

# Professional Development for the Infant-Toddler Workforce

## GRANTEES FEATURED

Georgia  
Kentucky  
Michigan  
New Jersey  
Pennsylvania  
Vermont

In December 2013, **Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Vermont** became the newest states to receive Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (ELC) grants. Although they, like the 14 states that received awards before them, do not plan to use a significant portion of their grants to fund initiatives targeting infants and toddlers specifically, their efforts to strengthen the systems that support all young children and families have potential to improve outcomes for babies if their needs are intentionally addressed. This excerpt from *Meeting the Challenge: How the Newest Early Learning Challenge Grantees Can Meet the Needs of Infants and Toddlers* [[www.zerotothree.org/public-policy/state-community-policy/elc-grantees-2014.pdf](http://www.zerotothree.org/public-policy/state-community-policy/elc-grantees-2014.pdf)] discusses grantees' plans to provide professional development to the infant-toddler workforce.

Infants and toddlers develop primarily through relationships with family members and caregivers in the context of their communities and cultures. Professionals working with very young children require a level of specialized knowledge and skill that is unique to the developmental needs of the early foundational years. States can prepare and support these professionals by infusing strong infant-toddler components into all aspects of their professional development systems. All six of the new ELC grantees have initiatives in this area.

- **New Jersey** and **Michigan** plan to work with higher education to improve access to and infant-toddler content of credit-bearing courses. **New Jersey** plans to respond to a recently conducted higher education inventory, which found that education degree programs at both the baccalaureate and graduate levels need to expand their focus on infants and toddlers. **Michigan** plans to partner with five community colleges to offer online Child Development Associate (CDA) credential courses, including some with infant-toddler content, which will be transferable toward an associate degree. The state

plans to target the new classes to home-based child care providers, who serve the majority of high-need children.

- **Pennsylvania** and **Kentucky** have plans to expand their career lattices in ways that will assist infant-toddler professionals. **Pennsylvania** will develop an infant-toddler credential and incorporate it into the state's career lattice and workforce registry. **Kentucky** already expanded the workforce pipeline by embedding requirements for state and nationally recognized credentials that infant-toddler professionals acquire (CDA and Certificate of Eligibility for KY Child Care Credential) into public high schools. The courses will now be integrated into the new state career lattice so that students who take them will not only be prepared to work in the field after graduation, but also will be eligible for professional development supports including scholarships.
- **Georgia** is expanding its coaching and mentoring system to support infant-toddler teachers located in the Early Education Empowerment Zones (E<sup>3</sup>Z) and other rural areas serving high percentages of children with high needs. Services will be provided in English and Spanish.
- Some ELC grantees are also taking steps to build capacity in infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH). **New Jersey** and **Vermont** are planning to offer new IECMH professional development opportunities to infant-toddler professionals and those serving older children. **New Jersey** will partner with IECMH experts to provide at least 200 early childhood educators with direct training services and resources in the Infant-Mental Health Endorsement (IMH<sup>®</sup>E, which the state recently adopted) and/or the Pyramid Model certification by 2017. IECMH trainings will also be offered to early childhood, child welfare, and community partners in the 10

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ZERO TO THREE has developed a number of resources related to the ELC, including a toolkit outlining how states can use the ELC to benefit infants and toddlers and articles detailing how the 2013 and previous ELC grantees targeted very young children. View them all at [www.zerotothree.org/elc](http://www.zerotothree.org/elc)

counties affected by Superstorm Sandy. The state also plans to crosswalk its existing Infant/Toddler Certificate with the IMH®E. **Vermont** plans to increase the involvement of IECMH professionals as practice coaches through the state's professional development system.

- In response to a study finding that the majority of children with high needs in child care are cared for in home-based environments, **Michigan** is targeting many of its professional development initiatives specifically toward these providers. The state plans to pilot the use of three types of consultants—health, family engagement, and social-emotional—to help providers improve quality. The state is also going to implement a new parent/community café approach to support home-based providers in certain communities.

Infants and toddlers make up a large percentage of the children served by home-based providers, so the state's efforts to improve their knowledge and skills has the potential to significantly affect the care very young children receive.

This series explores six strategies the newest ELC grantees are pursuing: developing and integrating Early Learning Guidelines for infants and toddlers; professional development of the infant-toddler workforce; expansion of home visiting; building capacity in high-need communities; engaging and supporting families; and connecting families to appropriate services. Download all of the strategy briefs and full paper, as well as other ELC resources, at [www.zerotothree.org/elc](http://www.zerotothree.org/elc).