

EVERY
CHILD
DESERVES
OUR BEST.



Arkansas Better Beginnings 2010-2011 Progress Report





What is Better Beginnings?

Better Beginnings is Arkansas' voluntary quality rating and improvement system for all licensed child care providers. It provides the tools, guidance and training needed to provide the very best care and education possible.

High quality child care and early childhood education build the foundation for how well our children learn, their self esteem and how they interact with their world.

Better Beginnings:

- ★ emphasizes the value of quality child care
- ★ empowers parents by providing an online tool that identifies and locates quality child care providers in their area
- ★ gives child care providers valuable tools for improving the quality of their programs
- ★ establishes standards of excellence
- ★ provides a path for providers to meet or exceed these standards



Solid Research. Solid Response.

Better Beginnings invested the time to listen to providers, families and officials across the state to provide a program that fits everyone's needs. More than 1,500 hours of research were invested with providers to fine tune the quality of Better Beginnings.

Better Beginnings conducted statewide focus groups to create a program that was built by Arkansans to provide quality learning environments for Arkansas children.





First Year Accomplishments

- ★ 349 Better Beginnings programs were given more than \$410,000 in Incentive and Professional Development grants to invest in their staffs.
- ★ Arkansas has 731 Better Beginnings certified programs.
- ★ Better Beginnings provided more than 5,800 hours of training and support for over 4,000 child care professionals in its first year.
- ★ In its first year, Better Beginnings dedicated over 650 hours of technical assistance and step-by-step guidance to child care providers in Arkansas.
- ★ Better Beginnings certified programs provided care in quality learning environments to more than 55,000 children in Arkansas.
- ★ In its first year, the Better Beginnings website saw more than 21,000 visitors seeking child care programs, help with certification or other information.
- ★ Better Beginnings has 47 dedicated staff members who provide training, technical assistance and support. This support system results in fewer child care licensing infractions.
- ★ In its first year, more than 1,500 hours of research were invested with providers to improve the quality of Better Beginnings .
- ★ Families have access to a Better Beginnings certified quality learning environment in all 75 of Arkansas' counties.

Impact on Arkansas and Its Families.

Better Beginnings connects Arkansas families with information and care that helps their children experience a safe, happy, and healthy childhood.

In its first year, the Better Beginnings website saw more than **21,000 visitors** seeking child care programs, help with certification or other information. This rich and unique website is designed for families to find child care providers and their ratings and for providers to help facilitate and provide resources and training models.



ARBetterBeginnings.com

Reaching Out.

In addition to our website, Better Beginnings has various methods of communications to reach Arkansas families and providers.



In its first year, Better Beginnings developed an informative newsletter that reaches families, providers, legislators and others throughout the state.

Better Beginnings produced an award-winning animated video to educate providers, families and legislators on the importance of a quality learning environment for Arkansas children. The video has been shown all over the state and is accessible on the website. An animated television commercial was also introduced urging parents to visit the website to learn more about the program.



Quality Ratings

When child care providers successfully complete the Better Beginnings certification process, their child care facility will receive a one, two or three star rating. This Better Beginnings rating will be posted on the Better Beginnings website for parents and others to use when making important child care decisions.

Many providers are in the process of getting their ratings and will be listed on the website on a special list titled "Getting Ready for Better Beginnings." These providers are enrolled in the Better Beginnings program and have begun the process of earning a star.

Licensed providers who choose not to be formally evaluated will also be listed on the website but will not receive a Better Beginnings star rating.

Families have access to a Better Beginnings certified quality learning environment in all 75 of Arkansas' counties.

The Beginning of Better Beginnings

Better Beginnings got its beginning as the Quality Rating Improvement System or QRIS. The program was spearheaded by a statewide coalition of early childhood education and child care advocates. Over a span of 10 years, as the coalition grew and the program gained momentum, Better Beginnings became the public name for the QRIS program and was introduced statewide with a kickoff on October 25, 2010, at Philander Smith College in Little Rock.

The kickoff day featured speakers including Dr. Joshua Sparrow, best-selling author and internationally renowned expert in early childhood brain research, along with Bill Millett, a sought after national speaker who focuses on community-based child development; as well as other child care advocates and state agency leadership. The Better Beginnings kickoff was designed to announce the program to child care advocates, legislators, policymakers, child care providers and the media from all over Arkansas.



Joshua M. Sparrow, M.D., internationally renowned child development specialist



**Bill Millett
Founder of Scope View
Strategic Advantage**



**Tonya Russell
Director, Division of
Child Care and Early
Childhood Education**



**Chad Rodgers, M.D.
Arkansas Early
Childhood Commission,
Chapter President of
the American Academy
of Pediatrics**

What Arkansas Leaders Say

Arkansas leaders know that quality child care can make a positive difference in our state.

“Investments in early learning increase academic achievements and reduce the number of children who need remedial and special-education services. By utilizing Better Beginnings programs, parents make an investment in their children today that will pay dividends for a lifetime.”

Mike Beebe, Governor

“Be an advocate for economic development in your community and start by investing in early childhood education. Research shows that productivity and absenteeism improve dramatically when parents choose high quality child care. Investing in early childhood development is a fiscally responsible way to reduce costs and create economic growth.”

Leroy Dangeau, former State Representative and current Chair of Cross Roads Coalition, a nine county economic development group serving Eastern Arkansas

“Improved test scores, higher graduation and college attendance rates, reduced incidence of substance abuse, crime and teen pregnancy-these are benefits of quality pre-K and are factors critical to growing a skilled workforce.”

Kay Kelley Arnold, Vice President for Public Affairs, Entergy Corporation

“Investing in early learning can increase academic achievement and result in savings on remedial education, grade retention, and special education services. When you support Better Beginnings, you invest in early learning.”

John Selig, Director, Arkansas Department of Human Services

