

Cooper Orders DHHS To Draft Early Childhood Action Plan By November 1

By Administrator

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Governor Roy Cooper issued an executive order directing North Carolina to create an Early Childhood Action Plan. The plan to be developed by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services will be devoted to the health, safety, and developmental and academic readiness of young children across the state.

“We know that a foundation for future learning, health and well-being is built during early childhood,” said Governor Roy Cooper. “I want all North Carolina children to get off to a strong start in safe and nurturing families and communities, with access to high-quality opportunities to learn, and this plan can help us get there.”

The Early Childhood Action Plan will set targeted goals and strategies to ensure the state’s 1.1 million children from birth through age eight are healthy, safe and nurtured, learning and ready to succeed. Birth through eight is a critical period in children’s development and readiness for academic success. Quality early childhood education also strengthens North Carolina’s workforce, by helping prepare young people for future work and allowing parents and caretakers to join the workforce.

The order directs DHHS to publicly track annual metrics to show regular improvements in early childhood outcomes. Today, North Carolina has a high infant mortality rate compared to most states, nearly half of young children in the state live in low-income households, and almost one in four are food insecure.

“We must do more to change outcomes for young children and their families across the state,” said DHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen, M.D. “The Early Childhood Action Plan will build on existing public and private efforts and develop new strategies to help us make smart, evidence-informed investments for North Carolina’s children.”

The action plan will be developed by DHHS in collaboration with the NC Early Childhood Advisory Council appointed by Governor Cooper and in extensive consultation with experts and stakeholders from across the state. The executive order calls for a draft Early Childhood Action Plan to be completed and available for public comment by Nov. 1, 2018.