

# STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT ALL YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Collaborative Improvement & Innovation Network

## WHY DO WE NEED STRONGER EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS?



Research clearly demonstrates responsive, nurturing relationships in safe, engaging environments throughout the earliest years of life (starting prenatally) are at the foundation of healthy development and lifelong success. An early childhood comprehensive system is defined as an organized, purposeful partnership of interrelated and interdependent agencies/organizations, representing health, mental health, social services, families and caregivers, and early childhood education, collaboratively coordinating effective systems of care for children from birth to kindergarten entry.



## WHAT IS THE EARLY CHILDHOOD COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMS COLLABORATIVE IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION NETWORK?



The Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network (CoIIN) is a strategic effort to identify ways to accelerate improvement in early childhood systems, resources and coordination across sectors so that all children can achieve optimal and equitable early childhood developmental health outcomes. In partnership with the ECCS CoIIN Coordinating Center, 12 states and 28 local communities work to both improve systems, processes, structures and norms and generate innovative solutions. The ECCS CoIIN initiative is funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau and informs and contributes to this national effort, as well as advances state and local early childhood system coordination efforts.



## WHAT APPROACHES ARE BEING UTILIZED IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMS COLLABORATIVE IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION NETWORK TO STRENGTHEN EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS?

### Develop and maintain partnerships and network

How: Expand the breadth of partners working to advance collaboration, foster effective collaborations, and promote contribution and impact towards a common vision of optimizing child developmental health

### Provide backbone support & mechanisms for connections and communication between State and community

How: Provide state-level support to community leaders and organizations to innovate, test and spread improvements resulting in a more efficient and coordinated system that supports optimal child development

### Implement capacity building efforts to promote and support early childhood

How: Use national resources, like the CDC's milestone tracker mobile app, to engage families and communities about child developmental health, the importance of developmental screening, and ways to support their optimal development

### Create early childhood systems infrastructure, improvement and sustainability

How: Improve processes between, and across, early childhood providers to allow for seamless connection to services and optimal coordination that support the healthy development of all children

### Advance policies and mobilize funding to sustain systems improvement

How: Work with community partners to identify the trainings and resources needed to develop and implement policies that will solidify, institutionalize and formalize responsive early childhood systems

### Strengthen family partnerships

How: Involve family members from the start as experts and equal partners in co-design processes, programs and services that support and promote child developmental health.



This project is supported by the Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$5,448,329 with 0 percentage financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit [HRSA.gov](https://www.hrsa.gov).

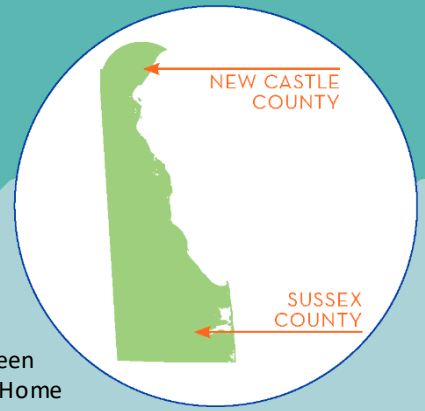


# EARLY CHILDHOOD IN DELAWARE



## CAPACITY-BUILDING EFFORTS

### Promoting & Supporting Early Childhood Development



- Efforts to achieve greater collective impact in early childhood were exemplified by the Early Childhood (EC) community's ability to leverage change within the early childcare and education community. The main goal was to persuade Early Childhood and Education (ECE) programs to utilize the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) as the preferred instrument for developmental screenings statewide, a change from using the Developmental Indicators for Assessment Learning (DIAL) instrument. This initiative began with the award of the ECCS grant in 2016, under the Colonial School Readiness team, which is a member of the New Castle County Place-Based community team. During the past three years, the Colonial team dedicated its time and resources to influence the EC community to switch from the DIAL to the ASQ.
- New Castle County partnered with Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) sorority to hold a "Books, Balls, & Blocks" event, where AKA provided free laundry mats and detergent and ECCS provided developmental promotion materials. This event allowed AKA to complete some community service and ECCS to address developmental promotion goals.
- Beyond the enhanced data collection and surveillance, the state-level team has been working closely with childcare programs, pediatric sites, [Help Me Grow/211](#), and [Child Development Watch](#) (Delaware Part C) to better track referrals and follow up for children identified as being at a higher risk for developmental delay. This improved tracking of children will help ensure that an improvement in age-appropriate developmental skills is met by the end of the project period.
- Through the [University of DE Center for Disabilities](#) and [Learn the Signs. Act Early.](#) Ambassador, the ECCS collaborated on a project involving the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). The project introduced the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) developmental screening checklist at all WIC locations in DE (with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation). WIC programs added the checklist to their intake system, and clients visiting WIC were asked questions based on the checklist. Families falling below the identified threshold were encouraged to call Help Me Grow/2-1-1 for an actual developmental screening to be administered. The data indicated that of the approximately 4000 checklists completed, 758 referrals were made to Help Me Grow, while only six (6) of the referred families actually called the call center.
- Improved collaboration between Help Me Grow/2-1-1 and the Home Visiting Program (HV) had significantly improved services to pregnant women and those families with young children. Improved communications and participation of staff from either party in mutually reinforcing activities has seen a spike of 47% in calls to HMG/2-1-1. Help Me Grow and HV staff have increased their level of communication and improved their processes for referrals, especially with health insurance companies. There's now synergy between these three entities such that health insurance companies refer families eligible for HV services through to HMG/2-1-1, who assist to get them enrolled with the relevant home visiting programs.
- Cultivated a strong rapport with healthcare provider community and early care/education providers/programs through their implementation of PEDS and ASQ, respectively. We are able to collect the ASQ and PEDS screens from these stakeholders and note areas of strength (e.g., an increase in developmental screening rates) as well as suggested areas for improvement (e.g., based on our analyses of these two data sets, enhanced focus should be placed on improving gross and fine motor skills of infants and toddlers).
- Sussex County PBC partners with UD Cooperative Extension program. In 2018, both groups partnered to organize workshops for parents and children where parents learned about healthy eating and received developmental screening materials and children went through a reading program. This partnership led to a strengthened relationship with the Read Aloud program. A plan exists to train [Read Aloud](#) volunteers to administer ASQ screens.
- Sussex PBC project. Bags included developmental screening messages, including Vroom partnered with area hospitals on the Mommy/Baby Bags cards encouraging Moms to read the included book to their children and request another book after reading the first. This encourages reading and improves relational health between parent and child.
- Hosted eight "Books, Balls & Blocks" events, mostly in New Castle AND planned three events in Sussex County, which were delayed due to the pandemic.
- Share promotional materials and blogs
- Created messaging targeting parents on developmental promotion



## POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

### Specific policies include:

- Statewide policy change for all birth-to-five programs to use the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) as the screener in culmination of the work, which started in the Colonial schools. The policy also fostered the collaboration of all 19 school districts across the state to commit to the creating developmental screening page on their websites with links to the ASQ screener for parents' use (free of charge) and subsequent referral and early intervention processes.
- Statewide policy to use ASQ as screener in early childhood education programs. Fostered creation of webpages on all ECE programs with link to online ASQs and subsequent referral and intervention processes
- Enacted Early Childhood Advocacy Day Resolution through New Castle County. This resolution affirms the importance of quality early learning for every citizen and every sector of the state, to celebrate the accomplishments of the past year, and to rededicate ourselves to our shared responsibility for the construction and support of an Early Childhood System that will positively impact children, families, communities, workforce and economic development across the state.
- Early Childhood Education policy to "require that the Department of Education ensure that the standards of the Delaware Stars for Early Success system (which includes use of the ASQ) are consistent with the regulations of the Office of Child Care Licensing"

Contact 1 Title: First Last Name, [Email@email.gov](#) Contact 2 Title: First Last Name, [Email@email.gov](#)

