The Early Childhood Innovation Network (ECIN) is a local collaborative of health, education, community providers, researchers, and advocates promoting resilience in families and children from pregnancy through age 5 in Washington, DC. During this critical period of brain development, children are deeply affected by their experiences and environment. ECIN’s approach affirms the tremendous opportunity to promote and ensure healthy development of young children.

UNIQUE PROMISE

ECIN works across sectors to empower adults in the caregiver role—parents, family members, educators, and health providers—with knowledge and resources to improve outcomes for children. By developing interventions and inclusive processes that are rooted in science and community voices, ECIN offers unique, holistic approaches to address adverse childhood experiences and promote nurturing conditions in support of healthy physical and emotional development.

Bold Vision | Strengthen a citywide movement to promote healthy families and children
- Empowering whole families to have better lives and communities
- Engaging the public in a conversation about healthy development of young children
- Pushing for policy changes in health and education to help families thrive
- Advancing the science of childhood development by understanding what interventions work for which families, and why

Diverse Settings | Collaborate with a wide variety of partners providing complementary support
- Partnering with early learning centers, health centers, and other community settings

Thoughtful Process | Understand what works for each family and how to best serve them
- Building relationships between providers and caregivers to match the right interventions to the right family and child
- Engaging community-based organizations where families live to develop sustainable solutions that meet the needs and desires of the community
- Continuously evaluating and improving our strategies to achieve optimal outcomes for families and children

Focused Interventions | Draw from evidence-based research and leverage insights from ongoing community input
- Strengthen and support caregivers: Training to help caregivers plan, problem-solve, achieve goals, and navigate systems
  - Building social connections between parents and other caregivers
  - Educating caregivers about infant and child development
  - Integrating behavioral health services in ECIN settings
  - Preventing the negative impacts of trauma and building emotional resilience in caregivers through training in mindfulness
  - Connecting parents and other caregivers with helpful resources
- Develop social, emotional, and cognitive skills in young children:
  - Promoting parenting skills to help children manage their emotions and build relationships
  - Teaching social and emotional skills in preschools
  - Enhancing the capacity of early childhood providers to recognize and address emotional challenges in young children
Frequently Asked Questions

ECIN emphasizes multi-generational efforts to promote nurturing interactions between children and their caregivers. These relationships stimulate the brain-based foundations for health, learning, and positive social interactions in the future, while buffering against the effects of trauma and adversity. Below are some frequently asked questions about children’s mental health. We encourage you to reach out with any additional questions you may have.

What are adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)?
ACEs are potentially traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on health and well-being. These experiences range from physical, emotional, or sexual abuse to parental divorce, the incarceration of a parent or guardian, community violence, and poverty. However, with positive adult support and strong relationships between children and caregivers, negative effects of ACEs can be prevented or minimized.

Why are ACEs so important?
The effects of ACEs influence the overall wellness of families during early childhood and beyond. It is critical to address ACEs because they may have an impact on the long-term quality of life of individuals and their families. Targeting and addressing ACEs gives individuals and families the opportunity to ensure a healthy and bright future.

What can be done to address ACEs?
Adverse experiences and other trauma in childhood do not dictate the future of the child and their family. Children survive and even thrive despite the trauma in their lives. Protective factors, such as healthy relationships (especially with parents and caregivers), and the ability to regulate emotions and behavior, can counterbalance ACEs and foster resilience. It is crucial to ensure that children have these protective factors in addition to addressing systemic issues that can contribute to ACEs, such as poverty.