

Expanded Eligibility for Alaska's Infant Learning Program (IDEA Part C)

**Leveraging the Power of Early Intervention Services
and Ensuring Equitable Access**

What is IDEA Part C?

Purpose and Funding:

- IDEA Part C is a federal program designed to support early intervention services for infants and toddlers (birth to age 3) with developmental delays or disabilities.
- Funded jointly by federal and state governments, it ensures services are available regardless of family income.

Alaska's Infant Learning Program (ILP):

- Administered by the Alaska Department of Health, the ILP is the state's implementation of IDEA Part C.
- The program supports infants and toddlers through individualized services delivered in natural environments, such as homes or childcare settings, emphasizing inclusivity.

Focus on Ages Birth to 3:

- The first three years of life are critical for brain development. Neural pathways for learning, behavior, and health are highly flexible during this period.
- Early intervention during this window can significantly improve cognitive, language, motor, and social-emotional outcomes.

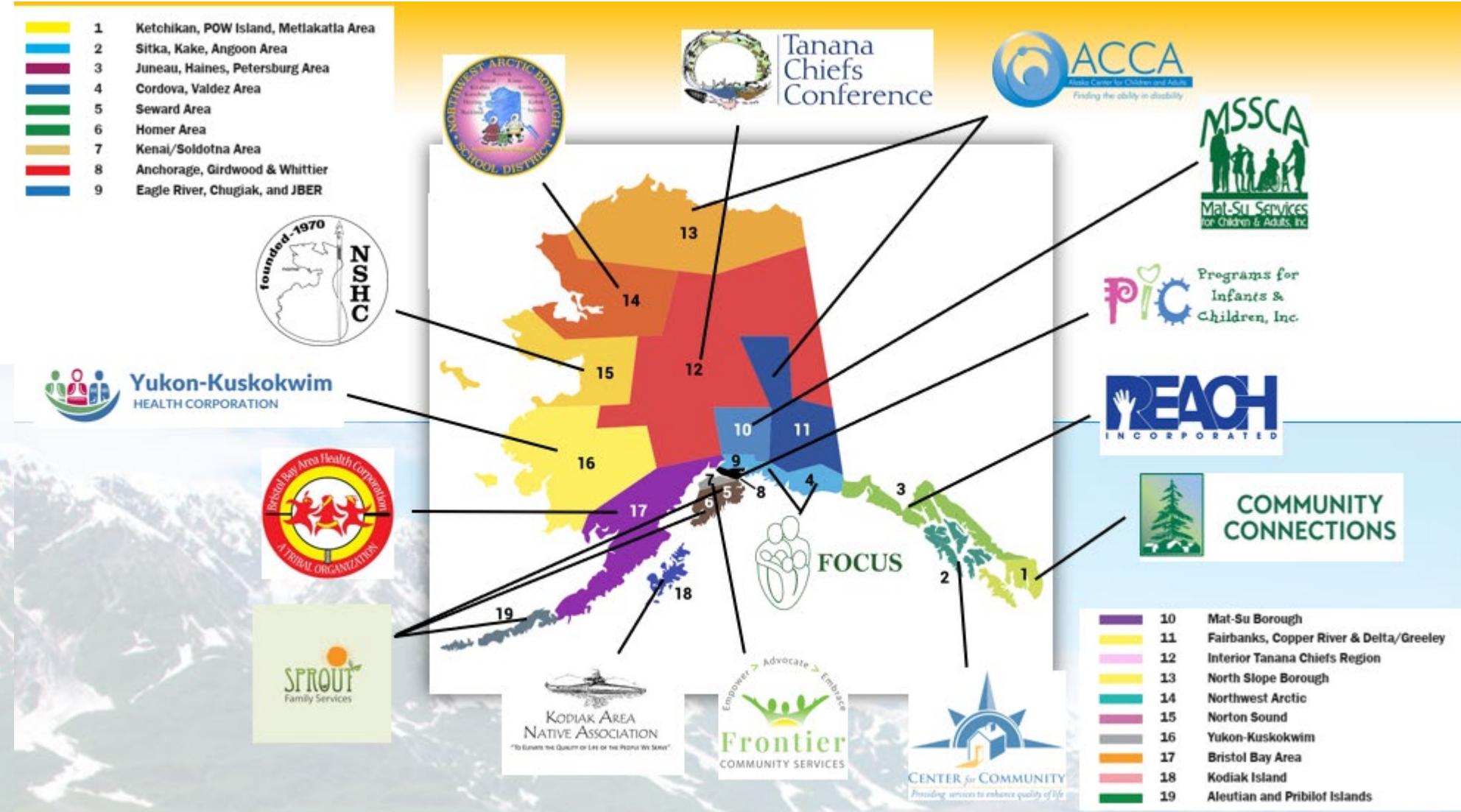
Family-Centered Approach:

- Services are designed to empower families to become advocates and active participants in their child's development.
- Evidence-based practices focus on integrating interventions into daily routines to maximize developmental progress.



AK ILP Network

- 1 Ketchikan, POW Island, Metlakatla Area
- 2 Sitka, Kake, Angoon Area
- 3 Juneau, Haines, Petersburg Area
- 4 Cordova, Valdez Area
- 5 Seward Area
- 6 Homer Area
- 7 Kenai/Soldotna Area
- 8 Anchorage, Girdwood & Whittier
- 9 Eagle River, Chugiak, and JBER



The work that led us here

In 2022, the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education and ICC charged the ICC Finance Subcommittee with exploring options for eligibility and funding.

The resulting report listed recommendations to expand eligibility and improve the funding systems for AK ILP.

ICC = Interagency Coordinating Council – required under Part C



Key Recommendations

- Align Part C criteria with Part B (25% delay in one domain of development or 20% in two) and update the list of qualifying conditions accordingly.
- Increase funding for AK ILP to pay for an expected 77% increase in children qualifying for ILP services.
- Make supporting changes to the Medicaid statute
 - ... add new ILP provider type and reimburse for all ILP services
 - ... allow the IFSP as an authorizing document for Medicaid coverage

Why Expand Eligibility?

Alaska has the most restrictive eligibility criteria for early intervention services in the nation.

Only two other states require a 50% developmental delay. Most states use 33% or 25%.

Alaska Part B (K-12 special education) uses a 25% threshold.

The difference results in delayed onset of services for children with 25-49% delay.

Often-cited studies by James Heckman have shown high return on investment for early intervention: ***For every \$1 invested, up to \$17 saved.***

46% of children that receive early intervention don't require special education by the time they get to Kindergarten, which represents annual savings up to \$34.9M.

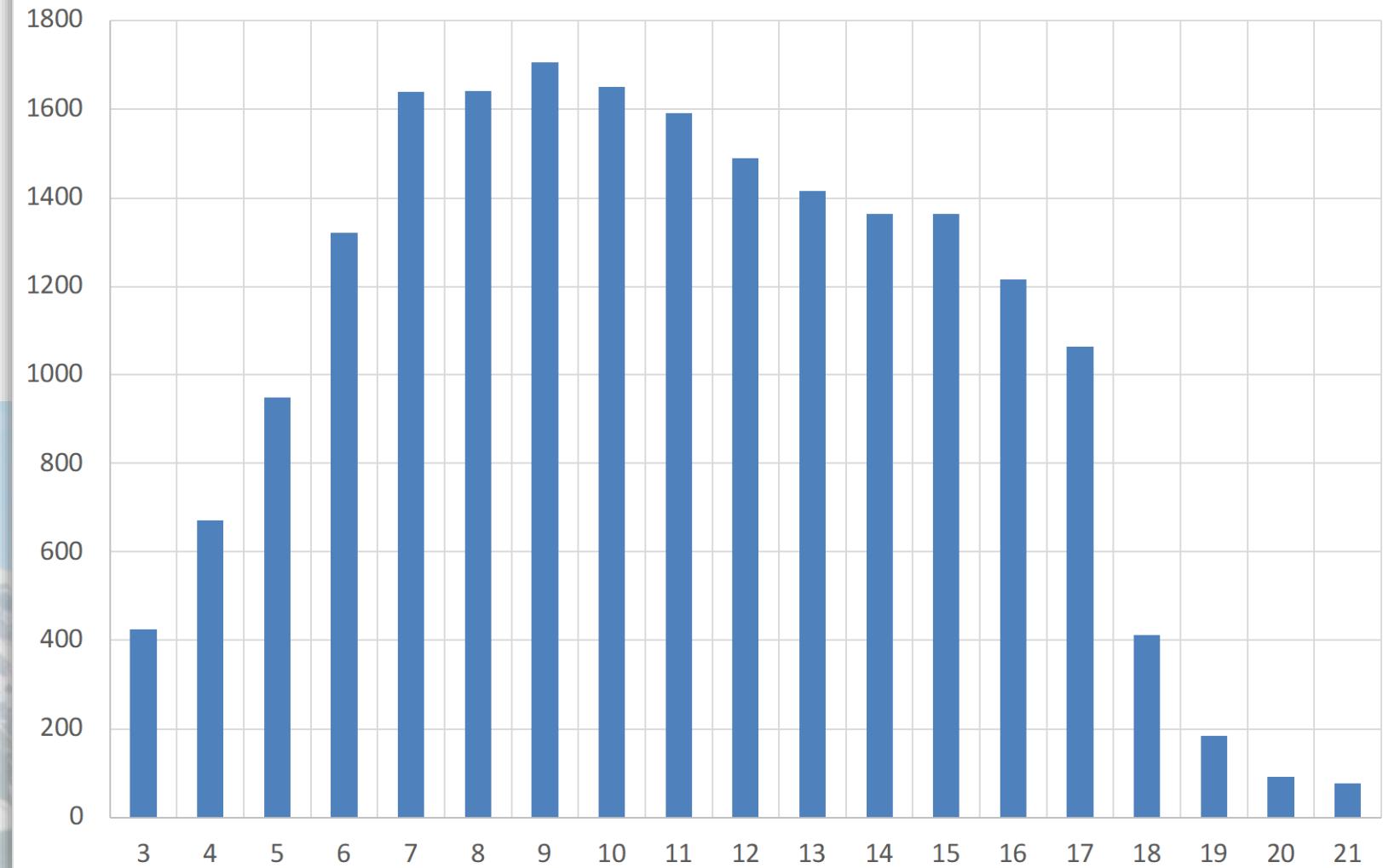
Early intervention improves long-term outcomes for children, families, and the state.

Identify Earlier

Many children who ultimately qualify for special education are not identified until age 6 or 7.

What would be the impact if we found them sooner?

Alaska Child Count by Age (3-21)
Children Served by Special Education Oct 2023



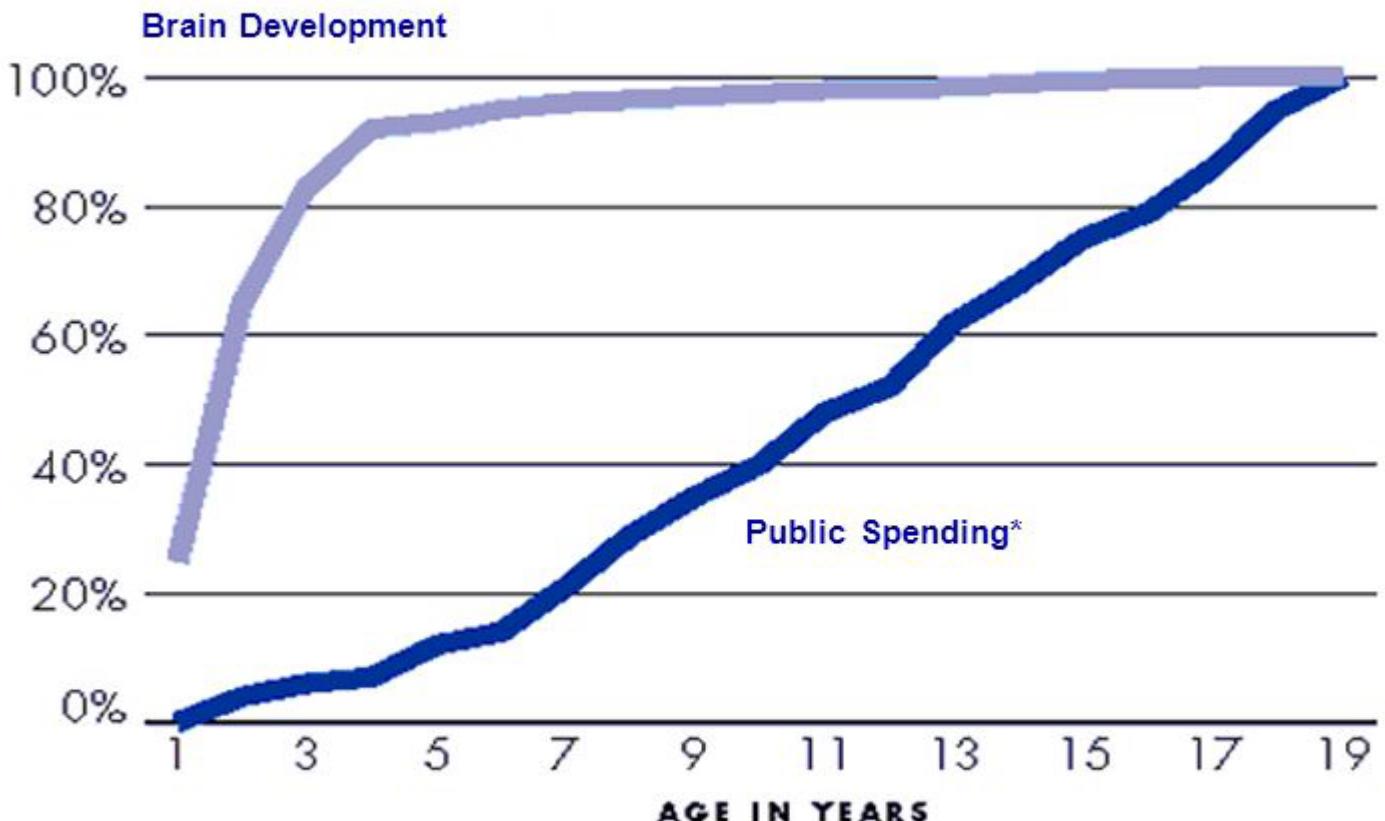
Invest Earlier

Almost 90% of brain development happens by age 3.

Children who don't receive ILP services, may not be identified until Kindergarten.

Earlier services can lead to much greater impact!

PUBLIC SPENDING & BRAIN DEVELOPMENT THE DISCONNECT

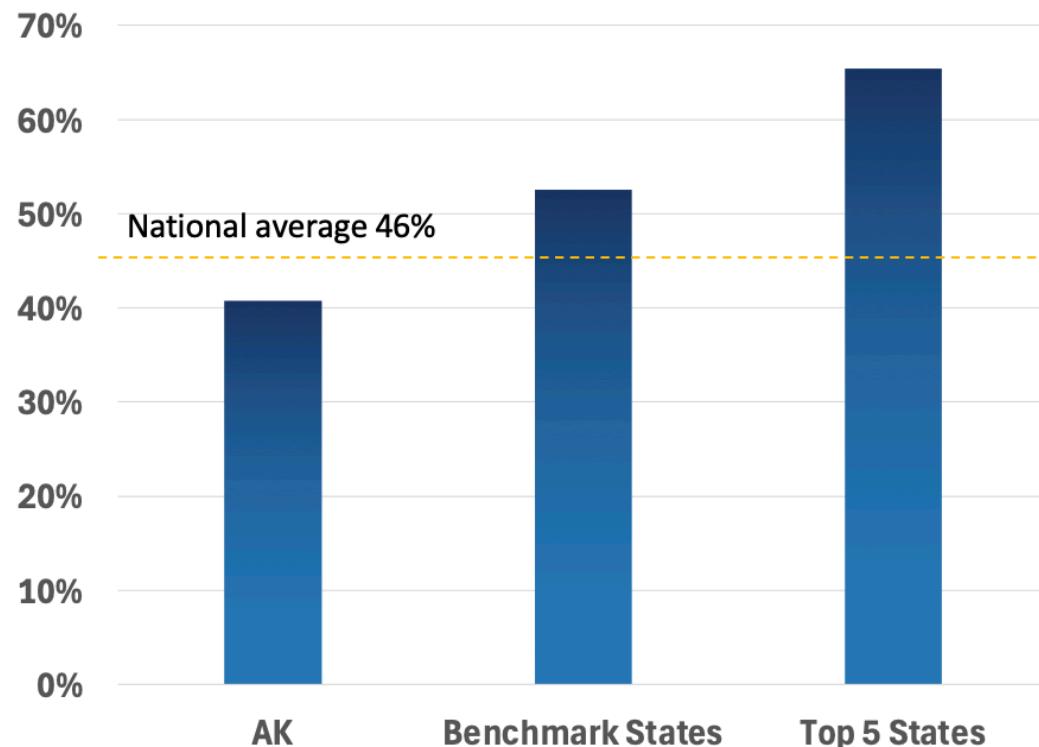


* Portion of total public investment in children being spent during indicated year in children's lives.

Source: The RAND Corporation

Because of Restrictive Eligibility, Alaska Trails Behind Other States

States with less restrictive eligibility help more children meet developmental age expectations at age 3 as a result of early intervention services.

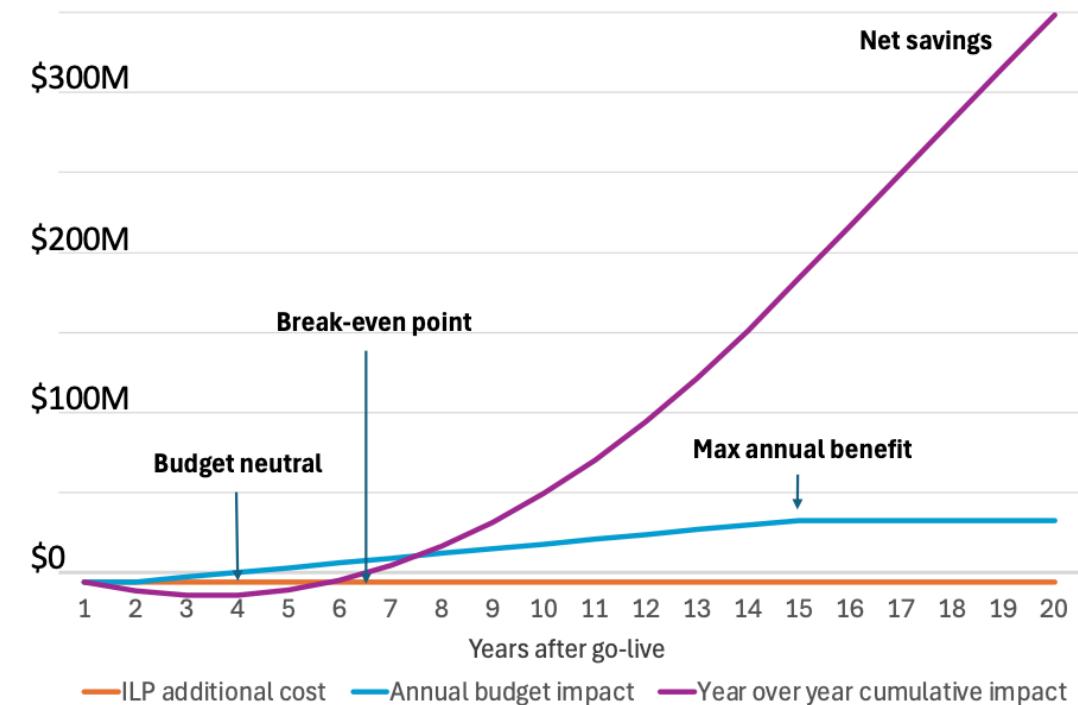


Percent of children in ILP that achieve age typical development by age 3.

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Substantial Savings That Can Be Used for Other Education Needs

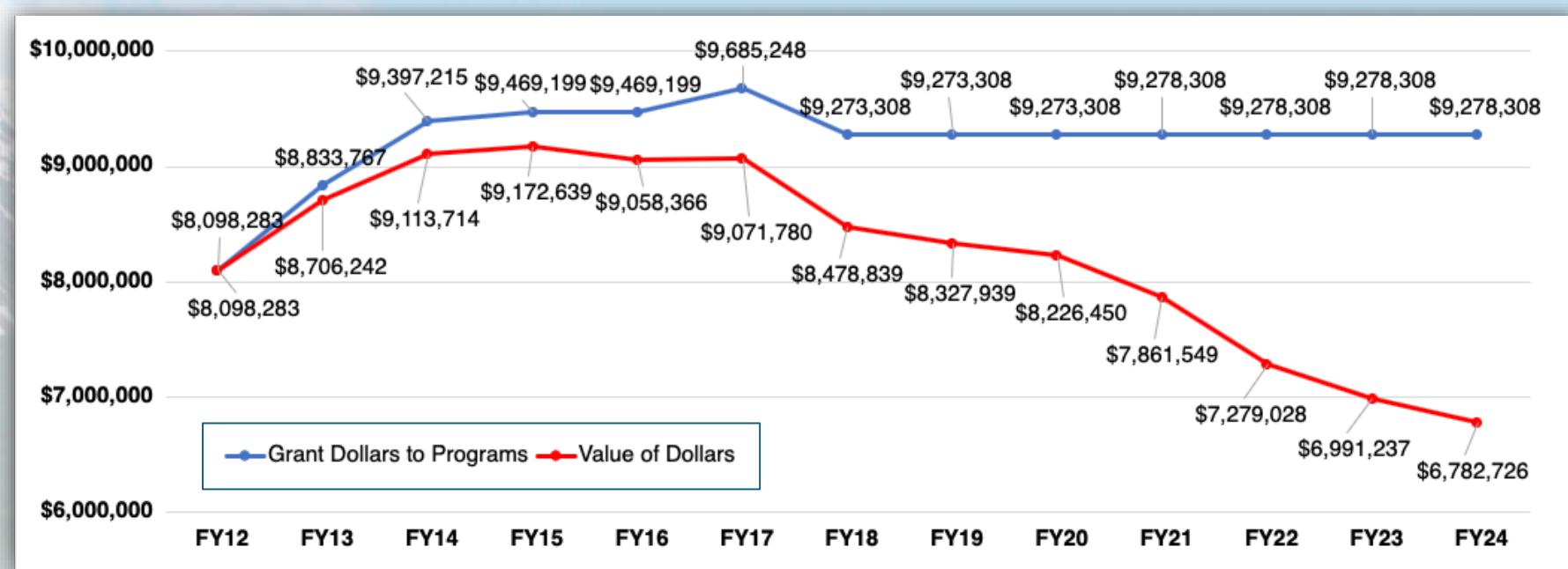
For each child that doesn't need special education due to ILP services, the state could save up to **\$229k**. Further savings from other services such as juvenile justice and adult Medicaid services are expected, but not easily quantified.



5

Challenges in Alaska

- Funding has been flat for a decade, while costs have risen 25%.
- Equity issues: rural and urban disparities in service availability.
- Individual children receive less frequent services due to funding deterioration.



Take-Away: Invest in the People of Alaska

- Approve expanded eligibility and additional \$5.72M funding for AK ILP.
- Ensure all Alaskan children have equitable access to early intervention services.
- ROI: Early intervention saves up to \$229K per child just in special education costs. Annual cost savings up to \$34.9M.





**GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON
DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Legislative Priorities:

- 1. SB 178 Expand Early Intervention Services (ILP Program)**
- 2. HB 246 Special Education Service Agency SESA Funding**
- 3. HB 141 Universal Changing Facilities**
- 4. Waitlist Priorities (InterRAI Funding and HCBS Guidehouse)**
- 5. HB 26 Public and Community Transit**
- 6. SB 8/HB 39 Education for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**
- 7. HB 272 Insurance for Prosthetics & Orthotics**

Thank You

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5 Reasons To Expand Eligibility for Early Intervention



For years early intervention has helped families learn how to be the best teachers for their children with developmental delays or disabilities. Early intervention's evidence-based practice of helping families incorporate intervention strategies into daily routines increases children's rate of growth in key developmental areas, multiplies the opportunities and effects of intervention, and increases the return on every dollar spent.

Discover how early intervention can help the children and families in your community and healthcare practice.

"Investing in the continuum of learning from birth to age 5 not only impacts each child, but it also strengthens our country's workforce today and prepares future generations to be competitive in the global economy tomorrow."

Professor James Heckman, University of Chicago

Reduces Need for Special Education

1

The National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study (NEILS) Special Education and Part C Programs tracked children with a developmental delay and found 46% did not need special education by the time they reached kindergarten as a result of early intervention services.



36%

had no disability, and were not receiving special education services.

10%

were reported to have a disability, but were not receiving special education.

Positive Results for Children

2

Studies found that children who participate in high-quality early intervention/early childhood development programs tend to have:

- Less need for special education and other remedial work.
- Greater language abilities.
- Improved nutrition and health.
- Experienced less child abuse and neglect.



Works with Brain Development

3

Neural circuits create the foundation for learning, behavior and health. These circuits are most flexible from birth to three.

Early social/emotional development provides the foundation upon which cognitive and language skills develop.

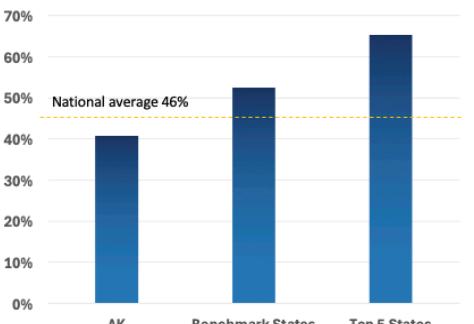
High-quality early intervention services can change a child's developmental trajectory and improve outcomes for children, families, and communities.



Because of Restrictive Eligibility, Alaska Trails Behind Other States

4

States with less restrictive eligibility help more children meet developmental age expectations at age 3 as a result of early intervention services.



Substantial Savings That Can Be Used for Other Education Needs

5

The state could save up to **\$229k** for each child that doesn't need special education due to expanded ILP services. Further savings from other services such as juvenile justice and adult Medicaid services are expected, but not easily quantified.

