

EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKING GROUP

OUR MISSION AND REACHING OUR GOALS

Mission

The mission of the Early Childhood (EC) working group is to build a **multi-disciplinary network** of researchers and leaders from academia, non-profit organizations, government, and other funding agencies to increase the amount and quality of **research** and **best practices** in promoting optimal physical and cognitive development through the promotion of healthy eating, and to support and facilitate the development and implementation of **evidence-informed policies**. Special emphasis is placed on equity and addressing the needs of **lower-income and racial/ethnic minority populations** at highest risk for low diet quality and/or obesity.

Using an online group of multidisciplinary researchers, advocates, government employees, Extension professionals, practitioners and policy makers, the Early Childhood working group will support nationwide learning collaboratives that focus on:

1. Increasing EC professionals' effectiveness in addressing issues in the area of nutrition, physical activity, child development, and childhood obesity prevention research, policy and practice by providing a platform for collaboration and information sharing.
2. Foster creativity and innovation in research and advocacy efforts by utilizing shared, objective methods to evaluate outcomes, ensuring efforts are not being duplicated, and encouraging collaborations on research or advocacy projects.
3. Advance knowledge-base and quality of EC research with special focus on low-income and racial/ethnic minority populations.

The goals of the Early Childhood working group are (1) to **develop and maintain learning collaborative(s)** to support **professional development** of researchers and (2) to provide a platform for information sharing and networking in order to **advance science** in the area of nutrition, physical activity, child development, and childhood obesity prevention research and practice in early care and education, home, community, and clinical settings.

Activities and Objectives:

- 1. Establish a research base to support changes to EC policies, environments, and practices in early childhood education, home, community, and clinical settings.**
 - a. Identify gaps in the early childhood knowledge base as it relates to healthy eating, nutrition, childhood obesity, and optimal child development.
 - b. Build evidence to support changes to EC policies, environments, and practices in ECE, home, community, and clinical settings.
 - c. Increase the amount and quality of EC research (increased grants and publications).
 - d. Share information about funding for EC obesity prevention research and evaluation

- 2. Build a vibrant, multidisciplinary network and support ongoing professional development within the EC community.**
 - a. Recruit and support new investigators through collaboration in working groups, mentored leadership, building connections, and other opportunities.
 - b. Create opportunities for learning and collaboration (e.g., commissioned research projects, grants, publications, presentations).
 - c. Share information and resources among members of the workgroup (e.g., tools, methods, intervention materials).
 - d. Share information on research with minority, low income populations across childcare contexts (family childcare vs. center, rural)

- 3. Maintain a Nationwide Learning Collaborative.**
 - a. Support collaborative projects developed by the learning collaborative for continued learning and professional development.
 - b. Identify, where possible, funding sources to support collaborative projects.
 - c. Support engagement of members of learning collaborative in collaborative projects.
 - d. Encourage members of the working group to share current projects they are working on with the learning collaborative