



Early Childhood Landscape

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Leadership North Carolina 2024-2025



Objectives

- Understand the importance of early experiences and brain development
 - Explain the value of promoting social and emotional well-being in young children
 - Describe several early childhood education efforts in NC
-

DIVISION OF CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING: WHAT WE DO

The Division of Child and Family Well-Being (DCFW) coordinates behavioral health, physical health, and social/nutrition programs to support a whole child and whole family approach to child and family well-being. Using a health equity lens, our strategies include:



Enhancing how children and families access programs that support their well-being

Coordination across programs serving children and families allows more families to access programs across mental, social, and health services. An early area of work was making it easier for families to enroll in the nutrition programs in the Division (e.g., WIC and FNS).



Coordinating increased investments to improve child health and well-being

The investments will be informed by data with a focus on closing equity gaps in child well-being. An early focus was maximizing the impact of the federal American Rescue Plan funds to address inequities in child well-being, including increasing access to youth mental health services.



Moving upstream of the behavioral health crisis

DCFW is part of DHHS's collective commitment to building innovative, coordinated, and whole-person centered systems that recognize that physical, behavioral and social health are interdependent and that preventing the onset of health issues is the best way to support children thriving.

Sections of the Division of Child and Family Well-Being

Food and Nutrition Services

- North Carolina's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Community Nutrition Services

- North Carolina's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

Early Intervention

- North Carolina Early Intervention/Infant or Infant Toddler Program (ITP) provides supports and services to children birth to 3 with developmental delays or established conditions (which include mental health supports and services)

Whole Child Health

- Child Behavioral Health
- School, Adolescent and Child Health
- Child and Family Wellness
- Best Practices
- Genetics and Newborn Screening

Data on Infants and Children

Demographics

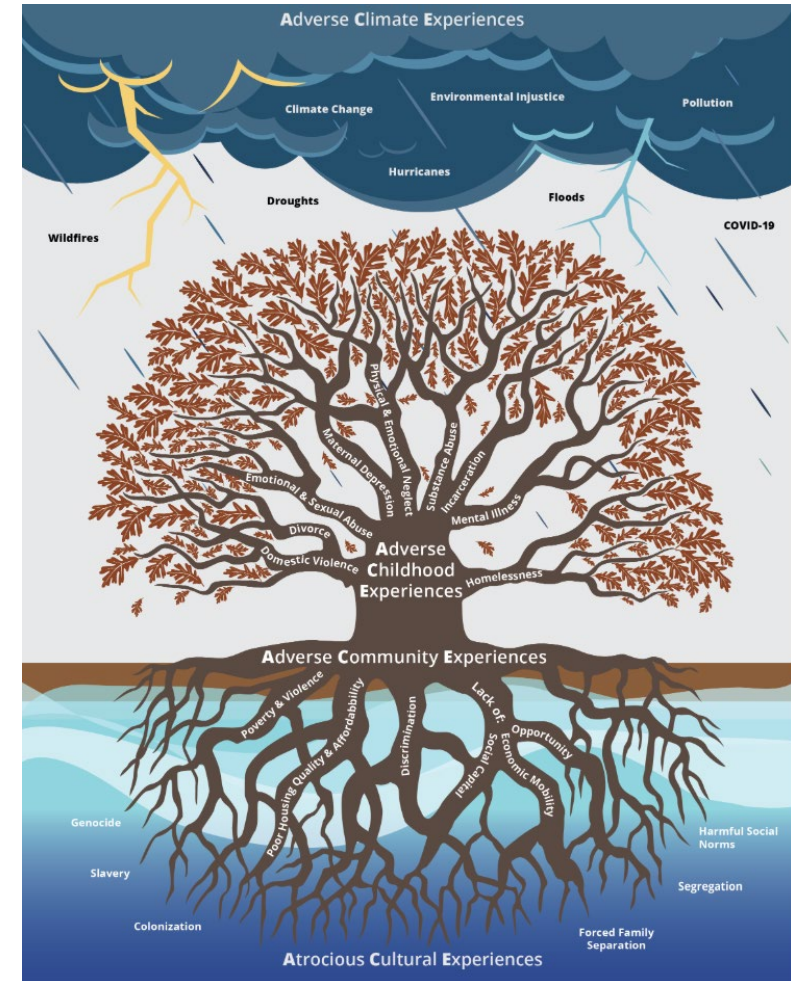
- In 2021, NC had 590K children ages 0-4 and 885K children aged 5-11.
- 65% of NC children ages 0-5 live in households where all parents work.
- 20% of children aged 0-5 in NC live in poverty.
- 18% of children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) are ages 0-5 years; 33% are ages 6-11 years



Data from Division of Child Development and Early Education and NC Fact Sheet from National Survey of Children's Health with 2021-22 data: [CYSHCN_North_Carolina_State_Factsheet_FINAL.pdf](#)

Early Life Experiences Are Foundational to Health, Well-Being and Learning

- "Early life experiences, both nurturing and adverse, are biologically embedded and influence outcomes in health, education, and economic stability across the life span..."
- "All children—but particularly those experiencing adversity—need **strong, positive, and nurturing relationships** to mitigate stress and grow and thrive."
- "A positive emotional connection with their **parents/caregivers** creates the necessary footing for young children to optimally learn about and engage in the world around them."
- "An important goal of **early childhood education** is teaching emotional self-regulation within the context of a safe, stable, nurturing environment"



Early Relational Health



- “The capacity to develop and maintain safe, stable and nurturing relationships (SSNRs) with others” is called **early relational health** and are "biological necessities to build a foundation for lifelong growth and development." -American Academy of Pediatrics
 - **Safe:** The relationship is free of physical or psychological harm. *Children believe their caregivers will protect them.*
 - **Stable:** The adult is dependably there for the child. *Children believe their caregivers will meet their needs.*
 - **Nurturing:** The child’s physical, emotional, and developmental needs are sensitively and consistently met. *Children believe their caregivers will use warmth and clear expectations to foster their development.*

<https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/early-childhood/early-relational-health/> and <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/148/2/e2021052582/179805/Preventing-Childhood-Toxic-Stress-Partnering-With?autologincheck=redirected> and <https://preventchildabusenc.org/>

How Brains Are Built: Introducing the Brain Story



"Everyone who touches the life of a child can promote social and emotional well-being."

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

The foundation of all future development

Everyone who touches the life of a child can promote social and emotional well-being

Social and emotional development, or **infant and early childhood mental health**, is the developing capacity of a child from birth to 5 years old to...



Form close and secure **adult and peer relationships...**



Experience, manage and express a **full range of emotions...**



Explore the environment and learn...

...all in the context of family, community, and culture.



Source:

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/how-to-talk-about-infant-and-early-childhood-mental-health>

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Early connections



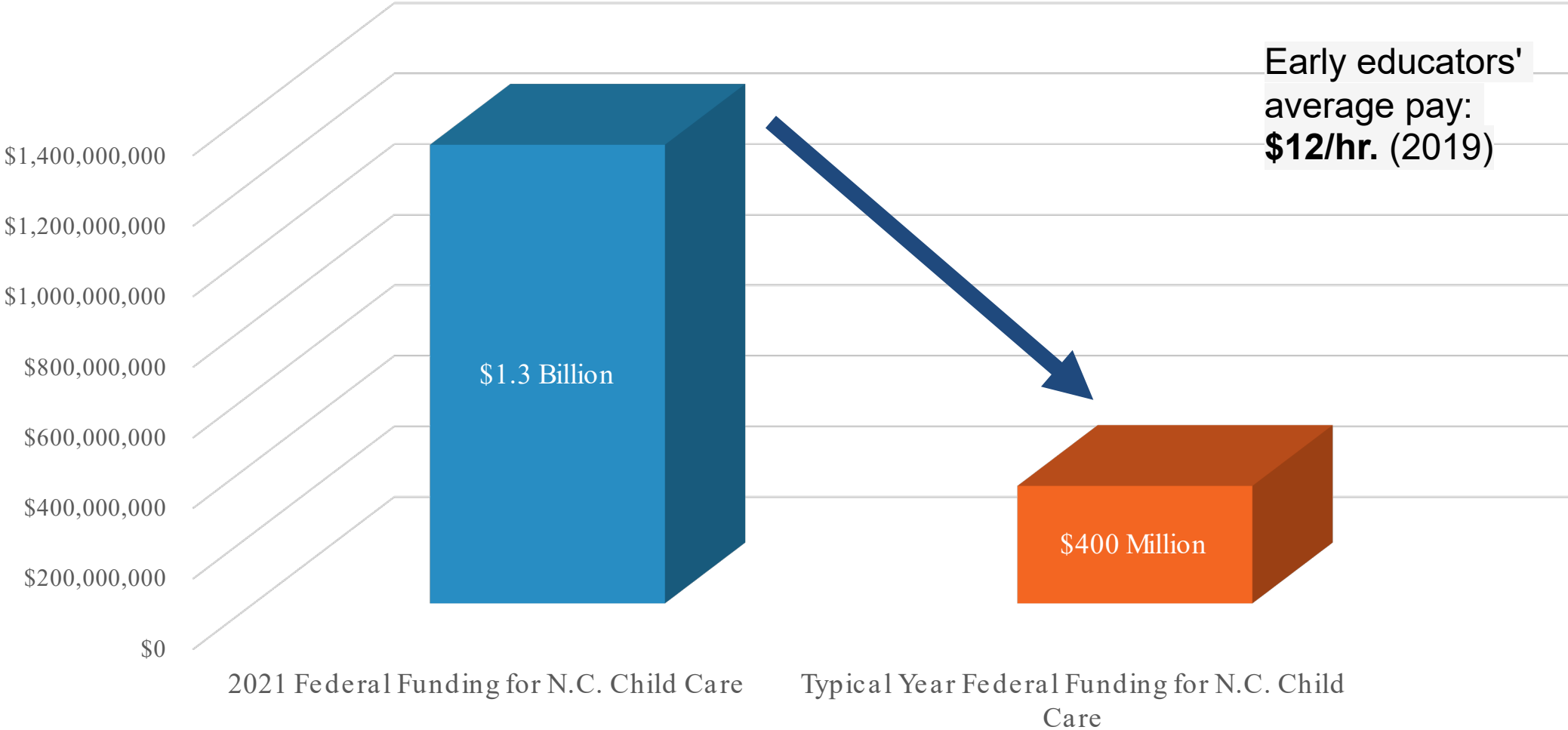
last a lifetime.

Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE)

- Monitors licensed child care for quality and safety
 - 200K children attend licensed child care
- Manages NC Pre-K (public preschool for age 4)
 - 30K children enter NC PreK annually; serving 52% of eligible 4-year-olds.
 - NC Pre-K Program requirements are focused on having children prepared in five developmental domains which include approaches to play and learning, emotional and social development
- Provides subsidized child care for families
 - 60-65K children/year receive child care subsidies; serving approximately 15% of eligible families with ~77% federal investments
- Provides professional development

For more on DCDEE efforts check out: [NC DHHS: Division of Child Development and Early Education](#)

2024 North Carolina Child Care Pandemic Relief Funding Cliff



Scale of ARPA Funding and Slide from DCDEE Staff

Federal Emergency Funds Saved NC Child Care

- Investment in teachers paid off, keeping early care and education doors open through the worst of the pandemic

<i>Paid through Sept 30, 2024</i>	Child Care Centers	Family Child Care Homes	All Grantees
# of Approved Programs Paid	3,498	1,253	4,751
Total Payments	\$1.09M	\$68M	\$1.16B

More Supports in Early Care and Education

- **Head Start and Early Head Start**

- Federally funded education and services for children from birth to age 5
- Families with **low income**; children in **foster care**, experiencing **homelessness**, and from families receiving **public assistance** (TANF, SSI, or SNAP).
- At least 10% of children enrolled have a **disability or delay** (under IDEA definition).
- **Goals are to help develop social competencies in children and promote self-sufficiency through a comprehensive family-focused approach.**

<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/office-early-learning/preschool/head-start>

- **CCR&R – Child Care Resource and Referral**

- Supports families to find quality child care
- Find your local CCRR Agency: <https://www.childcarerrnc.org/services/for-families/agency/>
- **Healthy Social Behaviors project - supports social emotional learning and classroom behavior management skills**

<https://www.childcarerrnc.org/special-projects/healthy-social-behaviors/>

Smart Start and NC Partnership for Children (NCPC)

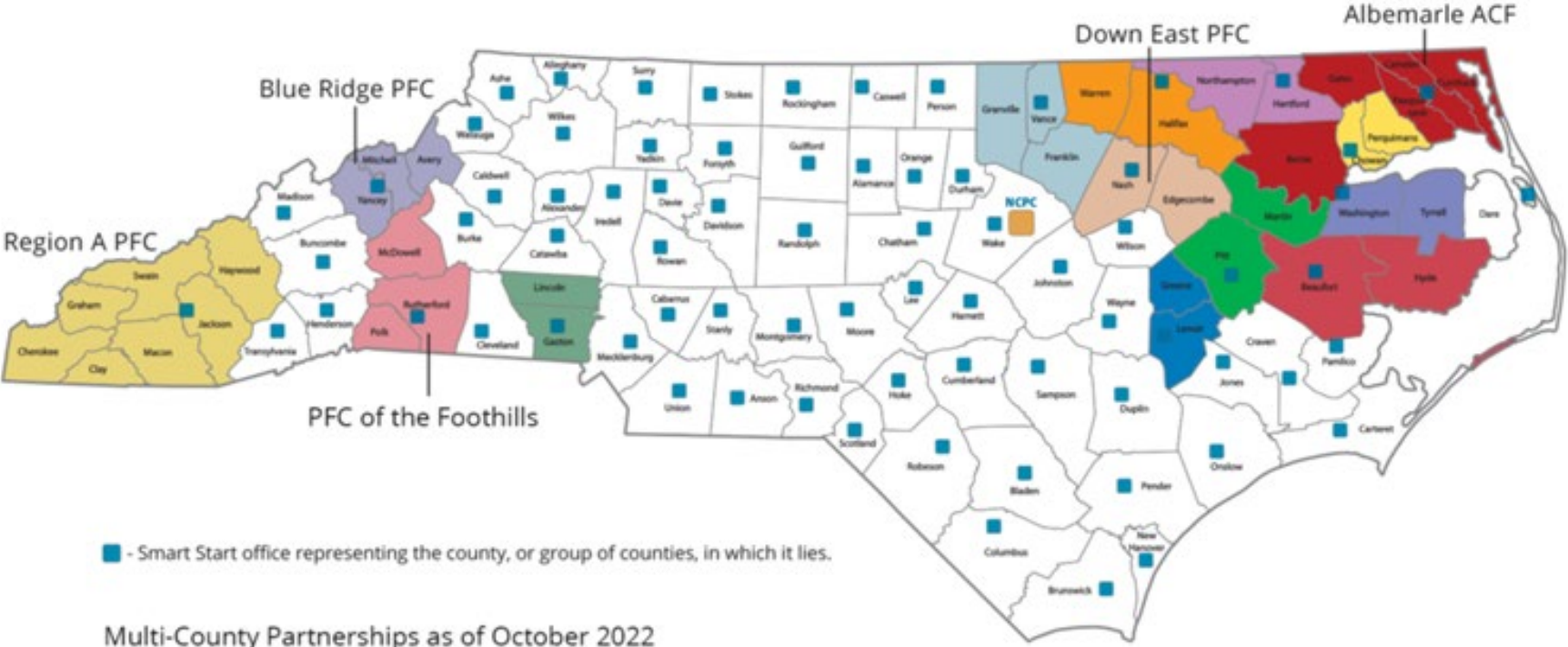


Each Child. Every Community.

- Committed to having each child reach their potential and be prepared for school and life success in North Carolina and a global community
- Provides statewide leadership to advance a high quality, comprehensive **early childhood system** that benefits every child beginning with a healthy birth, using a public/private partnership working in **all 100 counties** through the NC Partnership for Children and 75 local partnerships (Smart Start agencies)
- Priorities include:
 - Early care and education
 - Partnering with and supporting families
 - Early literacy
 - Advancing child health (i.e., childcare health consultants)
 - Systems building: Resilient NC (addresses ACEs)
 - Data and programming
 - Smart Start Community Indicators Data Dashboard: [Smart Solutions: Effective Birth-to-Five Investments](#)
 - [Smart Solutions: Effective Prenatal-to-Five Investments | Smart Start & The North Carolina Partnership for Children](#)

Smart Start Local Partnerships for Children

<https://www.smartstart.org/smart-start-in-your-community/>



Multi-County Partnerships as of October 2022

- Albemarle Alliance for Children and Families (Bertie/Camden/Currituck/Gates/Pasquotank)
- Beaufort/Hyde Partnership for Children
- Blue Ridge Partnership for Children
- Chowan/Perquimans Smart Start Partnership
- Down East Partnership for Children (Nash/Edgecombe)
- Franklin-Granville-Vance Partnership for Children
- Halifax-Warren Smart Start Partnership for Children
- Hertford-Northampton Smart Start Partnership for Children
- Lenoir/Greene County Partnership for Children
- Martin/Pitt Partnership for Children
- Partnership for Children of the Foothills
- Partnership for Children of Lincoln/Gaston Counties
- Region A Partnership for Children (Cherokee/Clay/Graham/Haywood/Jackson/Macon/Swain)
- Tyrrell-Washington Partnership for Children

Used with permission from NC Partnership for Children

Smart Solutions: Effective Prenatal to Five Investments

SMART SOLUTIONS

Effective Prenatal-to-Five Investments

a Smart Start initiative 

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Family Support
Book Babies

Home-visiting program to develop early language and literacy skills through customized literacy coaching and book provision. Book Babies equips parents/caregivers with a home library from birth and ensures their access to the tools and support needed to advocate for their children when they transition to Pre-K, kindergarten, and beyond.

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Family Support
Bright by Text

A nationwide text messaging service that encourages parents and caregivers to make the most of their interactions with their children. Text nudges provide information to parents and caregivers about child development, health, and well-being. Messages are customized to the child's age and include tips, information, games, and resources. Optional features for customized messages based on location.

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Early Care and Education
Advising to Support Professional Certification

Advising for child care professionals advancing their credentialing in early care and education is an intensive and comprehensive service designed to support the whole student in achieving their goals. Intensive advising is associated with improved retention rates and knowledge gains for students. Examples of professional certifications include the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, Family Child Care (FCC) Credential, and North Carolina Early Childhood Credential (NCECC), among others. Advising must be aligned with NC community College & Coaching for Mastery. Advising for child care professionals advancing their credentialing in early care and education is an intensive and comprehensive service designed to support the whole student in achieving their goals. Intensive advising is associated with improved retention rates and knowledge gains for students. Examples of professional certifications include the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, Family Child Care (FCC) Credential, and North Carolina Early Childhood Credential (NCECC), among others. Advising must be aligned with NC community College & Coaching for Mastery.

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Early Care and Education
Apprenticeship

Building Bright Futures (BBF) is program developed by the North Carolina Business Committee for Education (NCBCE), run in coordination with ApprenticeshipNC and Child Care Services Association (CCSA), that supports early childhood educator pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships in North Carolina, providing technical assistance, resources, and financial support to participants. This program supports students who want to enter the field, as well as ECE professionals who want to advance their education with credentials, certificates, or degrees. Apprenticeship creates a pipeline of talented and high-quality educators, increasing the ECE workforce and providing opportunity for growth within the field. Classroom instruction, on-the-job training, and mentorship with reflective supervision enhance this career pathway. *This is a temporary Solution. Permanency is contingent upon findings of the pilot program funded by a grant from DCDEE, which runs from January 3, 2023 to December 31, 2024.

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Family Support
Attachment & Biobehavioral Catch-Up (ABC) Infant

Attachment & Biobehavioral Catch-Up (ABC) Infant is a strengths-based parent/child home visiting model for families with children ages 6 months to 24 months. ABC Infant enhances the attachment security between a child and their caregiver, fosters strong, healthy relationships between parents and children, and promotes the child's development.

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Family Support
Basics Insights (SMS Only)

Parent education curriculum delivered via two weekly text messages that share developmentally appropriate information with families who have a child aged birth to five on physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development. All Basics Insights messages are related to the five Basics Principles: Maximize Love, Manage Stress; Count, Group, and Compare; Talk, Sing, and Point; Explore through Movement and Play; and Read and Discuss Stories.

[Smart Solutions: Effective Birth-to-Five Investments](#) and snips from site used with permission from NC Partnership for Children

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Programs

- Birth to Three: Early Intervention or NC Infant-Toddler Program (IDEA “Part C”)
 - 16 Children’s Developmental Services Agency (CDSA) Regions as part of DCFW in the Early Intervention Section use coaching and natural learning environment practices to provide supports and services to families and caregivers to help children with developmental delays and disabilities reach their maximum potential
- Ages 3-5: Exceptional Children Early Childhood Program (Portion of IDEA “Part B”)
 - Department of Public Instruction delivers ECEC program through supports and services in school-systems to "ensure that students with disabilities develop intellectually, physically, emotionally and vocationally through the provision of an appropriate individualized education program in the least restrictive environment"
 - Goal for preschool program is to improve child outcomes by increasing access to high quality early childhood education through inclusion and reducing the use of exclusionary discipline.

[Find your CDSA](#)

[Exceptional Children program](#)

[NC EC Early Childhood Contact List](#)

Pyramid Model is a Framework that both programs use, which includes supports at different levels to **promote social and emotional development**. The levels include: supporting an effective workforce, using nurturing and responsive relationships, building and monitoring high quality supportive environments, training on social emotional and trauma informed evidence-based practices, and including some intensive interventions.

Value of Social Emotional Learning

- Social and emotional learning is when children start to understand who they are, what they are feeling and what to expect when interacting with others.
- **Friendship skills, emotional literacy, self-regulation, anger management, and problem-solving** are all skills children can learn and practice.
- Building in social and emotional learning every day creates opportunities for **education staff and families to teach and model social and emotional skills** that set children up for success in school and life.

Free course from UNC-CH School of Social Work's *Behavioral Health Springboard*: [“Teaching the Whole Child: Supporting the Social-Emotional Wellness of Preschool and Elementary-Aged Children”](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/teaching-practices/article/social-emotional-learning) for early educators & teachers, school staff, counselors, social workers and professionals to learn how to support the social emotional wellness of students ages 3-10.



Early Care and Education and Expulsion

- **"Expulsion of young children ignores underlying emotional and behavioral concerns, disproportionately affects children of color (Black or Hispanic), males, children with disabilities, and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations, and has long-term consequences on educational and life success."**
- It is important for us to try "to identify children at risk for expulsion because of poverty, racial discrimination, toxic stress, insecure attachment, or history of trauma, so that we can **connect families with community resources** that may ameliorate these effects."
- **Health care providers** caring for children "can provide information on social-emotional development in early childhood, promote positive parent-child relationships, and model and discuss age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate behavior management."
- Efforts to provide child **mental health consultation** (psychologists, psychiatrists social workers, and other behavioral health providers) **to early care and education providers** can prevent or lessen the chance of expulsion and are happening in NC.

NC Department of Public Instruction Values Social Emotional Learning

North Carolina Social and Emotional Learning Webpage

Welcome and Introduction



NC-PAL (NC Psychiatry Access Line) provides mental health consultation and education to **clinical, educational and social service providers** in North Carolina, building their mental health knowledge and capacity to support children in **practice and community settings including CDSAs and schools.**

Practice-Focused Programs

Consultation

Pediatric Phone Line

Perinatal Phone Line

Care Guides & Screening Forms

One-time patient assessments

Education

REACH PPP Mini Fellowship

Residency Training

Lectures, Talks & Linkage to Trainings

NC AHEC Courses

Practice Support

Resource Navigation Support

IDD Supports

Early Childhood Supports

Collaborative Care Support

Community-Focused Programs

Social Services

Collaboration in statewide case reviews and policy development

Consultation & education pilots with select DSS agencies

Consultation & education pilots with select CDSAs

Schools

Collaboration in statewide policy and program development

Consultation & education pilots with select school districts

Engagement

Collaboration in statewide policy and initiatives

Develop Attachment Network of NC

Collaborate with health equity and quality initiatives

Additional Initiatives & Resources

Resilient NC

Essentials for Childhood (NC
Institute of Medicine)

Infant & Early Childhood Mental
Health Professional Development

Resilient NC



"Imagine a North Carolina where individuals, families and communities experience less adversity and have nurturing environments and resources from the start."

- Resilience is the ability to deal with and recover from difficult situations. North Carolina is recognized as a leader in the United States for promoting resilience.
- Across the 100 counties that make up our state, there are many efforts to promote personal, organizational, and community resilience.

NC Essentials for Childhood (E4C)

- Since 2013, the Division of Public Health has been funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to develop and implement the CDC public health framework for child maltreatment prevention called **Essentials for Childhood (E4C)** in North Carolina.
- **NC E4C has worked across state agencies, with philanthropic partners and with local organizations to promote strategies that create safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments for children and families.**
- **Examples of strategies that address E4C goals include:**
 - **Creating the context for healthy children and families by changing social norms to prevent child maltreatment.** North Carolina E4C is funding Positive Childhood Alliance North Carolina’s awareness campaign, “[Connections Matter](#).” Through a series of training modules, promotional strategies, and personal stories, the Connections Matter initiative aims to emphasize the importance of family and community relationships in building resilience for children impacted by trauma and other adverse childhood experiences.
 - **Strengthening economic supports for families through policy change.** North Carolina E4C is providing funding support to partner organizations engaged in ongoing work around the promotion and implementation of family-friendly workplace policies:
 - The North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation’s [Family Forward NC \(FFNC\)](#) initiative is focused on improving children’s health and well-being and keeping North Carolina’s businesses competitive. Business-led change to increase access to research-based family-friendly practices improves recruitment and retention and workplace productivity, while growing a strong economy that supports children’s healthy development.
 - [MomsRising](#) is working to build public awareness about the benefits of paid leave policies, and increase community capacity for implementation at the local level. MomsRising is working to engage community-level stakeholders, provide technical assistance to local governments, and coordinate storytelling campaigns and media toolkits for community partners.

Infant Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Key Professional Development Resources

- NC Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Association (NCIMHA) - mental health endorsement & reflection supervision training: <https://www.ncimha.org/>
- Behavioral Health Springboard - Social Emotional Learning free training for education professionals of ages 3-10: <https://bhs.unc.edu/social-emotional-learning-sel-training-series-school-based-professionals>
- [Healthy Social Behaviors](#) – Technical assistance for child care providers of classroom behavior management, with [Challenging Behaviors Helpline](#)
- NC PAL - Behavioral health consultation and education for healthcare and human services providers: <https://ncpal.org/>
- [ARCh](#) Project – Provider professional development
- NC Child Treatment Program - Clinical provider professional development: <https://ncchildtreatmentprogram.org/>

More Early Childhood Resources in NC



[Early Childhood Resources document link](#)