March 2017 • Volume 5 • Number 2

Early Childhood Development

Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development
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Latest From The Family Room Blog

The following entries are some of the latest from The Family Room Blog.

New Guide for Providing a Trauma-Informed Approach in Human Services
The Guide is intended to provide an introduction to the topic of trauma, a discussion of why understanding and addressing trauma is important for human services programs, and a “road map” to find relevant resources. Continue reading.

Research and Evaluation in 2016
This blog highlights 1 year of research and evaluation at the Administration for Children and Families. Continue reading.

Caring for Mothers, Babies, and Communities Suffering Because of Substance Abuse
This blog discusses the importance of supporting the development of young children who are affected by maternal substance abuse. Continue reading.

Improving Financial Stability Among Low-Income Adults
Early evidence from the Assets for Independence Evaluation shows that the programs increased low-income participants’ savings after 1 year. Continue reading.

ACF’s Continued Focus on Young Children’s Early Childhood Development

Fact: The population projections for 2017 from the U.S. Census Bureau stated that as of January 2017, a new baby will be born in the United States every 8 seconds, and a person will die every 11 seconds.

Fact: On New Year’s Day 2017, the world’s population was expected to be 7,362,350,168, an increase of 77,849,375 (i.e., 1.07 percent) from New Year’s Day 2016.

Fact: As of January 2017, 4.3 births and 1.8 deaths are expected worldwide every second.

Fact: After China and India, the United States is the world’s third most populous country.

You are probably wondering why we are sharing statistics with you in this month’s newsletter. We want to remind everyone that there are a lot of babies being born every day, and our work at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) could not be more important!

As 2017 moves into March, we are working on the implementation of the reauthorized Child Care and Development Fund program, finalizing the efforts from Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership reviews to make new grant awards, hosting webinars in-house and through our Early Childhood National Centers, and reviewing the Early Learning Challenge and Preschool Development Grant Annual Performance Plans that were just submitted. We are working with the Regional Offices to support work throughout the country on ending family and youth homelessness and on preparing materials for the transition team and new leadership.

We look forward to working with all of you during the transition and in the new Administration as we at ACF continue to focus on our youngest children’s quality early childhood development experiences.

We have much work to do! Together, we will continue to make a difference.

Have you been to our Web site recently?
Learn more about the Office of Early Childhood Development: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd.
From the Office of Child Care

Resources for Disasters and Emergencies
The Office of Child Care (OCC) Child Care Resources for Disasters and Emergencies Web page now includes a link to a new resource that can support those seeking help after a disaster. The resource, Post-Disaster Child Care Needs and Resources, is designed to address the challenges that families and child care providers (including centers, in-home providers, and family child care providers) might experience following a disaster.

The workgroup on Post-Disaster Recovery of Child Care identified several concerns and issues that adversely affect child care services following disasters as well as Federal and nongovernmental organization support that can provide relief in those instances. This document serves to catalog those resources by the identified gaps for families in need of child care, child care providers, and communities.

Emerging State Leaders Peer Learning Forum: Leading Change and Influencing People

Overview
The Child Care State Capacity Building Center is sponsoring a new cohort of Emerging State Leaders: Leading Change and Influencing People, a peer learning forum for emerging State leaders who seek to improve their knowledge and skills around leading change and influencing people as part of their contribution to a strong early learning system.

The opportunities and challenges confronting States and Territories are cross-cutting and complex. They require leaders at all levels to achieve results by coordinating groups of people, resources, and policies beyond their immediate control. Thus, leading change and influencing others are paramount skills in contributing to a strong early learning system. This opportunity is for emerging leaders who wish to benefit from cutting-edge research, theory, and practice.

The Child Care State Capacity Building Center will soon work with a new cohort of emerging State leaders. To see the Peer Learning Syllabus, use this Web link.

Child Care & Early Education Research Connections

Research Connections regularly reviews its latest acquisitions and identifies reports and journal articles of high policy relevance.

Research Findings
What are the trends in classroom quality and selected teacher characteristics between 2006 and 2014 based on data from the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES)?

How does instructional book-reading style and emotional quality of reading interact and relate to cognitive skills in a sample of at-risk infants and toddlers?

What are the biggest challenges in measuring the economic returns to early education programs?

What is the association between child care attendance and obesity?

How effective is the three-tier model of positive behavior interventions and supports for preschoolers in Head Start?

Research Findings on Play
How do early childhood educators’ and home child care providers’ practices support children’s play?

What is the impact of play-based vs. non-play-based approaches in early childhood education on preschoolers’ private speech and mastery motivation?

Policy Resources
What is the relationship between Minnesota’s child care shortage and the decrease in in-home family child care business?

What are the key initiatives that have started or expanded early childhood programs and policies in New York City?

How is the School Readiness Tax Credit benefiting Louisiana families and communities?

How are policy leaders and school districts achieving Pre-K–3 alignment in California’s education system?
Early Childhood Workforce

Early Childhood Workforce

EarlyEdU Alliance: A Higher Education Collaborative for Head Start and Early Childhood Teaching

The need for high-quality early childhood (EC) teachers is greater than ever. Increasingly, early learning programs—such as Head Start, State-funded preschool, and private programs—focus on achieving measurable outcomes for children. Teachers must understand child development and need to master instructional practices that engage young children in learning at every opportunity.

That is why the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning, funded by the Office of Head Start, launched EarlyEdU Alliance. This higher education initiative works to advance EC teaching by providing a suite of courses for EC educators to prepare them for classroom success.

Research-Based Courses To Improve Teaching

A team of EC experts from top universities developed the EarlyEdU courses. Each course is built on tested frameworks for intentional teaching and promotes the evidence-based knowledge, skills, and practices that EC teachers need to help young learners thrive.

The courses are designed for prospective EC educators and current teachers working in a wide variety of preschool settings. They will be delivered in partnership with faculty at 4-year colleges and universities.

Flexible and Proven Technology

All EarlyEdU courses are available as classroom versions, and many will be available on line. In addition to expert content, the courses take advantage of an innovative online platform, the Coaching Companion Campus Edition, which allows students to upload and annotate videos of their own teaching. The courses are designed for students working toward a Bachelor of Arts degree, and each course includes:

- Three content-rich syllabi and reading lists
- Three practice-based assignments and grading rubrics
- Three engaging lectures
- Three rich digital media resources, such as video vignettes, guest lectures, and interviews with researchers
- Three assignments that challenge students to demonstrate improved teaching practices in real-world settings.

For more information, see www.earlyedualliance.org. If you have any questions, please contact info@earlyedualliance.org.
Early Childhood Homelessness

Idaho’s New Training: Strengthening Families” Protective Factors in Families Experiencing Homelessness

A new training for child care programs helps participants identify concrete strategies for promoting the five Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors in families experiencing homelessness.

Families needing child care are as different as their children. Child care programs never know which families will arrive at the door, but rest assured, they all have two things in common: (1) parents want what’s best for their children, and (2) every family has strengths. When programs intentionally implement Strengthening Families: A Protective Factors Framework, from the Center for the Study of Social Policy, they promote five specific Protective Factors that reduce stress and promote optimal outcomes in families. Although every family benefits from partnering with a program using Strengthening Families, a program infused with the framework can be an especially powerful resource for families experiencing homelessness.

Every family already has all the following five Protective Factors that program staff can recognize and promote through intentional, everyday actions.

- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Concrete support in times of need
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Social and emotional competence of children.

Idaho’s training for child care programs teaches key strategies to promote the Protective Factors specifically in families who are homeless. The goal is to develop concrete strategies by studying the lived experience of a mother and her three children. Participants at the 2-hour training explore the definition, effects, and rates of homelessness in Idaho and across the Nation; identify signs and symptoms of trauma they might see in children experiencing homelessness; and most importantly, create an action plan to use the Protective Factors to reduce stress in families. The action plan draws on a list of recommended practices and is grounded in personal resolve.

The training is experiential, and its success depends on capturing the wisdom in the group of participants. Child care providers already naturally promote the Protective Factors through their everyday actions; with intentionality comes a higher level of awareness that focuses efforts to partner with families in a meaningful way. The Strengthening Families framework is central to safe, stable, and nurturing child care environments. Everyday actions that consciously promote resilience, contribute to the knowledge of parenting and child development, model social and emotional competence, offer a healthy social connection, and connect families to helpful resources reduce stress in families as they transition to a stable home.

For more information about Strengthening Families, visit this Web site.

To learn more about Idaho’s new training, contact Jane Zink, IdahoSTARS Quality Rating and Improvement System Coordinator and Strengthening Families Coordinator, The IdahoSTARS Project, at jzink@idahoaeyc.org.

HHS: Supporting Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness

By: Commander Kent Forde, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Over the last several months of 2016, I spent 1 day a week with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). I had the opportunity to witness progress firsthand. These successes included strengthening collaboration efforts among health and housing agencies, expanding early care and education for children experiencing homelessness, and building on guidance to help States connect families experiencing homelessness to stable, permanent housing. Each of those successes was built on a foundation of evidence-based and promising practices as well as a commitment to action.

Read the full blog via this Web link.

USICH Releases Criteria and Benchmarks for Ending Family and Youth Homelessness

USICH released the criteria and benchmarks for achieving the goal of ending family and youth homelessness.

- Review the Criteria and Benchmarks for Ending Family Homelessness
- Review the Criteria and Benchmarks for Ending Youth Homelessness

The issue of Advances in Child and Family Policy and Practice, focused on Child and Family Well-Being and Homelessness, was released (Editor, Mary E. Haskett, Department of Psychology, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina). This summary of policy recommendations focuses on three areas: (1) the integration of policies and practices for families experiencing homelessness, (2) the promotion of healthy families, and (3) a building of the evidence base to guide effective policy.
Developing a Tool To Examine Teachers’ Use of Ongoing Child Assessment To Individualize Instruction
Explore this report and brief to learn about the draft Examining Data Informing Teaching measure, its development, lessons learned, and next steps for development and future use.

Findings on Overweight and Obesity From the Head Start Health Manager Descriptive Study
Head Start health managers in 86 percent of programs consider overweight and obesity among children to be a major concern. Explore this brief to learn more about what the Head Start Health Manager Descriptive Study tells us about overweight and obesity.

Findings on Mental and Behavioral Health From the Head Start Health Manager Descriptive Study
What can the Head Start Health Manager Descriptive Study tell us about mental and behavioral health and social-emotional well-being in Head Start (HS)/Early Head Start (EHS)? Explore this brief, which focuses on these topics and how HS staff and programs leverage resources to work on these issues.

Findings on Family Engagement From the Head Start Health Manager Descriptive Study
What can the Head Start Health Manager Descriptive Study tell us about family engagement in the health services component of HS/EHS? Explore this brief, which considers the ways in which programs support family engagement, barriers to engagement, and promising practices.

Key Aspects of CCDF Policies Across States and Territories
Explore this in-depth look at Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) policies in all States and Territories as of October 1, 2015.

Protecting Privacy When Using Technology in Early Childhood Settings
Explore this brief on the privacy and security considerations related to technology that early childhood practitioners can access via the Internet as part of their work.
Trauma-Informed Care Supports Early Childhood Development

More than two-thirds of children in the United States experience trauma—intense events or circumstances that threaten or cause harm to a child’s emotional and physical well-being. Examples include abuse and neglect, domestic violence, homelessness, the loss of a loved one, or a serious injury. Young children (from birth to age 5) are disproportionately exposed to trauma, including maltreatment, domestic violence, and serious injuries.

Many people believe that young children are not seriously affected by trauma or that they will “bounce back” after a traumatic event; science has debunked this myth. Some children return to typical functioning, but research shows that young children perceive, remember, and react to traumatic events and can develop posttraumatic stress and mental health problems. However, their reactions differ from older children and adults. Infants and toddlers cannot verbalize their feelings and might cry excessively, have difficulty sleeping or eating, or show extreme distress when separating from caregivers. Preschoolers could regress in previously mastered skills, withdraw, behave aggressively, have physical symptoms, or act out traumatic events during play.

There are effective strategies for supporting young children who experience trauma. The presence of a nurturing adult who can help the child reestablish a sense of safety and security and can buffer the impact of trauma is most important. Evidence-based trauma treatments are effective in reducing trauma’s effects and can support sensitive caregiving. However, a collaborative system of trauma-informed care is essential in addressing early childhood trauma.

Trauma-Informed Care

Trauma-informed care (TIC) encompasses a variety of approaches to working with children who have been exposed to trauma. (See the Resource Guide to Trauma-Informed Human Services.) According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the TIC approach:

• Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands the potential paths for recovery
• Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma
• Integrates knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices
• Seeks to actively resist retraumatization.

Below are five ways that TIC supports early childhood development.

1. TIC helps caregivers and systems recognize and respond to trauma.

Parents, service providers, and other caregivers trained in TIC learn effective ways to interact with young children, including helping them cope with trauma “triggers,” supporting self-regulation, and providing referrals to trauma screening and evidence-based treatment.

2. TIC promotes a common language and approach.

A shared approach helps create a collective understanding of trauma and ways to address its impact. For instance, TIC in the Massachusetts Child Trauma Project included training child welfare staff, disseminating evidence-based treatments, and establishing interdisciplinary teams to implement TIC, leading to reduced child behavior problems and posttraumatic stress.

3. Everyone in a child’s life has a role to play in TIC.

Mental health providers are not the only people who are essential to TIC. Parents, early childhood educators, pediatricians, judges, child welfare workers, and other service providers play important roles. TIC requires collaboration among the adults in children’s lives. For example, Head Start Trauma Smart strategically partners Head Start staff and mental health providers.

4. TIC supports adults’ capacity to cope with their own trauma responses.

Many parents have trauma histories that could compromise their ability to be sensitive caregivers. Moreover, service providers who work with trauma-exposed children can suffer severe stress and burnout. TIC emphasizes self-care and an increase in adults’ capacity to work through their trauma reactions.

5. TIC is receiving increased attention from policymakers.

Policymakers increasingly recognize the importance of TIC. In Texas the child welfare system is legislatively mandated to provide trauma training for caseworkers, foster and adoptive parents, and kinship caregivers. Other policies focus on TIC in the health care, mental health, and juvenile justice systems.

Child Trends contributors: Jessica Dym Bartlett, Ph.D., M.S.W.; Kristin Anderson Moore, Ph.D.; April Wilson, Ph.D.; and Zakia Redd, M.P.P.

New Guide for Providing a Trauma-Informed Approach in Human Services

The Administration for Children and Families; SAMHSA; the Administration for Community Living; and the Offices of the Assistant Secretary for Health and Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, developed a Resource Guide to Trauma-Informed Human Services. The Guide is intended to provide an introduction to the topic of trauma, a discussion of why understanding and addressing trauma is important for human services programs, and a “road map” to find relevant resources. See the announcement via this Web link.
Supporting Families Who Have Children With Developmental Delays

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) of the Flathead Reservation in Montana manage a home visiting program for pregnant women, expecting fathers, and families of children as old as age 5. The program is often the first-responder when it comes to helping families recognize and address developmental delays. Home visitors credit the trusting relationships that they have with families, where parents feel comfortable sharing concerns and asking for help.

Home visitor Juanita Swaney recalled a family whose toddler had an apparent speech delay. “I put it in the parents’ hands first and asked, ‘How do you think his speech is going?’” said Swaney. “They paused to think about it. I asked if they would like a screening to be done to see where their child was at. The mother said yes; she had been kind of worried but didn’t want to say anything. So I made a referral and got her connected with a speech therapist. That interaction with the family and building that trust is really key.”

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The CSKT home visiting program is supported by grants from the Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program and Tribal Early Learning Initiative, which are overseen by the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The home visiting model that CSKT has chosen to follow is Parents as Teachers, which uses a developmental screening tool called Ages and Stages.

Continue reading the full article via this Web link.

Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation

Using Data for Family and Program Progress

Explore the Using Data for Family and Program Progress Web page for resources about implementing the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework in your program.

Putting the Head Start PFCE Framework To Work in Your Program: ISPP Part I

Use this resource to become familiar with the PFCE Framework and how it applies to program practice. Complete the Integrating Strategies for Program Progress (ISPP) self-assessment tool provided to track your progress. This resource is available in Spanish (español).

Putting the PFCE Framework To Work in Your Program: ISPP Part II

Ready to take your knowledge about the PFCE Framework to the next level? Explore the connections between engagement strategies and the ability to reach family and child outcomes. Practice by using the exercises and discussion questions to deepen your practice. This resource is available in Spanish (español).
Early Learning Challenge Grants

Strategies and Processes Contributing to CIZ Grantee Success

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, conducted a study examining the innovative and successful family engagement efforts that are happening in Pennsylvania’s Community Innovation Zones (CIZ). Highlights from the interim findings include the following.

• **Process of implementation:** Grantees faced some initial challenges in collaboration with local partners, but over time, many grantees found value in information-sharing and collaboration. In addition, grantees have benefited from the support of family engagement and CIZ specialists, particularly appreciating the individualized support provided by the specialists.

• **Family engagement strategies:** Grantees have found success in using technology and social media to engage and communicate with families and in providing leadership opportunities for family members. Furthermore, family engagement efforts in CIZs have been most successful when grantees are sensitive to families’ needs and concerns, particularly around family circumstances, competing demands, and beliefs about their children’s education.

Get more details with this [indepth summary of the interim findings](#).

Building a Better Child Care System: What Michigan Can Do To Help More Parents and Children Access Quality Care

This report, prepared for the Office of Great Start, Michigan Department of Education, identifies ways to improve Michigan’s child care system, particularly focusing on methods related to the State’s child care subsidy. Recommendations include ways to improve the ability of low-income families to access the subsidy, which includes simplifying the application process, changing eligibility thresholds, and rationalizing the way that providers are reimbursed.

Preschool Development Grant Highlight

Supporting Young Children: Addressing Poverty, Promoting Opportunity, and Advancing Equity in Policy

The statistic that one in five, or 4.2 million, children younger than age 5 live in poverty is troubling in a Nation as wealthy as the United States. This situation is made even more troubling by the fact that poverty does not affect all children equally. Young children of color are significantly more likely to experience poverty than their white peers. In this webinar, Melanie Meisenheimer, from the Center for the Study of Social Policy, reviews the data on poverty and examines the policies and systems that create and maintain these racial disparities and that deny millions of young children of color access to equitable opportunities for learning and healthy physical and social-emotional development. You can access the PowerPoint and recording on [this Web site](#).
Early Childhood Health

Health Literacy Highlighted

The health information readily available today is not usable by most Americans. Nearly 9 out of 10 adults have limited health literacy and find it difficult to fully use and follow everyday health information. Health literacy is defined as the degree to which individuals can obtain, process, and understand the basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions. Limited health literacy affects people’s ability to adopt healthy lifestyle behaviors and is associated with worse health outcomes and higher costs. Without clear information and an understanding of prevention and healthy lifestyles, people are more likely to skip necessary medical tests, visit the emergency room more often, and have a hard time managing chronic diseases.

Early childhood programs can have an active role in improving the health literacy of their families by building partnerships with parents and caregivers that focus on the health and well-being of their children. Parental health literacy is defined as parents’ knowledge and understanding about basic health topics as well as their ability to navigate health systems, and such literacy is linked to the health and long-term outcomes of their young children. Numerous studies have found a link between low parental health literacy and child health outcomes and have found evidence that interventions providing written materials and educational opportunities can increase parental health knowledge and can improve health behaviors. To effectively reach parents and to change behavior, interventions need to be engaging, culturally sensitive, and clear with regard to the language used. Improving parental health literacy also has the potential to improve children’s school readiness and long-term outcomes, as research has documented a strong link between child health and later educational success.

The National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness (NCECHW) has successfully worked with Head Start programs nationwide to improve their families’ knowledge, skills, and understanding of basic health topics. The NCECHW Health Care Institute uses a structured approach to health education using business management principles, such as marketing, planning, data collection, and followup, and provides low-literacy, health-related materials in multiple languages. More than 130,000 families have been trained using this approach since 2001.

You can find more health literacy-related information on this Web site.

To sign up to receive this newsletter, please e-mail marsha.basloe@acf.hhs.gov and include the subject line “Early Childhood Development Newsletter.”

If you have questions or comments regarding the newsletter, please contact marsha.basloe@acf.hhs.gov.

For more information on the Office of Early Childhood Development at ACF, visit this Web site.

The Early Childhood Development newsletter contains links to other Web sites and news articles. These links represent just a few examples of the numerous reference materials currently available to the public. The opinions expressed in any articles or on Web pages do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The inclusion of resources should not be construed or interpreted as an endorsement of any private organization or business listed herein.

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http://www.acf.hhs.gov/rss
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