lifelong consequences.

Young children and families with health insurance are more likely to go to the doctor and get help for health conditions before they become emergencies. Young children who have a regular health care provider, or medical home, are more likely to get the high quality preventative care they need to identify and address the common health needs and concerns of early childhood, like immunizations, developmental screenings, hearing and vision tests.

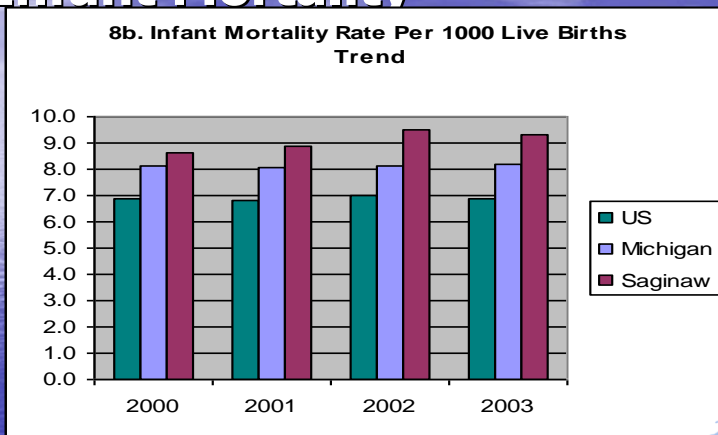
Prenatal Care



Dept. Community Health



Infant Mortality

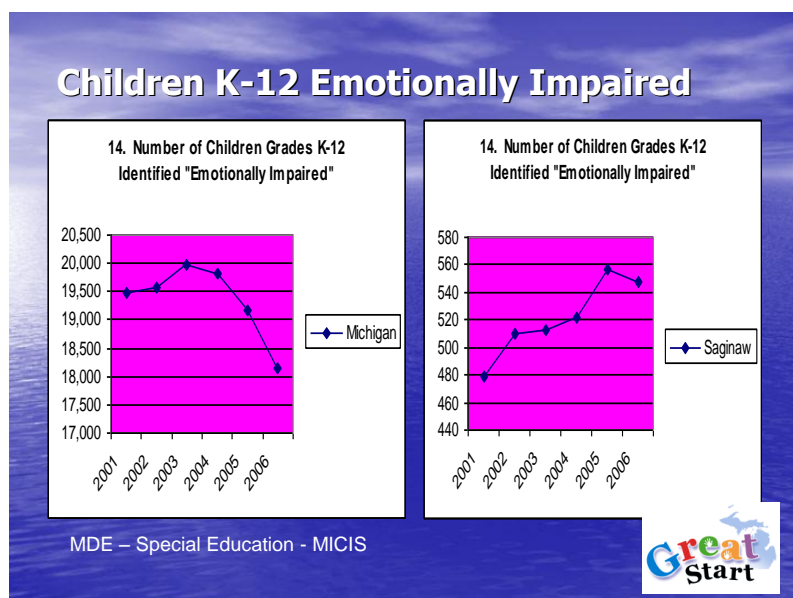
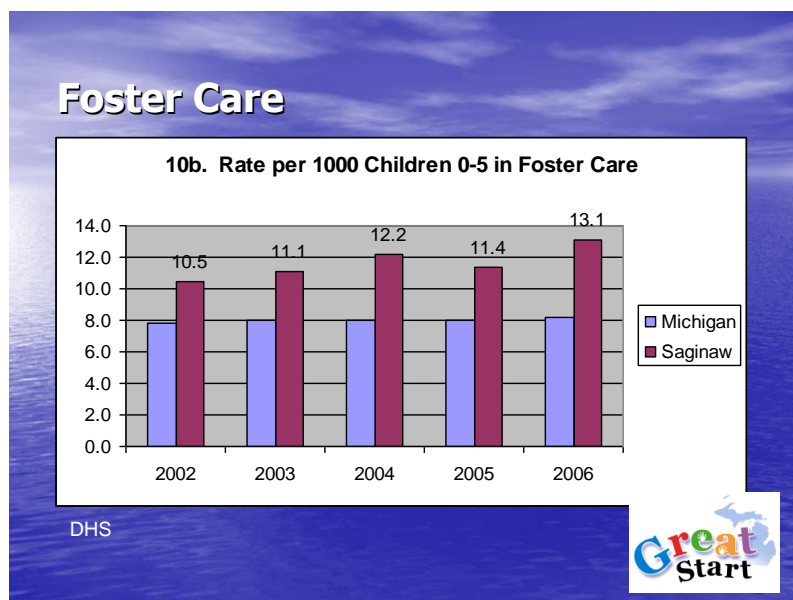


DCH



Every infant needs a warm, nurturing and stable relationship with his or her parents and other caregivers to grow into a trusting, curious and confident toddler. Young children who are socially and emotionally healthy are self-confident and enjoy exploring their worlds. Healthy young children can more easily cope with their emotions, control their impulses and form friendships. They have learned through nurturing relationships that they can trust adults and look to them for guidance. Success in school requires that children get along well with their classmates, listen and respond to their teachers, and demonstrate an eagerness for learning. All of these are social-emotional skills.

Infants, toddlers and young children, like adults, can develop mental health problems such as depression or traumatic stress disorder, which hurt their healthy social and emotional development. Early diagnosis and treatment of mental health problems is vital.



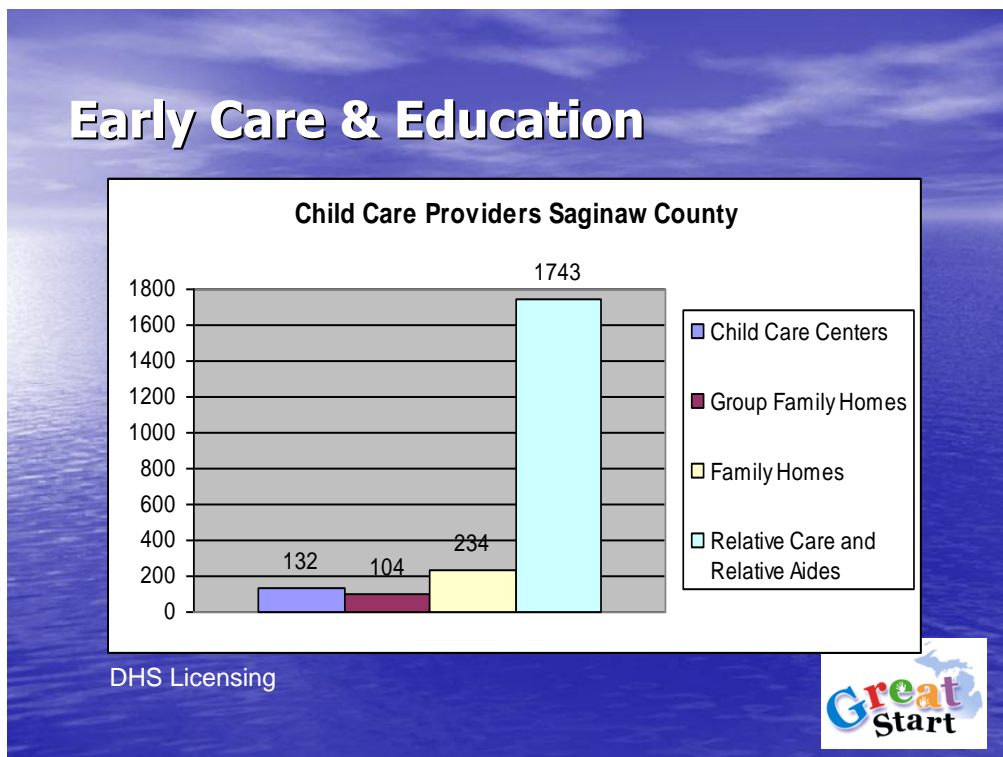
Early Care and Education

Parents are their children's primary caregivers, as well as their first and most important teachers. With the demands of today's work world, most young children are cared for by someone other than one of their parents, prior to entering kindergarten. The quality of early care and education – whether it is provided by grandma, a neighbor, the church, or a childcare center – matters. High quality early care and education provides a safe, healthy and nurturing environment for infants and young children. Children who receive high quality early care and education have stronger learning, language and social skills when they enter school.

Children who attend a high quality preschool program in the year or two before kindergarten are better prepared – academically, socially and emotionally. High quality preschool programs have well-trained staff, small group sizes, language rich environments, and actively engage parents in their children's learning.

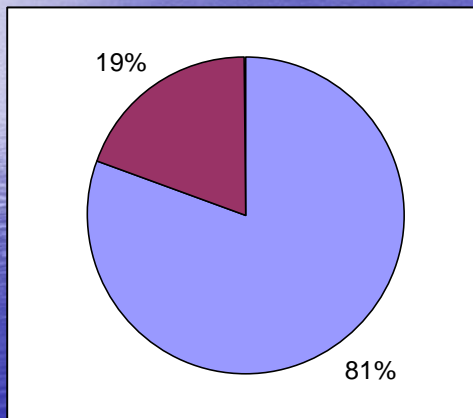
Parents who are involved in their children's early care and education program benefits not only their own child, but the other children in the classroom. Parents who get involved meet other parents, learn about how their children spend their days, and can build on these relationships and activities at home.

Young children with developmental delays or disabilities usually have special health, developmental, and learning needs which are most effectively addressed when they are identified early. Individualized early intervention services and special educational supports provide crucial developmental guidance for parents and are designed to help every child reach his or her fullest potential.



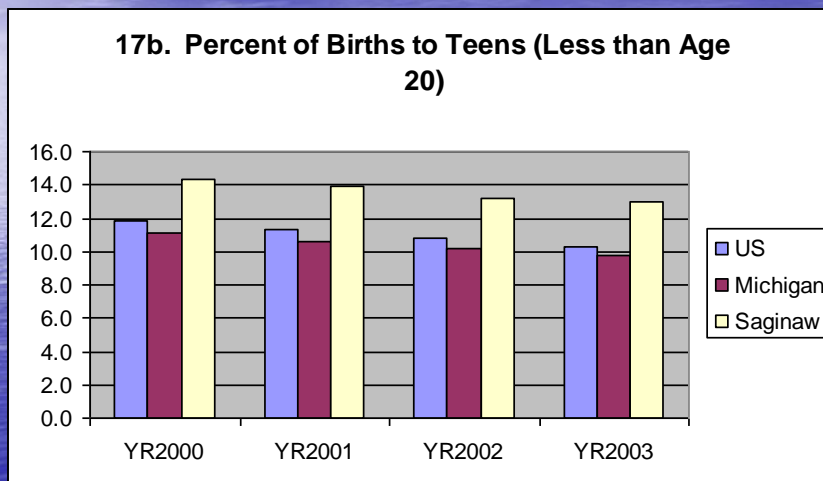
Raising young children is challenging for every family, regardless of education or income. Parents must be caregivers, educators, playmates, role models, providers, and protectors. Knowing what to do in each role can be a difficult and stressful task. Parents greatly benefit from easily accessible parenting information, community resources, training and supports.

Saginaw County Parent Education Services MSUE, Saginaw Public Schools, Teen Parent Services, Healthy Families Saginaw



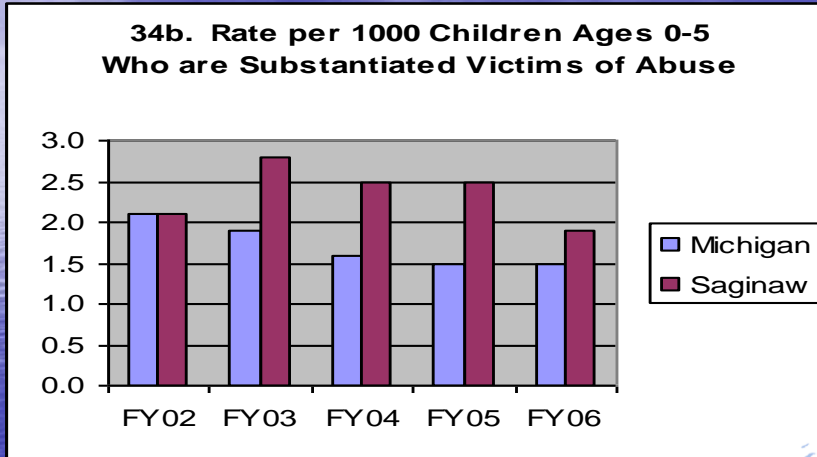
19% of children ages birth to five years currently receive parenting education services in Saginaw County

Teen Births



Young children need a stable, safe and secure family environment in order to flourish. A lack of sufficient family economic resources may place young children's health, safety, and development at-risk. When parents have to focus their full attention on just meeting their family's basic needs, daily reading or play can take a backseat to keeping a roof over the head and food on the table.

Basic Needs, Security, Safety

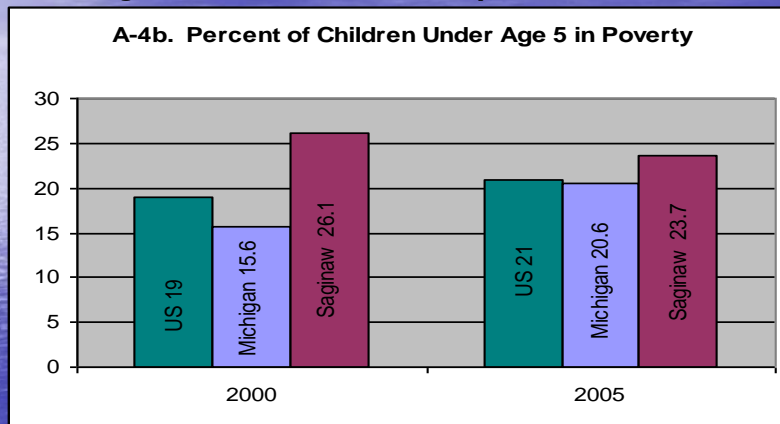


DCH



Childhood Poverty

(Children Aged 0 – 5 / 2000 Census Data)



Census 2000; ACS 2005



This report makes it clear that Saginaw County has significant work to do on behalf of our young children! With your help and these data as a starting point, the Great Start Collaborative – Saginaw County will lead the development of the *Saginaw County Early Childhood Strategic Plan and Annual Action Agenda*.

Over the next few months, the Great Start Collaborative – Saginaw County will be gathering together members throughout our to develop our Strategic Plan and Annual Action Agenda.

How will WE assure that *every child arrives at kindergarten healthy, safe and eager to succeed in school and in life?*

We need for you to be involved in helping to make sure we have a sound plan to address this question. The future of our youngest citizens **is in our hands**; remember that early experiences last a lifetime and skills beget skills. We urge you to become involved in making a real difference. Only by working together we can assure a sturdy foundation and a *Great Start* for every child in Saginaw County.

Please Call Today!

Rich Van Tol, Co-Coordinator
Great Start Collaborative – Saginaw County
989-399-7423
vantolr@sisd.cc
www.greatstartssaginaw.org

5 Ways to get involved:

- ✓ Attend Great Start Collaborative work group meetings and provide input.
- ✓ Help us build goodwill for early childhood programs, i.e., marketing, post signage in your business or agency, encourage family/friends to support our effort, etc.
- ✓ Sponsorship (i.e., sponsor advertisements, play to group activities, parent meetings, business coalition meetings, parent field trip, etc.)
- ✓ Share expertise (i.e., offer advice or assistance specific to your field of work)
- ✓ Help us ensure services are accessible to ALL families by offering space at your organization for staff or clinics (retail, grocery, faith-based, commercial space, etc.)

