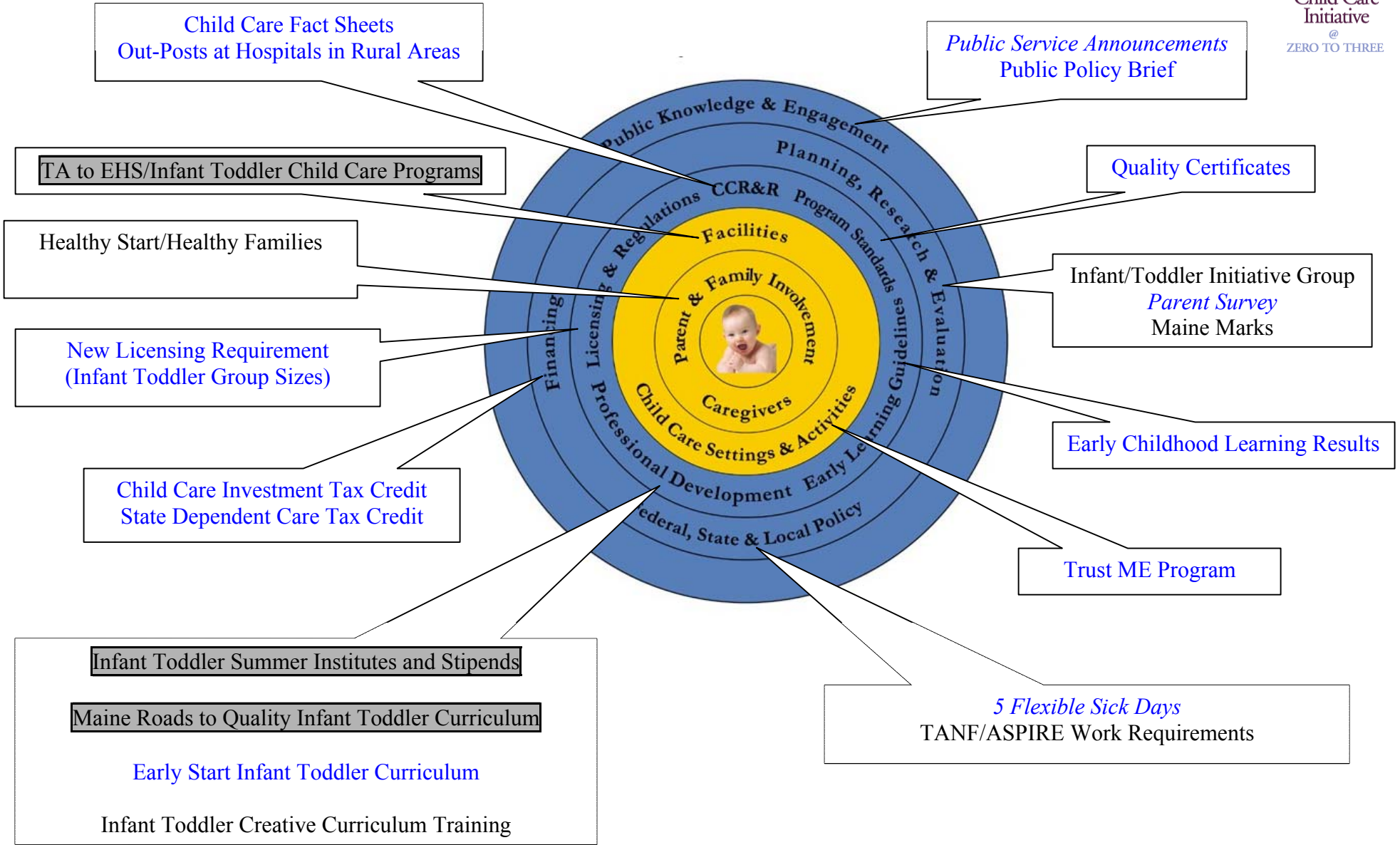


Early Care and Education Systems That Support Quality Care for Babies and Toddlers

Key Initiatives and Activities in Maine



Items shaded in gray were identified from the FY2004-2005 Child Care and Development Fund Plan

Items in italics are efforts that are still in process.

Items in BLUE were identified in the RFA

Last Updated July 2004



Early Care and Education Systems that Support Quality Care for Babies and Toddlers

Key Activities and Initiatives in Maine

Public Knowledge & Engagement

- Two Public Service Announcements are being produced through collaborative efforts between the Maine Children's Alliance and the Maine Infant Toddler Initiative group. One PSA will be directed toward parents with information on contacting their RDC for more information. The other PSA will be directed toward the public with a suggestion to contact their legislator for support of policies impacting infant and toddler care. The PSA directed at parents also supports the element of Parent & Family Involvement as an activity that informs and supports parents.
- The Maine Children's Alliance has developed a Public Policy Brief ("Early Childhood Development: What Matters MOST?") through the Better Baby Care Campaign which highlights research findings that define quality care for policymakers. This booklet was delivered to all doctors providing Raising Readers Books 0-5 and all legislators at the beginning of the 2004 Legislative Session. An accompanying letter was signed by the four members of Maine's Congressional delegation.

Financing

- The Child Care Investment Tax Credit was created to improve the quality of child care. If an individual provider spends \$10,000 in one year in expenses that significantly improve the quality of care, they are able to take a \$1,000 tax credit for the next 10 years and a \$10,000 credit at the end of 10 years. For a corporation, financial institution, partnership, LLC, S-corporation, estate or trust, they will receive a tax credit of 30% of \$30,000.
- Maine doubles the State Dependant Care Tax Credit as an incentive for parents to use "certified quality child care providers" (i.e. those who have been granted Quality Certificates). For tax years 2003-2005, the double tax credit is 43% of the federal tax credit. The maximum value of the tax credit will be \$452 for one child and \$903 for two or more children. The credit may result in a refund of up to \$500.

Both tax credits also support the element of Federal, State & Local Policy as activities that are state policies.

Planning, Research & Evaluation

- Leaders of Maine's infant and toddler provider network came together in February 2003 to discuss the needs of infants and toddlers across the state. They reached consensus on four priority goals that would constitute their work: 1) increasing quality, affordable, accessible infant toddler care; 2) increasing professional development opportunities resulting in a more qualified credentialed workforce; 3) working toward attaining a more stable, consistent workforce by decreasing staff turnover; and, 4) increasing parent and public awareness around what constitutes quality infant toddler care. The group divided into 4 teams (1 for each goal area) and developed action plans to address each of the goal areas.
- A Parent Survey (parents with children 0-12) is currently being conducted through the Child Care Data Capacity Grant to assess availability of child care, types of child care being used and accessibility of quality child care.
- The Children's Cabinet, composed of those state departments directly related to children and families, shaped an overall vision for the well-being of children, families and communities. With the vision as a guide, the Cabinet then established specific outcome statements, which were designed as a way to think about and work on the vision in 12 manageable pieces. 80 indicators were identified to help assess progress on these outcomes. These outcomes and indicators are known as Maine Marks.

Federal, State & Local Policy

- Maine Women's Lobby is working on legislation that would provide 5 Flexible Sick Days that parents can use to be home with sick children.
- TANF recipients are exempt from participating in ASPIRE if they have a child under 12 months.

Licensing & Regulations

- A recent effort in Maine aimed to change licensing requirements to improve the maximum group size for child care centers. The proposed regulations are going to public hearing in May 2004, with implementation expected in 2006. The proposed regulations reduce the group size for infants (6weeks to 12 months) from 12 to 8, for young toddlers (13 to 30 months) from 15 to 10 or 12 (depending on the ratio), and for older toddlers (31 to 36 months) from 30 to 21.

Program Standards

- Maine family child care providers who become accredited or complete a CDA can apply for a Quality Certificate through the Department of Human Services. Child care centers that are accredited or receive a Head Start rating of Center of Quality or Excellence are also eligible for a Quality Certificate. Caregivers who have a Quality Certificate receive 10% increase in their child care subsidy through a voucher or contracted slot. Parents also receive a double child care tax credit if their child is enrolled in a program with a Quality Certificate. Quality certificates also support the element of Federal, State & Local Policy as an activity that affects statewide subsidy policy.

Professional Development

- For each of the past two summers [2001 and 2002] an intensive Infant and Toddler Summer Institute has been available to caregivers of infants and toddlers. Caregivers in both family child care and center-based child care participated in the institute offered by the University of Maine at Farmington for three credits. The course is called *Infants, Toddlers and their Caregivers*. Caregivers who participate in the Infant and Toddler Summer Institute also receive equipment stipends of \$500-\$1,500 to enhance quality for infants and toddlers in their care. The amount of the stipend is correlated with the number of new spaces for infants or toddlers they plan to add in the next year, from 1-3. The stipends also support the element of Facilities as an activity that provides incentives for providers to serve infants and toddlers.
- As part of Maine Roads to Quality 180 hour Core Knowledge Training, a 30-hour Infant and Toddler Curriculum care has been developed and offered. This entry-level training is tailored to meet the needs of Maine caregivers in family child care and child care centers.
- The Early Start Infant-Toddler Curriculum was a collaborative partnership project of the Kennebec Valley Community Action Program, Southern Kennebec Child Development Corporation and the University of Maine Center for Community Inclusion. The curriculum was initially designed for Early Head Start staff. The content was aligned with the Early Head Start Performance Standards and provided the 120 CDA education hours required for the CDA Infant-Toddler credential, as well as, 9 associate degree credits in early childhood education through the technical college system. It has been offered several times in Kennebec County."
- Infant Toddler Creative Curriculum Training is being offered through Coastal ACCESS to approximately 30 providers in mid-coast Maine.

Early Learning Guidelines

- Early Childhood Learning Results have been developed for children from age three to their entrance to kindergarten. There is interest in developing guidelines for infants and toddlers, using a similar process, which included stakeholder meetings, expert reviews, public forums, trainings and piloting in all types of settings.

Child Care Resource & Referral

- RDCs send the following Child Care Fact Sheets to parents looking for I/T care: *Look for Quality Care for Infants*; *What Is Quality Care*; *The Cost of Quality Care*; and *Steps to Choosing Quality Care* (a checklist that is also available from child care providers, pediatricians' offices, libraries, the U of Maine Cooperative Extension service and through some employers).
- RDCs set up "out-posting" in hospitals in rural areas to provide information for pregnant mothers on choosing quality care.

Child Care Settings & Activities

- The Trust ME Program is a listing of in-home license-exempt caregivers who have passed a background check... a trust me caregiver has a safe driving record, no substantiated allegations of child abuse or neglect and no history of Maine criminal convictions. The Trust ME Program has helped build family child care capacity, and as such also supports the element of Facilities.

Facilities

- A unique collaboration between the Maine Office of Child Care and Head Start and the Education Development Center (EDC) has resulted in a position aimed at providing technical assistance to Early Head Start and Infant and Toddler Child Care programs in Maine. This part-time position has provided support for the newly funded Early Head Start programs, made follow-up visits to Infant/Toddler Summer Institute participants to help identify needs for advanced training and given technical assistance on-site to newly established programs providing Infant/Toddler care. This position was created in 2003.

Parent & Family Involvement

- Healthy Start/Healthy Families, an affiliate of Healthy Families America, provides home-visitation services and community-responsive parenting education.

Collaboration

- The Infant Toddler Initiative Group includes representatives from various sectors of the early care and education system. Each member does outreach by working with other programs, task forces, and agencies toward the common goal of providing quality care for infants and toddlers.
- A Memorandum of Understanding with Early Head Start and Child Development Services programs to share expertise, services and training is in the process of being expanded to include child care.
- Early Head Start programs share local training with other programs such as Healthy Families, Parents as Teachers, and Parents are Teachers Too.