

# 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

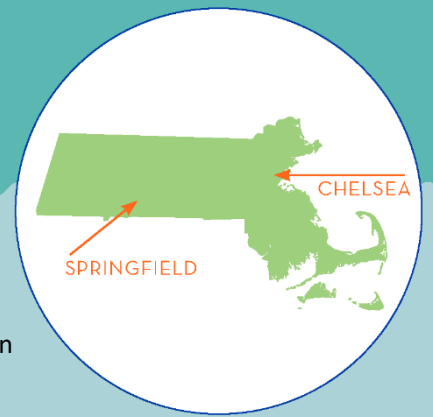
How: Involve family members from the start as experts and equal partners in co-design processes, programs and services that support and promote child developmental health.



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# EARLY CHILDHOOD IN MASSACHUSETTS



## MA EARLY COMPREHENSIVE CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS (MECCS) IMPACT PROJECT SUMMARY

**Impact Grantee:** Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Family Health & Nutrition

**Local Communities:** Chelsea and Springfield

### Project Goals:

- Promote alignment and collaboration across early childhood and family health initiatives to streamline services and supports for young children and families
- Support sustainable early childhood Collective Impact initiatives in Chelsea and Springfield, the MECCS Place-Based Communities
- Elevate diverse family voices and develop sustainable platforms for family leaders to inform early childhood and family health services and supports



## CAPACITY-BUILDING EFFORTS

Promoting & Supporting Early Childhood Development

### Community Early Childhood Systems Innovations

#### LOCAL COMMUNITY - CHELSEA

- Established Chelsea Early Childhood Network (CECN), comprised of 40+ cross-systems partners. Achievements include an electronic early childhood resource guide, an annual early childhood resource fair, promotion of common messaging on child development, a Parent Leadership Committee, and involvement in Chelsea's pandemic emergency response team.
- Co-leading pilot of Integrated Referral and Intake System (IRIS), a web-based communication tool and referral network, which will also be used as the referral tool in a pilot program to support pregnant and parenting families impacted by COVID-19 stressors.

#### LOCAL COMMUNITY - SPRINGFIELD

- Implementing [DRIVE, a developmental health promotion initiative from the United Way](#), that builds community capacity to engage all families in developmental screening and makes screening data actionable
- Created a professional development series on racial justice, health equity, and cultural humility for cross-systems providers who work with young children and families
- Collaborating with the public school system and community partners to explore a system to link developmental screening data with the school district's data system

## EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS

Infrastructure, Improvement, and Sustainability



### SYSTEMS ALIGNMENT

- Through the state's Preschool Development Grant, MECCS played a leadership role in reaching a data sharing agreement on key indicators of child developmental health across systems of education, health and human services, spanning four state agencies
- The MECCS strategic plan to embed a racial equity lens across all project activities includes co-facilitating a dialogue between early childhood partners on aligning racial equity efforts and supporting cross-systems learning and resource sharing
- MECCS designed an infrastructure to connect community-state systems improvement activities to enhance information sharing, scale innovations, and develop consistent measurements. This includes multiple touchpoints for cross-team learning, including an annual convening to promote shared approaches and creative problem solving across teams.

## FAMILY LEADERSHIP

### STATE LEVEL

- MECCS supports a growing cohort of family leaders to guide DPH early childhood program design and decision making within an existing cross-systems advisory council. MECCS has also integrated our family leadership efforts within MA Title V priorities and state action plans.

### LOCAL COMMUNITY - CHELSEA

- Established part-time Family Navigator position, a bilingual/bicultural Chelsea parent who outreaches to families of young children not engaged in services and provides information, referrals, and warm hand-offs based on family preferences and needs

### LOCAL COMMUNITY - SPRINGFIELD

- Developed a cadre of family leaders who convene a monthly family council as well as provide outreach and support to families of young children in Springfield, including engaging families in developmental screening through DRIVE



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