ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

ZERO TO THREE Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators™

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Developing and Assessing Competencies for Teachers and Caregivers Serving Infants and Toddlers meeting • Washington, DC • January 4, 2017

Critical Competencies

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The ZERO TO THREE Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators™ describe what educators can do to make the most of teacher–child interactions

- Support educators who work in group settings (center-based and family child care homes) with infants, toddlers, or both
- Focus on pedagogy—the method and practice of teaching
- Detail essential and observable skill sets that effective educators use to optimize babies' and toddlers' social-emotional, cognitive, and language and literacy development
- Emphasize considerations for supporting high-needs populations and multi-language learners

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Critical Needs, Opportunities, & Competencies

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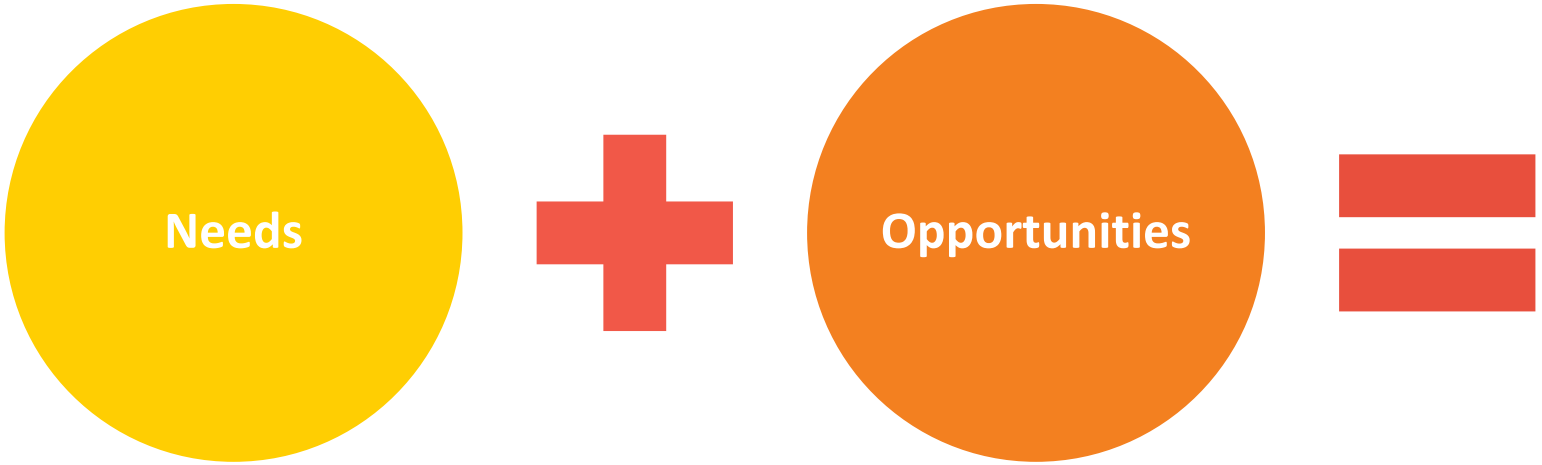
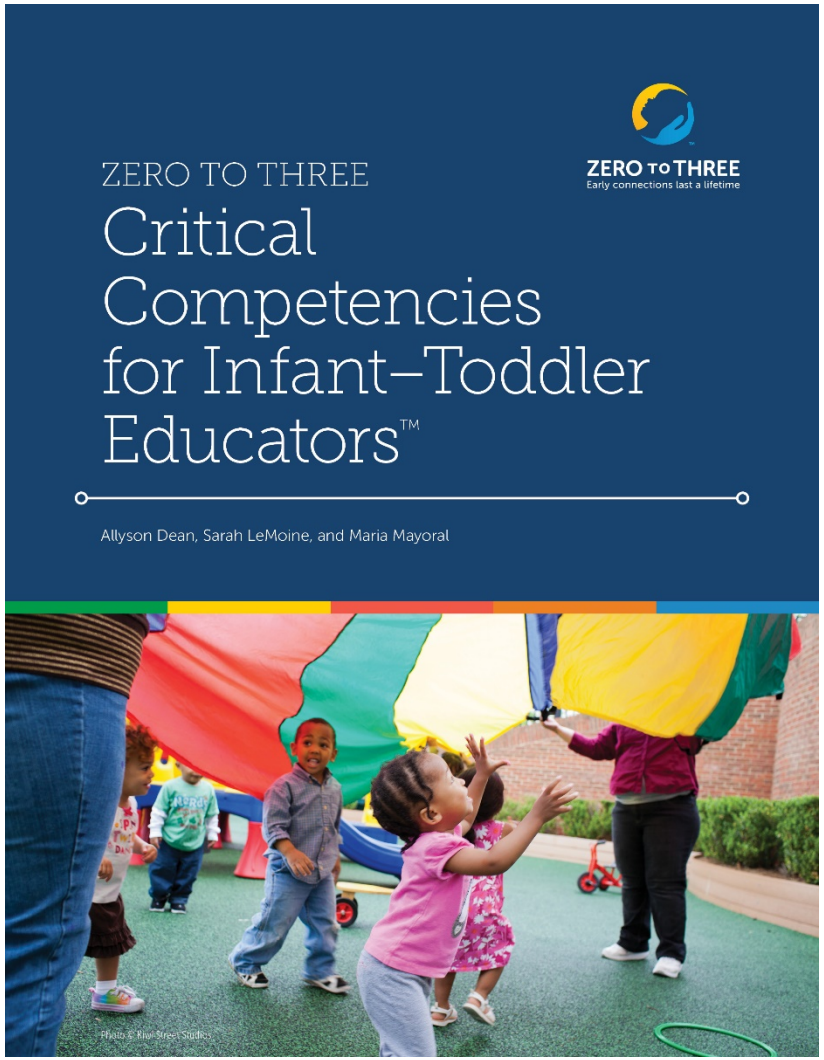
lack of information, opportunities, & capacity

impact of teacher-child interactions



unique child & family, & workforce needs

increased local, state, & national attention



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Critical Needs & Opportunities

How do we advocate for, develop, and implement partnerships, policies, and systems that respect the differences and also build common ground?

Expectations

Competency

Consistent

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Creating the Critical Competencies

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3 primary sources to inform and enhance development

1. Current evidence base
2. Workforce and systems status
3. Expertise
   - ZERO TO THREE's board and staff expertise
   - Organization and pilot partners' expertise

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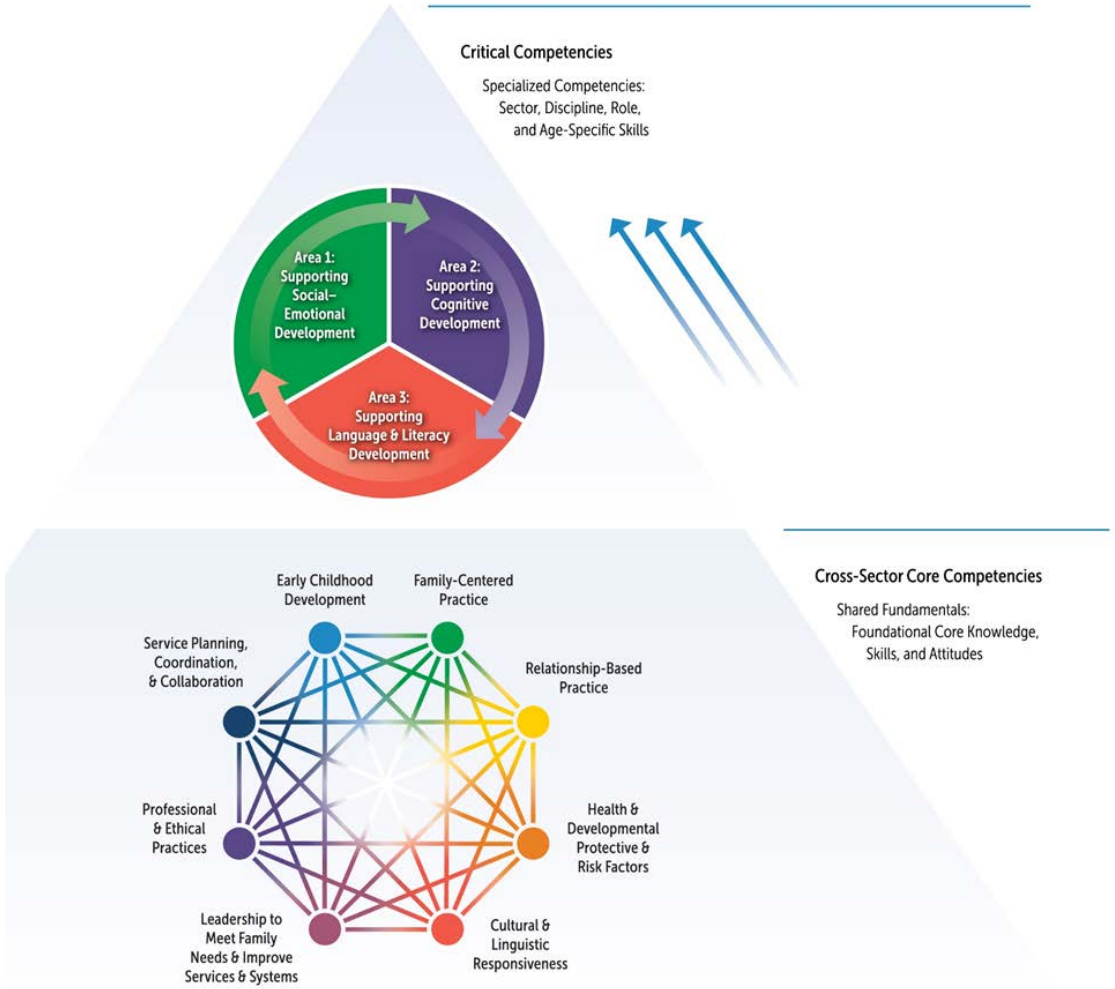
Specialized Competencies Build on Core



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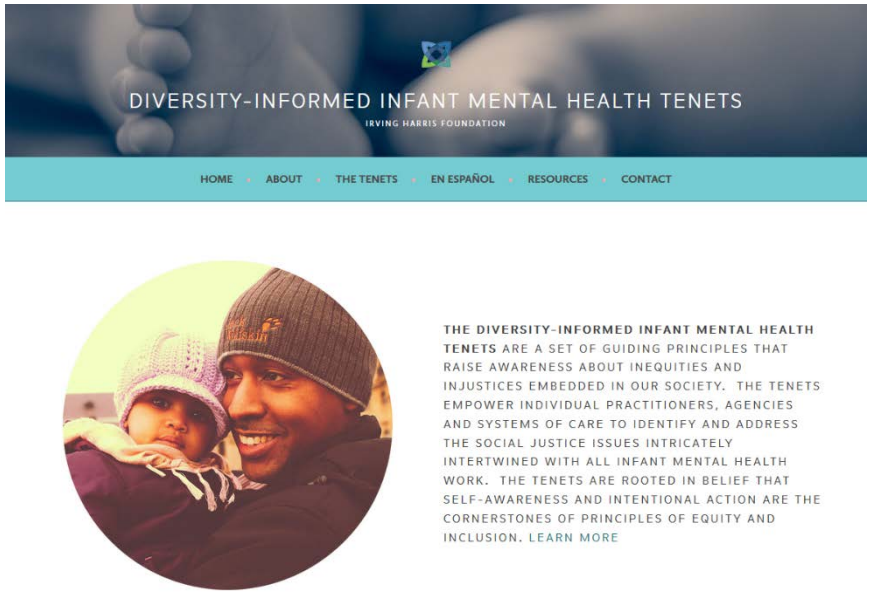
Overarching Principles: Irving Harris Foundation's Diversity-Informed Infant Mental Health Tenets



Awareness

Readiness

Tenet 1: Self-awareness leads to better services for families.

Intentionality

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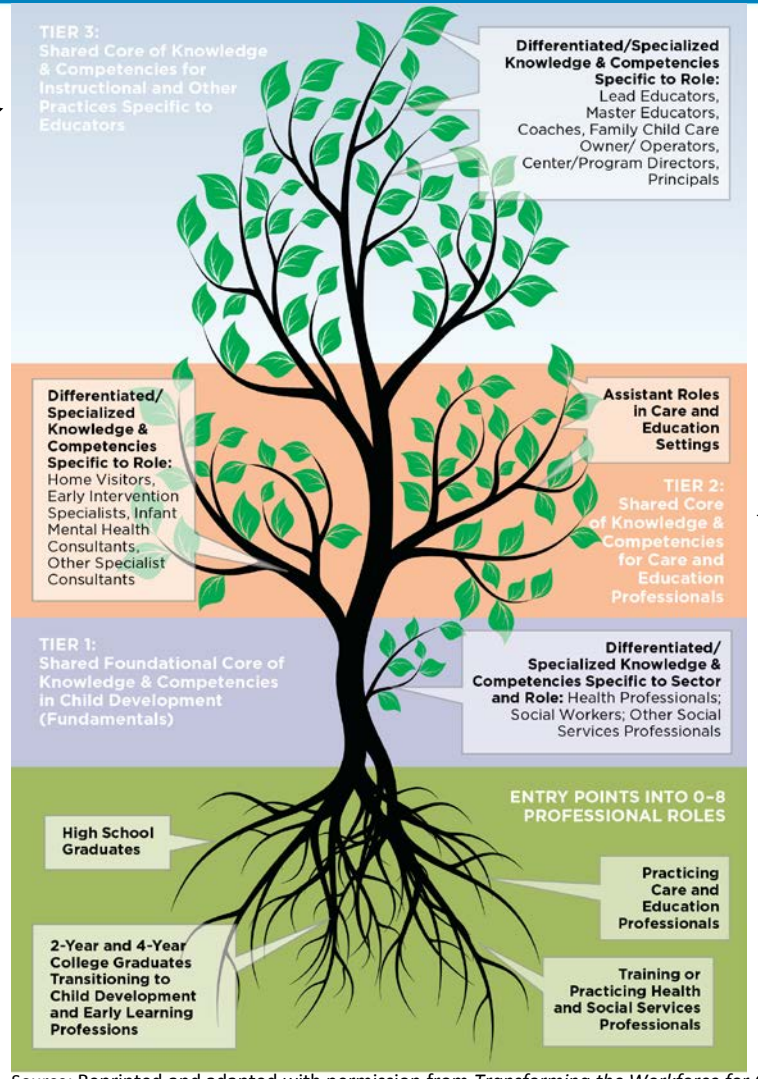
Critical Needs, Opportunities, & Competencies

ZERO TO THREE Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators™



National Consensus Focus

ZERO TO THREE Cross-Sector Core Competencies for the Prenatal to Age 5 Field

Source: Reprinted and adapted with permission from *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation,* Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015, p. 430, by the National Academy of Sciences, courtesy of the National Academies Press, Washington, DC.

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Critical Competencies' Features

- Specific teaching practices that support social-emotional, cognitive, and language and literacy development of babies and toddlers
- Detailed descriptions of observable skills of infant-toddler educators
- Considerations for serving high-needs populations and dual-/multi-language learners
- Summaries of foundational knowledge, attitudes, and competencies from ZERO TO THREE's Cross-Sector Core Competencies for the Prenatal to Age Five Field
- Crosswalks with related ECE criteria, tools, and example child outcomes

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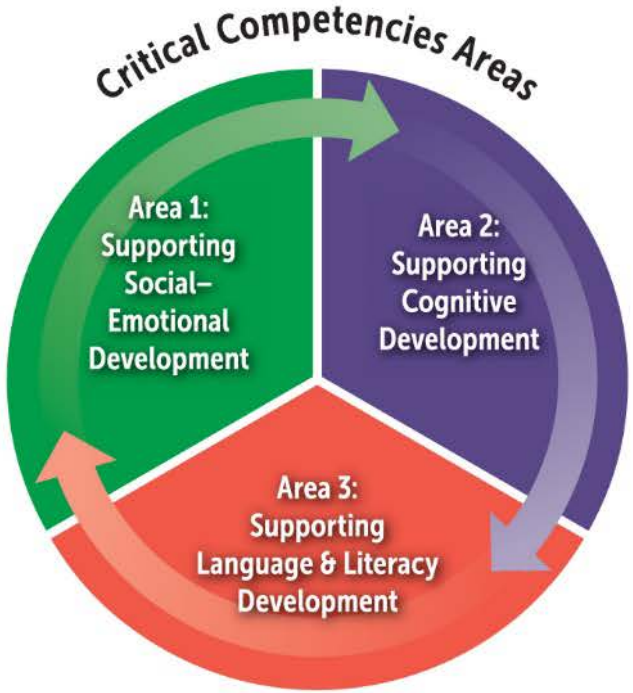
Critical Competencies Model



Critical Competencies Sub-Areas

Supporting Social–Emotional Development

1. Building Warm, Positive, and Nurturing Relationships
2. Providing Consistent and Responsive Caregiving
3. Supporting Emotional Expression and Regulation
4. Promoting Socialization
5. Guiding Behavior
6. Promoting Children's Sense of Identity and Belonging

Supporting Cognitive Development

7. Facilitating Exploration and Concept Development
8. Building Meaningful Curriculum
9. Promoting Imitation, Symbolic Representation, and Play
10. Supporting Reasoning and Problem Solving

Supporting Language & Literacy Development

11. Promoting Communication Exchange
12. Expanding Expressive and Receptive Language and Vocabulary
13. Promoting Early Literacy

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Area/Sub-Area Content

- Overview of the developmental area for infants and toddlers
- Summary of infant–toddler educators' role in supporting development in the area
- Specific, pedagogy-focused skill statements
- Considerations for working with high-needs populations and dual-/multi-language learners
- Examples in practice with young infants, mobile infants, and toddlers

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Tenets underpin the *Critical Competencies'* Additional Considerations

ZERO TO THREE Critical Competencies for Infant–Toddler Educators™

Area 1

Considerations for Supporting Vulnerable Populations

What about infants and toddlers who may be lacking warm, positive, and nurturing relationships at home? Sometimes life events and circumstances prevent parents and guardians from offering the stable and nurturing interactions needed to help infants and toddlers develop secure and consistent relationships. When this happens, it is even more important for infant–toddler educators to provide a stable and positive relationship with very young children that augments and supports relationships with parents and guardians at home. Unfortunately when children come from inconsistent caregiving relationships at home, it is sometimes more difficult to establish secure relationships in out-of-home care settings. Children may be unresponsive to a teacher's initial attempts at affection or may be overstimulated by positive affect. In addition, young children at risk may frequently test their teachers—such as by deliberately misbehaving—to see whether those teachers will respond consistently. In these cases it is important to offer consistent, predictable, and positive interactions with children. Infant–toddler educators should also be sure to understand what works best for each child and tailor their interactions to match that child's tolerance. For early educators, a critical part of supporting warm, positive, and nurturing relationships is to continue to work with parents and guardians in the home to develop consistency across settings and to support and strengthen the parent–child bond. Regardless of their home circumstances, some children with delays or disabilities may need to be explicitly taught interaction and other skills so they can participate in and build trusting relationships. Competent and skilled early educators work with family services workers, early childhood mental health providers, early intervention specialists, and others involved in supporting the family to ensure they remain aware and supportive of child–parent relationships. Over time a teacher's consistent and contingent warmth and affection can help each child develop trusting, positive relationships.

Considerations for Supporting Dual-/Multi-Language Learners

What about infants and toddlers who are learning more than one language? The social–emotional components of communication can be even more important as caregivers strive to build relationships with children and families who speak other languages. For example, teachers can build a bond with each child by intentionally using nonverbal communication and expressing interest in connecting with them. Nonverbal communication can be used as a support for verbal communication and includes activities such as pointing, using props, making gestures and facial expressions, demonstrating or "acting it out," looking at and reading books with the child, showing pictures, and using sign language. Ways of expressing warmth and affection vary across cultures. While some cultures tend to use physical contact more often (e.g., hugging, kissing), other cultures tend to express positive affect from a physical distance. Teachers should keep these cultural nuances in mind as they connect with the children in their program who might be coming from diverse backgrounds. For example, some children might be accustomed to kissing and hugging everyone "hello" as they greet others when they enter a new space; however, other families might not think this is appropriate and might prefer to wave "hello." In partnership with families, teachers can become cultural and linguistic navigators, incorporating elements of various cultures and languages into the everyday routines, explaining how families do things or communicate similarly, but also noting some of the differences so children will be exposed to different cultural and linguistic practices. These cultural and linguistic differences provide teaching opportunities that can help children understand more about their own culture and home language, and become global citizens. As teachers develop bonds with children, they also need to engage in self-reflection to ensure that they don't overlook a child because they are not able to share verbal language and/or experience a language and cultural match. Learning a few words or phrases from the child's home language is helpful in forming warm and positive relationships. Educators should use children's home languages to the maximum extent possible and be intentional about using correct pronunciations and grammar. Teachers must remember that establishing a meaningful, warm, and positive connection is the primary goal.

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3. Work to Acknowledge Privilege and Combat Discrimination
4. Recognize and Respect Nondominant Bodies of Knowledge
5. Honor Diverse Family Structures
6. Understand That Language Can Be Used to Hurt or Heal
7. Support Families in Their Preferred Language

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Suggested Relationships with State CKCs

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- High-level overview of relationship between criteria for all states with CKCs
- More detailed alignment, to the level of student outcomes, done with pilot states

Pennsylvania Core Knowledge Competencies For Early Childhood & School-Age Professionals			ZERO TO THREE Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators™: Areas/Sub-Areas													
			Supporting						Supporting				Supporting Language			
Knowledge Area	Strand	Sample Competency	Building Warm, Positive, and Nurturing Relationships	Providing Consistent and Responsive Caregiving	Supporting Emotional Expression and Regulation	Promoting Socialization	Guiding Behavior	Promoting Children's Sense of Identity and Belonging	Facilitating Exploration and Concept Development	Building Meaningful Curriculum	Promoting Imitation, Symbolic Representation, and Play	Supporting Reasoning and Problem Solving	Promoting Communication Exchange	Expanding Expressive and Receptive Language and Vocabulary	Promoting Early Literacy
K1***	K1.1	Examine how classroom practices support child development through positive interactions with families, caregivers, peers and other community members to further develop reciprocal relationships. (K1.1 C3)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
	K1.4	Apply knowledge of brain development to facilitate children's learning, socio-emotional development, and self-regulation. (K1.4 C2)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
	K1.7	Apply knowledge of growth, development, and learning to establish appropriate expectations for individual children. (K1.7 C2)		✓	✓	✓									
	K1.8	Provide play environments, experiences and activities that foster communication, problem solving, and creativity. (K1.8 C2)							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	K1.9	Develop environments that foster competence and self-confidence birth to middle childhood. (K1.9 C2)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
K2***	K2.1	Arrange a responsive learning environment (setting, space, resources, relationships and schedules) based on ages, abilities, home culture, and interests and needs of children that are linked to the PA Learning Standards. (K2.1 C2)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓
	K2.3	Describe ways that a prepared physical environment promotes positive behavior and encourages supportive relationships including, room arrangement, visual cues, temperature, acoustics, schedules, resources, and adaptations and accommodations for diverse learners. (K2.3 C1)					✓								
	K2.4	Plan for appropriate use of indoor and outdoor physical space and materials to support comprehensive, developmental learning							✓	✓	✓	✓			✓

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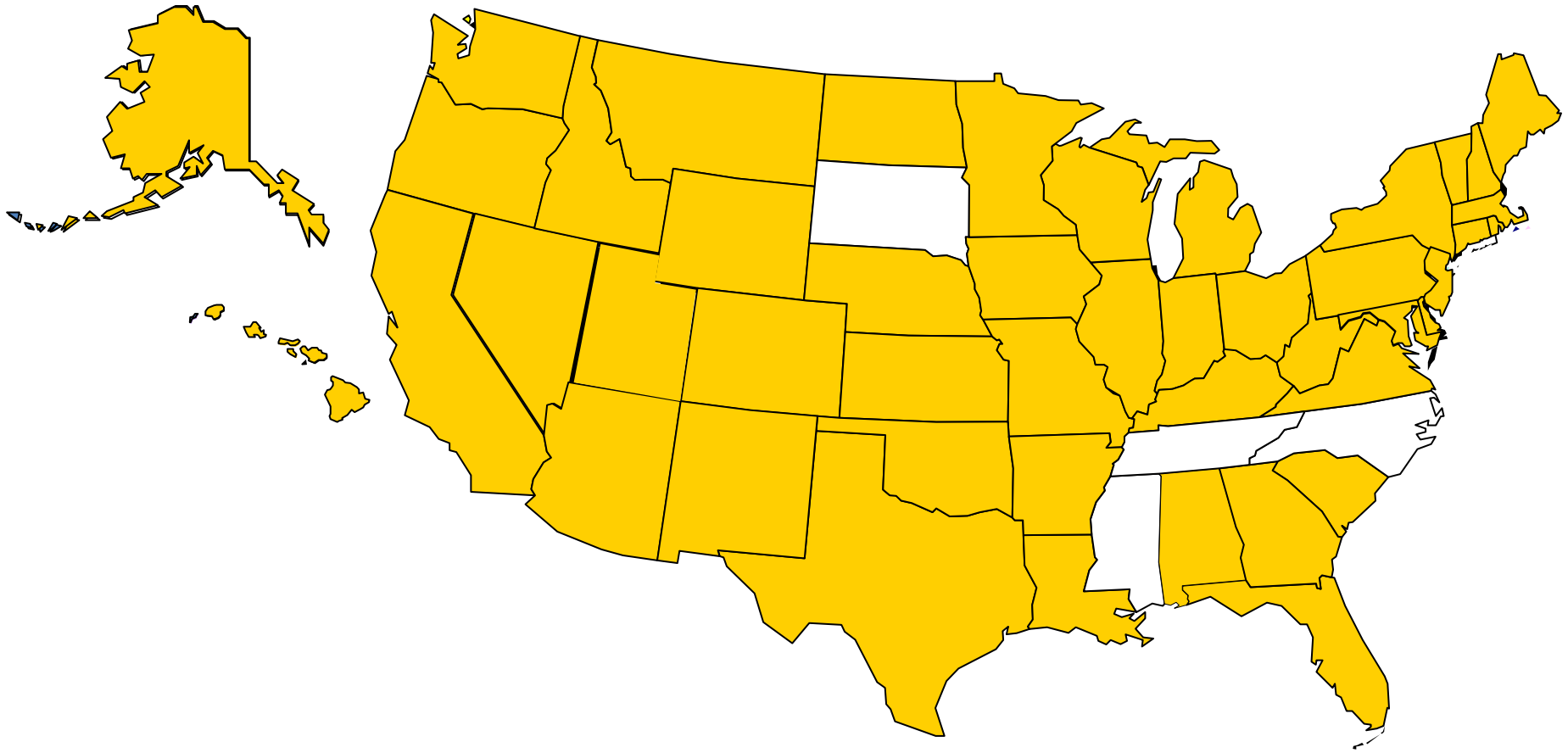
Suggested Relationships with State CKCs

Drafted for 47 states' with CKCs



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In Process … Development and Piloting

- ZERO TO THREE Reflection Tool™: Critical Competencies
- Professional Development Modules (in-person and scenario-based e-Learning)
- Training-of-Trainers and Trainer Certification
- Faculty Institutes

ZERO TO THREE is already an:

- ✓ *Accredited Provider by IACET (approved CEU provider)*
- ✓ *Recognized Training Organization by the National Workforce Registry Alliance*

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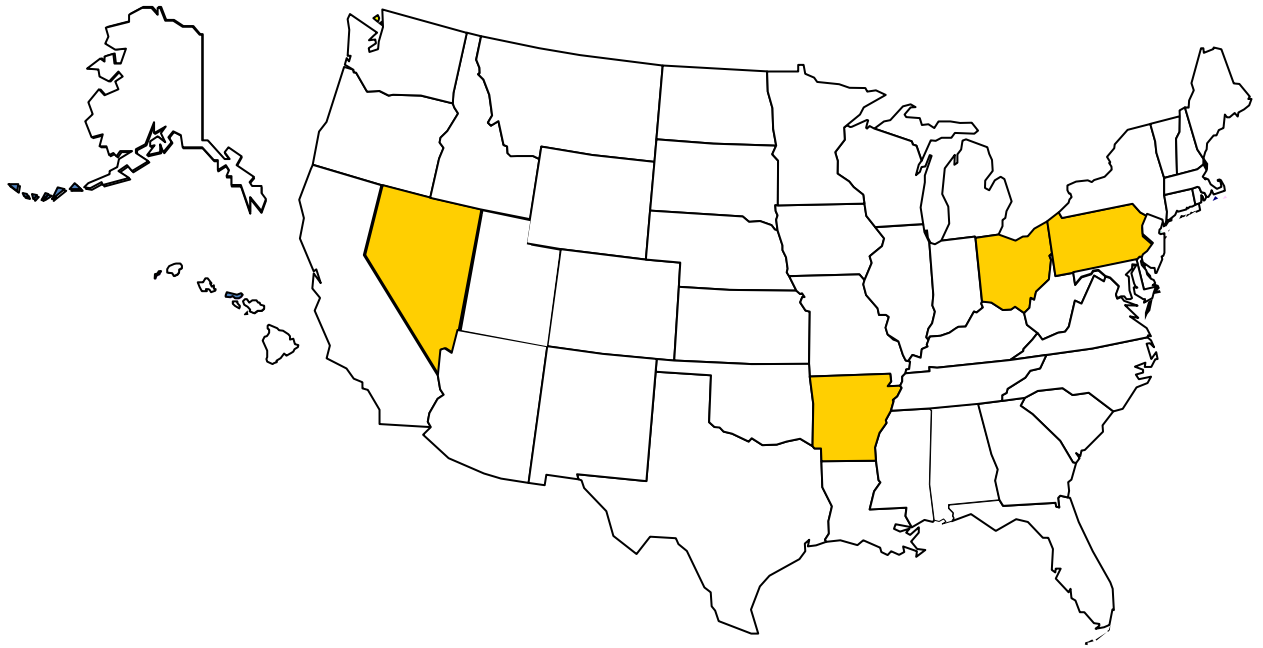
4 State Pilot Partners

1. Arkansas
2. Nevada
3. Ohio
4. Pennsylvania



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THANK YOU!

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ZERO TO THREE's Early Childhood Workforce Innovations Department

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The Early Childhood Workforce Innovations department:

- Supports your efforts to build, implement, and enhance cross-sector early childhood professional development systems and workforce supports
  - develops pioneering products such as *ZERO TO THREE's Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators*™
  - provides customized training and technical assistance to states and communities

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About ZERO TO THREE

For close to 40 years, ZERO TO THREE's mission has been to transform the science of early childhood development into practical resources and responsive policies for millions of parents, professionals, and policymakers.

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