



Hub State Spotlight: DC

Dr. Damali Wilson, Program Lead, the Early Childhood Innovation Network Prenatal to Five Capacity Building Collaborative

The NCIT Newsletter offers *Spotlights*, a regular monthly feature that highlights the work happening in our states and communities and fosters connections among grantees. Read this Spotlight to learn more about the Early Childhood Innovation Network Prenatal to 5 Capacity Building Collaborative in Washington, DC.

The Early Childhood Innovation Network Prenatal to Five Capacity Building Collaborative Goals

The goal of the collaborative is to increase DC's investments in prenatal-to-three programming with a focus on programs that support health, mental health, and cognitive development of birthing persons, infants, toddlers and their families. Its leaders believe that by increasing availability and access to services, more DC families will thrive.

The collective prioritizes enhancing caregiver and family leadership and advancing systemic equity. Building capacity means creating strategies, advancing policy, and fostering sustainability until all DC children get what they need in their first three years.

Challenges to Achieving Our Goals

Currently, DC has many promising prenatal-to-three services and programs. The collaborative is committed to continually assessing and identifying gaps in the current service landscape. The challenge comes with identifying sustainable strategies to fill those gaps. Not only do families need high-quality, evidence-based programs, but these programs need sustainable funding streams. Despite these obstacles, city officials, including the DC Council and agency administrators in the childhood space, continue to support these efforts.

Partners

The coalition's greatest strength is its engaged network of partners. The coalition is composed of senior leadership from key sectors, including local government, healthcare education, early childhood education, nonprofits, policy, advocacy, and, most importantly, caregivers and families.

Equity

Meaningful, consistent community engagement is a key part of fostering equity. The collective has created spaces for its stakeholders to speak their minds, to ensure that everyone's voice is heard.

These resources, listed below, are available to program staff, providers, and parents to ensure that, no matter a person's role in early childhood, there is a safe space to share their experience.

- Parent cafes, hosted by community leaders, offer families the opportunity to connect directly with resources in real time.
- ReadySetConnect meetings give families the opportunity to share their experiences, their needs, and their feedback on the services they receive directly with coalition members.
- The coalition hosts forums in Spanish, to ensure that everyone has access to information and resources in their native language.
- A series of videos shares details on the programs that are available and how to access them.

By collaborating closely with direct service providers, the coalition makes it easier to navigate these resources, breaks down barriers to access, and fosters equity among the prenatal-to-three community in DC.