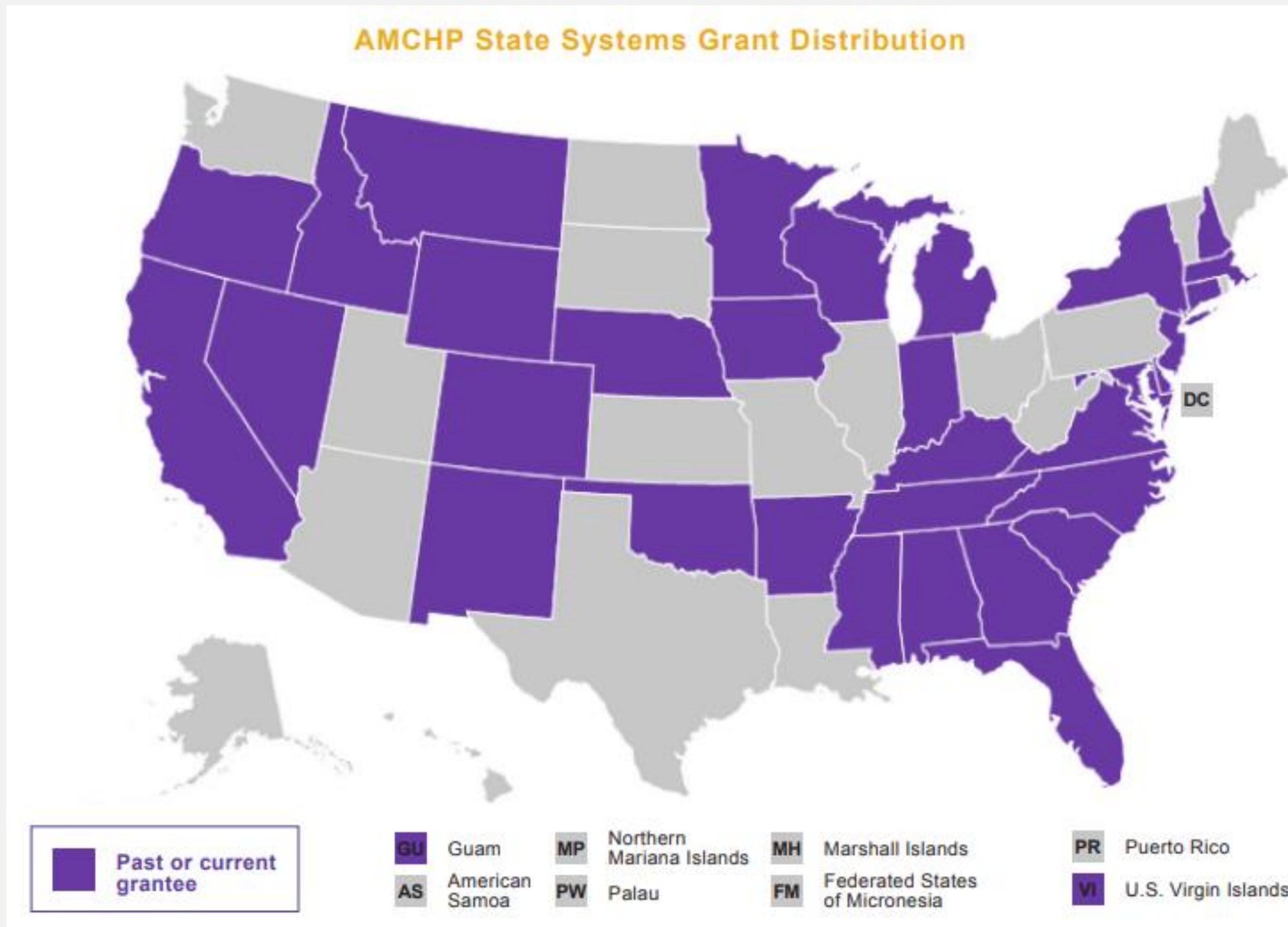# Learn the Signs. Act Early. AMCHP's State Systems Grant: Eight Years (2011 - 2018) in Review

Paige Bussanich, MS, Anna Corona, MPH, Maura Leahy, MPH, Kate Taft, MPH, and Shanel Tage, MPH, Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
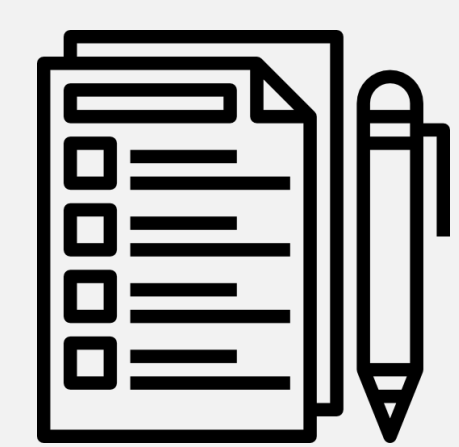
## Background

**AMCHP State Systems Grant Distribution**



Past or current grantee

GU Guam
AS American Samoa
MP Northern Mariana Islands
PW Palau
MH Marshall Islands
FM Federated States of Micronesia
PR Puerto Rico
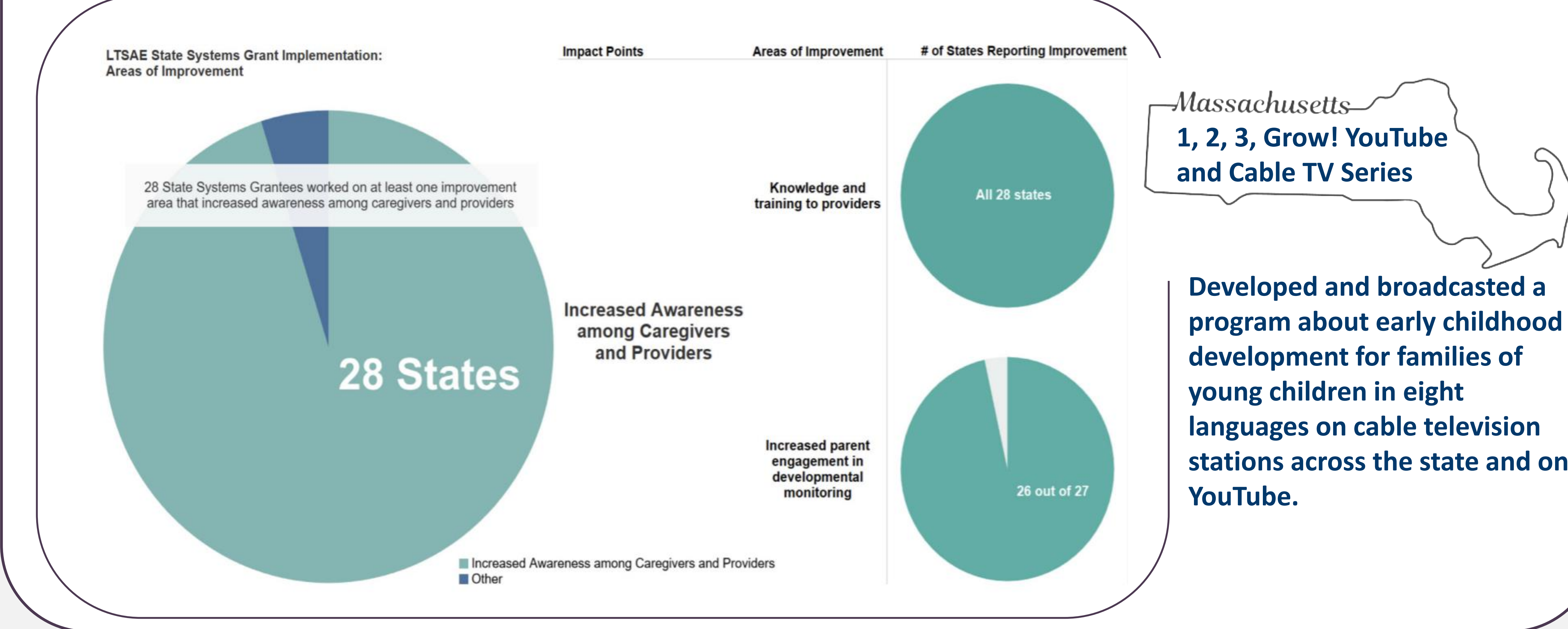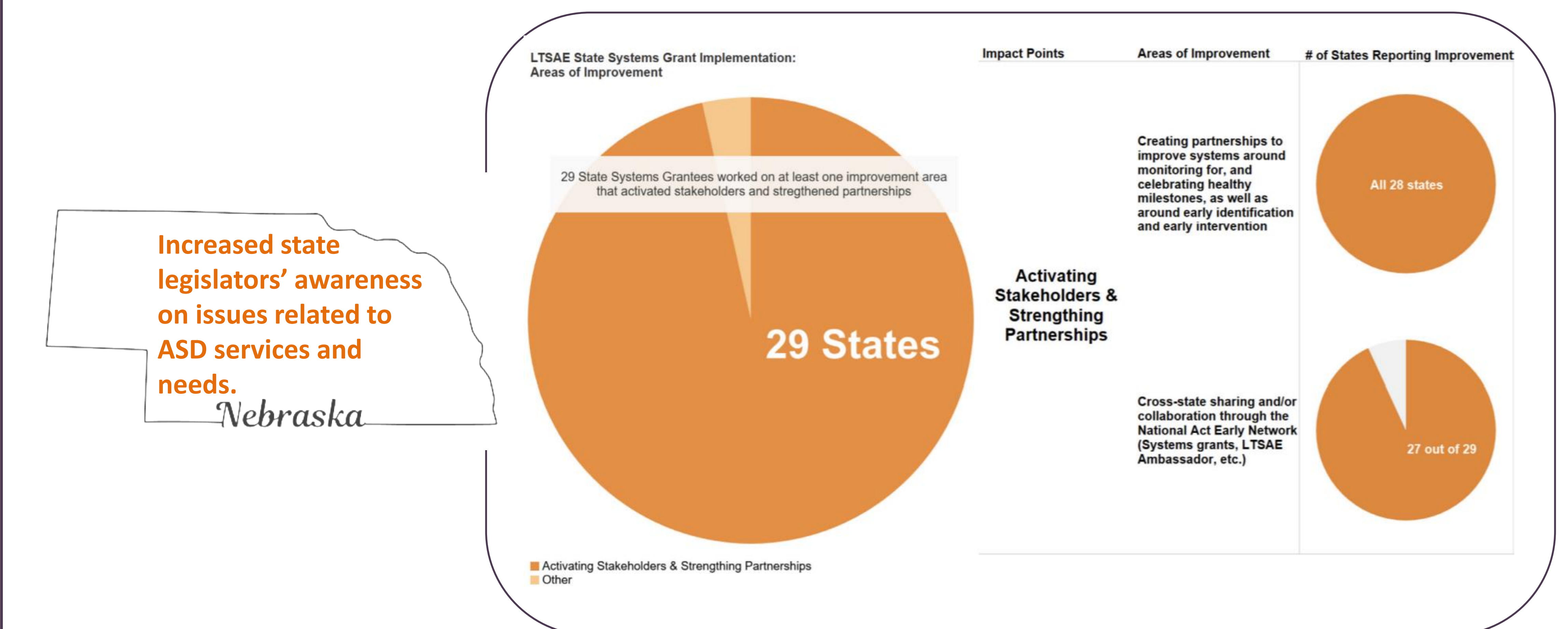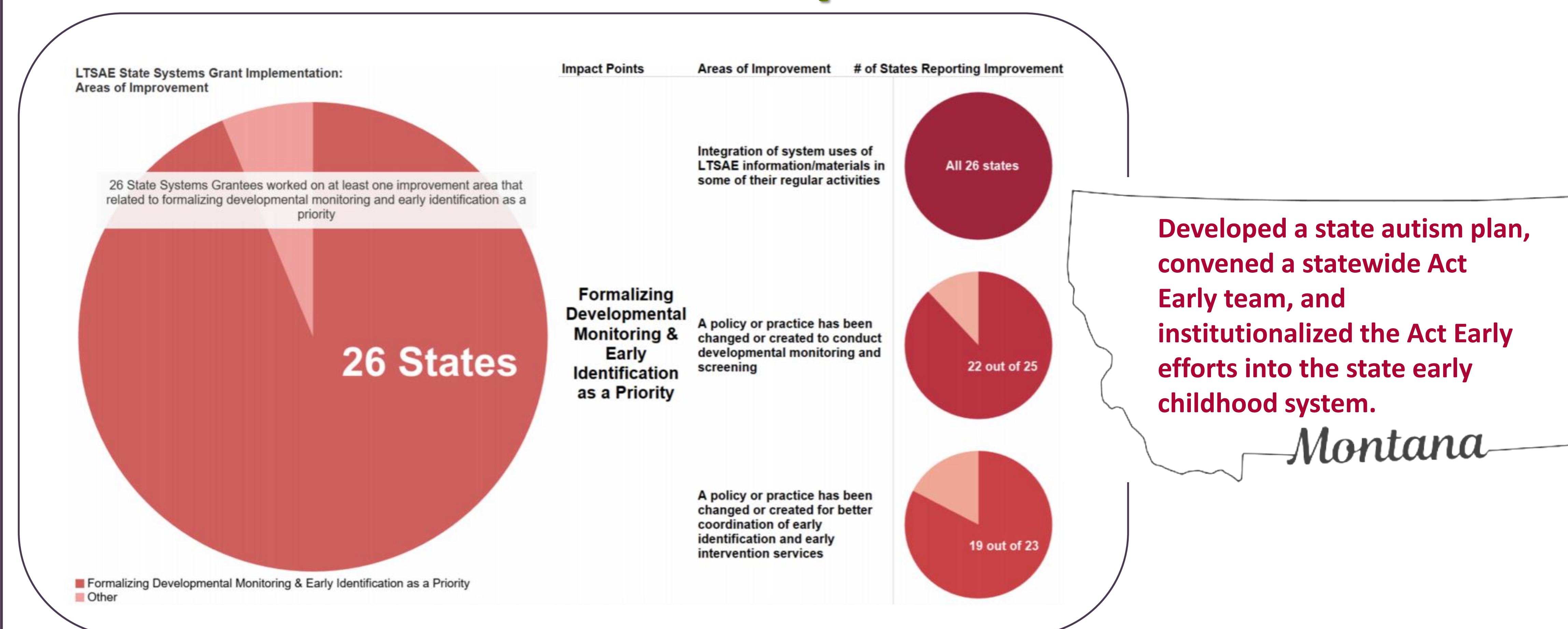VI U.S. Virgin Islands

As part of the CDC's Act Early Initiative, the Act Early Network was created in 2007 and convened Act Early Regional Summits throughout the U.S. from 2008–2010; during this period, states coordinated plans regarding capacity building to identify ongoing needs of children with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities (ASD/DD). In 2010, the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP) began the Learn the Signs. Act Early. (LTSAE) state systems grants in order to complement state activities initiated during the Act Early Summits. The goal of the state systems grant is to strengthen state and community systems for early identification and coordination of services for children with developmental disabilities. In addition to funding grants, AMCHP has provided quarterly technical assistance calls, connected grantees to other states and experts, and supported an interactive grantee listserv. Through support from the CDC and in partnership with the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), LTSAE state system grants have been dispersed among 34 U.S. states and jurisdictions, with 14 participating in more than one cohort.

## Methods

AMCHP conducted an environmental scan of each grantee's applications, mid-year reports, final reports, and quarterly call summaries. Following the environmental scan, AMCHP administered a survey to grant leads in April 2018 to assess each grant's impact and outcomes, sustainability efforts and concerns, and comments not otherwise captured in the environmental scan. Grant leads from 31 states and jurisdictions responded, representing 91 percent of the grantees over the life cycle of the program. The environmental scan findings and survey results were analyzed for common themes.

## Results: Impact Points



**LTSAE State Systems Grant Implementation: Areas of Improvement**

26 State Systems Grantees worked on at least one improvement area that related to formalizing developmental monitoring and early identification as a priority

**26 States** — Formalizing Developmental Monitoring & Early Identification as a Priority

Impact Points | Areas of Improvement | # of States Reporting Improvement

- Integration of system uses of LTSAE information/materials in some of their regular activities — **All 26 states**
- A policy or practice has been changed or created to conduct developmental monitoring and screening — **22 out of 25**
- A policy or practice has been changed or created for better coordination of early identification and early intervention services — **19 out of 23**

*Montana:* Developed a state autism plan, convened a statewide Act Early team, and institutionalized the Act Early efforts into the state early childhood system.



29 State Systems Grantees worked on at least one improvement area that activated stakeholders and strengthened partnerships

**29 States** — Activating Stakeholders & Strengthening Partnerships

- Creating partnerships to improve systems around monitoring for, and celebrating healthy milestones, as well as around early identification and early intervention — **All 28 states**
- Cross-state sharing and/or collaboration through the National Act Early Network (Systems grants, LTSAE Ambassador, etc.) — **27 out of 29**

*Nebraska:* Increased state legislators' awareness on issues related to ASD services and needs.



28 State Systems Grantees worked on at least one improvement area that increased awareness among caregivers and providers

**28 States** — Increased Awareness among Caregivers and Providers

- Knowledge and training to providers — **All 28 states**
- Increased parent engagement in developmental monitoring — **26 out of 27**

*Massachusetts:* 1, 2, 3, Grow! YouTube and Cable TV Series. Developed and broadcasted a program about early childhood development for families of young children in eight languages on cable television stations across the state and on YouTube.

## Partner Organizations



State MCH/CYSHCN Program
Part C/ Part B, Child Find
Hospitals
Home Visiting Programs
Help Me Grow
Faith-based Organizations
AAP
Childcare
Libraries
Other
Early Head Start
Community Organizations
Parent Organizations
WIC
Universities

## Conclusion

The survey and environmental scan revealed a wealth of information on outcomes, impact, and lessons learned from the entire eight years of the LTSAE State Systems grant program. Overall, the grant program was successful in building the capacity of states and jurisdictions to strengthen state and community systems to provide early identification and coordinate services for children with ASD/DD. Although approaches may differ across states and organizational structures, they can be adapted and replicated to aid state systems in increasing developmental monitoring and screening and improving approaches to meet the service needs for children with ASD/DD and their families.

**Learn more at:**
bit.ly/LTSAE19