



Learning the Landscape: Infant and Toddler Care Systems

The infant and toddler care delivery systems within states and territories can be challenging to navigate. Furthermore, technical assistance (TA) providers work in a variety of settings with a range of priorities. A strong understanding of the infant and toddler care delivery system can help improve the effectiveness of TA.

National Landscape

In their 2016–2018 Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Plans, 44 states and territories reported using funds to provide coaching or technical assistance to increase quality through infant/toddler specialist networks (ITSNs). For information on how to implement an ITSN, please see our revised [Guide to Developing a Statewide Network of Infant/Toddler Specialists](#). Below is a list of all the quality improvement activities reported by states and territories in their 2016–2018 CCDF Plans:

- ◆ **31** states and territories have infant/toddler standards within their quality rating and improvement systems (QRISs).
- ◆ **44** states and territories provide technical assistance through statewide networks of infant/toddler specialists.
- ◆ **30** states and territories have infant/toddler standards in their child care licensing regulations.
- ◆ **55** states and territories provide professional development to promote appropriate services for infants and toddlers.
- ◆ **32** states and territories have an infant/toddler credential system.
- ◆ **47** states and territories have infant/toddler early learning standards or guidelines.
- ◆ **18** states and territories have established staffed family child care networks.
- ◆ **18** states and territories have established infant/toddler community- or neighborhood-based child development centers.
- ◆ **37** states and territories provide clear and user-friendly consumer information about high-quality infant and toddler care.
- ◆ **24** state and territory CCDF Lead Agencies coordinate with partners to provide developmental screenings and comprehensive services for infants and toddlers under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- ◆ **30** states and territories provide financial incentives to improve the supply and quality of infant/toddler care (Child Care State Capacity Building Center, 2017a).

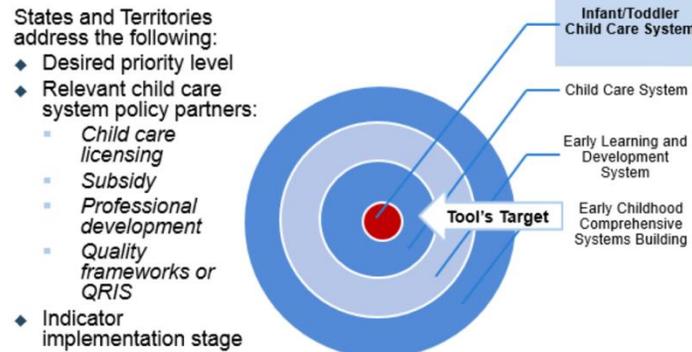
System Landscape

Infant and toddler child care systems vary by state and territory, and each system may have a different approach for integrating technical assistance. A new tool from the State Capacity Building Center, [Strengthening State and Territory Infant/Toddler Child Care System Policies and Practices: A Tool for Advancing Infant/Toddler Child Care Quality](#), helps states and territories better understand their unique systems. The tool helps users examine infant and toddler child care system policies and practices to answer a key question: How is our state or territory

working to strengthen the quality and supply of child care services and programs for infants, toddlers, and their families?

The diagram below shows how the infant and toddler care system exists within a larger system of early childhood care and education. This tool focuses on the area in red—the infant and toddler child care system—which exists within the broader child care system, which in turn exists within the larger early care and education system.

Infant/Toddler Child Care Instrument System-Level Focus



Upon completion of the tool, states and territories will have data to use in their strategic planning. This information will help them maximize resources to improve quality, including investing in technical assistance. Following are a few sample indicators from this tool that relate to technical assistance:

- ◆ 3.1.3: Support a statewide network of infant/toddler specialists to provide access to specialists who can offer support and coaching to infant/toddler child care programs in meeting the developmental needs of very young children.
- ◆ 3.1.4: Adopt a practice-based professional development approach focused on foundational and specialized core knowledge and competencies for infant/toddler care teachers, providers, and directors.
- ◆ 3.1.6 Develop a coordinated professional development approach to support coaches, trainers, consultants, licensing specialists, infant/toddler specialists, faculty, and other individuals in their efforts to help infant/toddler child care providers provide relationship-based care (Child Care State Capacity Building Center, 2017b, p. 27).

Guiding Questions

When thinking about the landscape of infant and toddler care, on a national level and within your own state or territory, consider the following questions:

- ◆ Where does your work fit into the national landscape? If you currently work for a quality improvement initiative, what is the focus of your work and in what ways do you help increase the quality of care for infants and toddlers?
- ◆ Where does your work fit into your state or territory' landscape? If you work within a statewide infant and toddler specialist network, how and where do you see yourself within that network? If you work within a quality improvement initiative such as a quality rating and improvement system, how and where do you see yourself within that system? How is your work connected to others who help increase quality?



- ◆ Do you use a practice-based professional development approach with technical assistance? If so, what is the framework? How is it working? What kinds of improvements do you see in the practices of infant and toddler teachers as a result of your TA work?
- ◆ What—or who—do you have to support your work as a TA provider? Do you attend trainings, share professional resources with colleagues, or participate in a community of practice? What works well for you? What ideas do you have for new resources to support your professional development?

Resources

[Aligned Professional Development Systems Planning and Implementation Guide](#), from the National Center on Child Care Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives (PDW Center), is a planning and implementation guide to help states and territories think about how to align professional development systems.

[Build It Better: Indicators of Progress to Support Integrated Early Childhood Professional Development Systems](#), by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRA), is designed to help “policy makers, administrators, educators, and advocates work together to build a better professional development system for early childhood educators working with children birth through age 8” (NAEYC & NACCRA, 2011, p. 6).

The [Early Childhood Education Professional Development: Training and Technical Assistance Glossary](#), by NAEYC and NACCRA, contains professional development, training, and TA terms to support consistent terminology and definitions for the field.

The [Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide](#), from the Child Care State Capacity Building Center, is designed to support CCDF Administrators in their pursuit of system-building initiatives.

The [Early Childhood Systems Working Group \(ECSWG\)](#) is a “volunteer group of national leaders engaged in technical assistance to state policymakers in the development of comprehensive early childhood systems....The ECSWG seeks to help states implement systems that can provide an integrated continuum of policies, services, and programs across early learning and development, health, and family leadership and support, so that children and families thrive” (ECSWG, n.d.).

[Resources developed by the National Center on Child Care Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives](#): These resources include briefs, guides, and presentations that aim to strengthen the early childhood and school-age workforce.

References

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**State Capacity Building Center,
A Service of the Office of Child Care**

9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031

Phone: 877-296-2401
Email: CapacityBuildingCenter@ecetta.info

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