

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

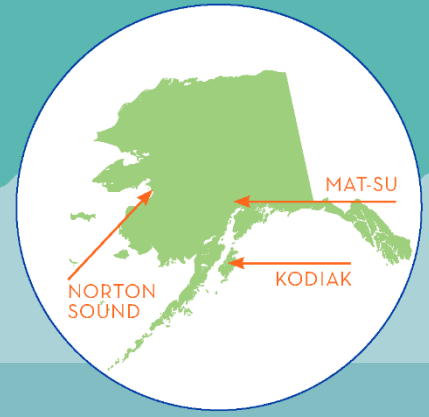
How: Involve family members from the start as experts and equal partners in co-design processes, programs and services that support and promote child developmental health.



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 ALASKA



EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS

Infrastructure, Improvement, and Sustainability

STATE LEVEL

State Improvement Grantee (SIG)

- Participated in a Joint Task Force to support three early childhood initiatives with two shared goals: an early childhood needs assessment and a unified strategic plan. The Joint Task Force was comprised of approximately 30 early childhood experts from around the state, to advise on shared goals toward strengthening and aligning Alaska's Early Childhood System.
- Provides co-ordination of the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC), chaired by the Commissioners of the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED). The purpose of the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC) is to promote positive development, improved health outcomes, and school readiness for children prenatal through age eight by creating a culturally responsive, comprehensive, and accessible service delivery system that links service providers, empowers families, and engages communities.
- Established a Universal Developmental Screening Advisory Committee based on findings from a March 2020 Help Me Grow Alaska report on the status of universal developmental screening efforts in Alaska. The group began quarterly meetings in September 2020 and provides a platform for stakeholder engagement in order to improve and coordinate current efforts.
- In partnership with Help Me Grow Alaska, established the Early Childhood Network (ECN). The purpose of the ECN is to bring together the leads of statewide early childhood coalitions and child-focused groups for the purpose of networking, resource sharing and specific didactic training. They offer monthly meetings to foster deeper connection and communication amongst those working to improve community-level early childhood systems and provide opportunities to develop and share ideas for this work.
- In partnership with the Office of Children's Services (OCS), the ECCS Program Manager oversees the Developmental Screening Stipend Initiative to increase healthcare provider utilization of the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), and increase data sharing through the statewide ASQ-online system.

LOCAL COMMUNITY – KODIAK

- Led by Kodiak Area Native Association and with collaboration of the Kodiak Early Childhood Coalition (KECC). Membership includes representation from WIC, the Housing Authority, local preschools, the United States Coast Guard, Head Start, Parents as Teachers (PAT) home visiting, thread Alaska, the school district, Infant Learning Program (ILP), continuing education, and more.

LOCAL COMMUNITY – NORTON SOUND

- Led by the Norton Sound Early Childhood Coalition (NSECC). It has strong parent involvement and includes members from the Norton Sound Health Corporation, WIC, two Head Start programs, ILP, Behavioral Health

Services, the school districts in the region, tribal representation, and more. NSECC's mission is to promote access to early care and learning opportunities, shares information and resources with families and providers about child development and encourages collaboration among providers so that all young children and families in Norton Sound thrive.

LOCAL COMMUNITY – MATANUSKA SUSITNA

- Led by R.O.C.K. Mat-Su (*Raising Our Children with Kindness*), a borough-wide collective working to promote family resilience and reduce child maltreatment through systems change. The collective is composed of more than 50 cross-sector partner organizations, including representatives from behavioral health, child welfare, early childhood education, government, health care, Infant Learning Program (ILP), philanthropy, public education, and tribal partners.

CAPACITY-BUILDING EFFORTS

Promoting & Supporting Early Childhood Development



STATE LEVEL

- Provided multiple training and technical support opportunities to assist each community in building and/or sustaining their early childhood coalitions. Training topics included continuous quality improvement (CQI) methodology, coalition strategic planning, coalition meeting facilitation, and including data to inform decisions in early childhood.
- Help Me Grow Alaska launched and piloted in the three ECCS communities. They are now accepting calls and referrals statewide and are an integral part in both state and community level ECCS activities.
- Increased the number of children receiving ASQ screenings in the ECCS place-based communities by 54% since 2017.
- Increased the number of health care partners actively involved in the state's developmental screening stipend program. Partnered with Prentice Consulting and the Alaska Center for Pediatrics (ACP) to provide technical assistance, coaching, support, and outreach to pediatric providers on administering the ASQ and gathering data.

LOCAL COMMUNITY – KODIAK

- Developed more culturally relevant Learn the Signs. Act Early. developmental checklists, in partnership with the leadership from Help Me Grow Alaska and in partnership with the LEND Fellowship Program
- Collaborated with HMG-AK to provide a community resource database
- Engaged partners in healthcare and education by promoting and supporting developmental screening and care coordination

screening in Nome's Primary Care Clinic and expanded to well-child checks region wide to the more isolated and rural villages in the region

LOCAL COMMUNITY – MATANUSKA SUSITNA

- Collaborated with HMG-AK and Connect Mat-Su to develop a community resource database and increase awareness through outreach
- Recruited participation in the Developmental Screening Stipend Initiative
- Provided trainings to shift mental models about Adverse Childhood Experiences, child care sustainability, child sexual abuse prevention, racial equity, and trauma informed practices.
- Developed and sustained a therapeutic court using the ZERO TO THREE Safe Babies Team™ model.

LOCAL COMMUNITY – NORTON SOUND

- Collaborated with HMG-AK to provide a community resource database
- Engaged partners in healthcare and education by promoting and supporting developmental screening and care coordination
- Physician Champions took the momentum of conducting developmental

Alaska ECCS Impact Grantee Contact Information: Emily Urlacher, ECCS Program Manager, Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Health, Section of Women's, Children's & Family Health, 3601 C St. Suite 322, Anchorage, AK 99503 (907)269-3405 or Emily.Urlacher@alaska.gov

