



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Early childhood years are crucial in children's optimum development; advocates call for increased investment for children ages *Zero to Five*

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Experts agree that the first five years of life are crucial in ensuring a child's future. While 85 percent of a child's brain development occurs by age 3, VOICES for America's Children finds that in Alabama less than 1 percent of public investments in education and development have occurred by that time.

*Zero to Five Matters*, a statewide early care and education public awareness campaign, is being launched today to educate Alabama decision-makers and business leaders about these vital early years and to advocate for increased investment in Alabama's most vulnerable citizens.

State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson said, "If we know that early childhood sets the stage for school success, and we know that there is a direct correlation with education success and healthier Alabamians, we need to promote the early years as critical to positive changes in a healthier Alabama."

This investment in young children and their families yields tangible economic returns as well when compared with the cost of remedial services later in life. Remedial costs include higher education costs and the cost of imprisonment.

Planning for *Zero to Five Matters* began two years ago when the Alabama Partnership for Children formed a statewide coalition consisting of a diverse group of stakeholders, service providers and child advocates.

*Zero to Five Matters* serves as the first phase of a three-year implementation process of the Alabama Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Plan created over a two-year period to address issues concerning young children and their families. The planning initiative was funded by a federal grant awarded to the Alabama Department of Public Health.

For more information about *Zero to Five Matters* or how to become involved in your community, call toll-free 1-866-711-4025 or visit [www.KidstuffAlabama.org](http://www.KidstuffAlabama.org).

*Zero to Five Matters* is supported by the Alabama Department of Public Health through the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant.

4/5/06

