



Health

# Children Are Healthy and Thriving

What happens in early childhood matters. By age 5, the architecture of the human brain is 90% developed, and early experiences have literally shaped how the brain is built. Adverse experiences—poverty, abuse, and neglect—interfere with children’s healthy development, potentially setting them back months, even years from their peers. The period of early childhood (before birth to age 5) dramatically affects the future health, wellbeing, and success of a child. These formative years impact a person’s entire life.

Early childhood affects not only individuals, but all of Alabama. From low education and poor health outcomes to high crime and addiction, the biggest challenges we face in our state connect back to early childhood.

## Prosperity Begins with Health

Children are more likely to grow into productive and responsible citizens when they have the foundation of a healthy body and a healthy mind.



## HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS PROVIDE A SOLID FOUNDATION

Alabama consistently ranks at the bottom of national statistics measuring the health and wellbeing of our children, including low-weight births, infant mortality, developmental concerns, and undetected delays in children when they start school. Thirty percent of families in Alabama have a concern about their child’s health and development, and connecting them to resources as early as possible is a proven strategy to reduce disparities and level the playing field to improve school success.

Alabama programs such as *Help Me Grow* connect families to health and developmental resources so children can start school healthy and ready to succeed. *Help Me Grow* partners with Alabama’s 2-1-1 service to link parents with care coordinators who answer questions about their child’s development, connect them to services in their community, and follow up to ensure they receive the help they need.

### Help Me Grow:

- **Screens** more than 28,000 children each year.
- **Connects** 90% of families in need with service providers.
- **Addresses** developmental concerns and delays.
- **Helps** our children thrive in school and life.



“We need to create urgency around the health and wellbeing of our children. Early intervention works.”

Senior Leader in Early Childhood Education

### ALL KIDS IS A VITAL SAFETY NET

*ALL Kids* is Alabama’s Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) that ensures regular checkups, vision and dental care, and medical attention if children become sick or injured. Together with Medicaid, this program provides a level foundation for children to grow, leading to healthier families and communities that can drive Alabama forward.

### STARTING HEALTH PROMOTION AND DISEASE PREVENTION EARLY IS COST EFFECTIVE

Being healthy in childhood lays the foundation for being healthy as an adult. Heart disease and obesity have their roots in early childhood. Children need to see a consistent health care provider for regular check-ups, and they need comprehensive screenings to identify concerns as early as possible. Undetected delays can become costly conditions and often follow the child into school and beyond. When it comes to early childhood health and development, there is no better case for “investing in success now so that we don’t have to pay for failure later.”

### WE HAVE A PLAN FOR OUR CHILDREN, A BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

Healthy child development programs are part of a comprehensive plan to improve the health and wellbeing of our children. The Alabama Partnership for Children and nearly 30 organizations have come together as the Alabama Young Child Wellness Council to adopt a common approach to supporting early childhood. Through programs such as *First Class Pre-K*, *Parents as Teachers*, and *Help Me Grow*, we are working together with policymakers, businesses, and service providers to make the biggest difference for Alabama.



Supporting our youngest children and families  
is a smart investment in our future.

Alabama voters agree.

Learn more about **Alabama’s Blueprint for Strong Families, School Readiness, and Prosperity** and find out how you can support early childhood programs in Alabama at [www.smartstartalabama.org](http://www.smartstartalabama.org)



*Every Alabama Child Will Have the Opportunity to Succeed in Life*