

# New Policies Should Align With Existing Goals and Plans for Children and Youth

## Why is this important?

To have a collective impact on child and youth outcomes, leaders must develop and implement a broad, long-term child and youth strategy, and be accountable for results. This can be a challenge. Policies often require the creation of strategic plans that are organized around a single, narrow topic. Instead of working toward collective impact, policy leaders end up generating separate sets of goals and plans, which fragment their efforts.

### What happens when new policies allow and encourage alignment with existing goal setting and strategic planning?

**You don't always have to start from scratch.** This is what Nashville learned when it created the Child and Youth Master Plan. Published in July 2010, the plan is a living document that articulates the region's commitment to children and youth. The plan acts as a single blueprint for people and organizations to work together, share resources and achieve common goals.

"One of the areas that has a great plan already in place, which we knew we could leverage, was healthy eating/active living," says Laura Hansen, former project manager at the Mayor's Office of Children and Youth. This plan was created to implement a \$7.5 million grant, called Communities Putting Prevention to Work. When Nashville created its Child and Youth Master Plan it utilized the objectives of its existing plan to address health-related goals.

Because the city built on this existing plan when it developed the Child and Youth Master Plan, it was able to save time and resources, and to ensure that the new plan aligned with existing efforts.

Manchester, Conn. found the same thing. Faced with a fragmented system of youth service providers, Manchester created the Manchester Children, Youth and Family Master Plan in September 2009 to take a more seamless approach to serving young people. Later, Manchester applied for a private Cyber Town grant to bring a computer lab to its community. This required a plan for how the computer lab would be used. **Because Manchester built on its existing Master Plan with additional detail, it was able to save time and ensure that the new computer lab squarely aligned with other efforts in its Master Plan.**

### What happens when policies don't allow and encourage the use of existing goal setting and strategic planning?

**Too much of a good thing.** In 2010, Washington D.C.'s deputy mayor for education cataloged existing plans for children and youth and found that the city had 14: Two plans for children's health; two for alternative education; two for special education, English Language Learners and English and a Second Language students; four for other in-school time efforts, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Each one of these well-intentioned plans plays a critical role in shaping children's lives. But if these plans were built upon each other, rather than each beginning anew, it would have saved a lot of time and energy and made a stronger collective impact on children and youth. D.C. is not alone in experiencing this need to improve alignment of its plans. We find a similar proliferation of plans in communities across the country.

**The Ready by 21 Policy Alignment Series** provides a set of strategies to ensure that new child and youth policies align with existing efforts in order to create a seamless system of supports.  
[www.forumfyi.org/pubs/series/policyalignment](http://www.forumfyi.org/pubs/series/policyalignment)

## Policy Language that Helps New Plans Align with Existing Plans:

- Language allowing the topic in question to be addressed by an existing goal-setting and strategic plan.

### Promise Neighborhoods<sup>ii</sup>

While applicants are required to implement a school reform strategy, “an applicant is not required to propose a new reform strategy in place of an existing reform strategy in order to be eligible for a Promise Neighborhoods planning grant.”

### Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization of 2011 (proposed)<sup>iii</sup>

While the proposed reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act requires states to make workforce plans, it allows states to “develop and submit to the appropriate Secretaries a combined State plan ... in lieu of submitting 2 or more plans, for the programs and activities and the core programs.”

## Language that Doesn't Help Align Plans:

- Language requiring the creation of new goals and strategic plan, even if there is already a good child and youth plan to build on.

### McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act<sup>iv</sup>

“Each SEA must prepare a State plan that describes, among other things, the State’s strategies for addressing problems resulting from enrollment delays that are caused by immunization and medical records requirements; residency requirements; lack of birth certificates, school records, or other documentation; guardianship issues; and uniform or dress code requirements.”

## Policy Alignment in Action

The good news is that you can work with policymakers to make language more helpful. Consider recent changes to this important legislation:

### Successful Safe and Healthy Students Act of 2011 (proposed)

The Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions Committee used the Ready by 21 Policy Alignment Series while drafting the Successful Safe and Healthy Students Act of 2011. An early draft of the legislation called for the creation of a new standalone plan for improving conditions for learning. Using the Policy Alignment Series as a guide, the committee changed the legislation to clarify that the plan may be part of a broader statewide child and youth plan.

#### Before Alignment Was Considered<sup>v</sup>

##### Applications shall include:

- “a plan for improving conditions for learning in schools in the State in a manner consistent with the requirements of the program”
- “a needs analysis of the conditions for learning in schools in the State”

#### After Alignment Was Incorporated<sup>vi</sup>

##### Applications shall include:

- “a plan for improving conditions for learning in schools in the State in a manner consistent with the requirements of the program that **may be a part of a broader statewide child and youth plan**, if such a plan exists and is consistent with the requirements of this Act”
- “a needs analysis of the conditions for learning in schools in the State, which **may be a part of a broader statewide child and youth needs analysis**, if such an analysis exists and is consistent with the requirements of this Act”

## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> Education and Youth Development Plan: The Building Blocks to Ensure All District Youth Are Prepared for College, Career, and Life. (December 2010), Government of the District of Columbia, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education.

<sup>ii</sup> Promise Neighborhoods Program, Notice of Final Priorities, Requirements, Definitions, and Selection Criteria. (July 6, 2011), Federal Register Volume 76, Number 129.

<sup>iii</sup> Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization of 2011. (June 8, 2011), Senate staff discussion draft.

<sup>iv</sup> McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program. (March 8, 2002), school enrollment guidelines, Federal Register Volume 67, Number 46.

<sup>v</sup> Successful Safe and Healthy Students Act of 2011. (April 29, 2011), staff discussion draft.

<sup>vi</sup> Successful Safe and Healthy Students Act of 2011. (May 9, 2011), as introduced by Senator Harkin.