

# Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

## Board of Early Education & Care – January Meeting

January 15, 2025

# Agenda

## Routine Business

- Approval of Minutes from the December 18, 2024 Meeting – **VOTE**

## Items for Discussion and Action

- Child Care Financial Assistance FY25 Reimbursement Rate Increase – **VOTE**
- FY25 Student Loan Repayment – **VOTE**
- Early Childhood Mental & Behavioral Health – Overview & Key Initiatives
- FY25 Mid-Year Review

A background image of numerous colorful wooden blocks (red, yellow, blue, green) scattered on a white surface. A semi-transparent red banner with rounded corners is positioned across the middle of the image, containing text. The number '1' is enclosed in a thin yellow circle on the left side of the banner.

1

## FY25 CCFA Reimbursement Rate Increase – VOTE



# Child Care Financial Assistance Rates

EEC reimburses early education and out-of-school time programs that serve families receiving EEC child care financial assistance with a daily per child reimbursement rate.

These rates subsidize costs and provide purchasing power for families receiving child care financial assistance.

**EEC's daily reimbursement rate for child care financial assistance is based on multiple factors including:**

**Program Type**



**Child's Age**



**Location of Care**



**Type of Care**



# Funding Appropriated for Increases to CCFA Rates, FY20-FY25

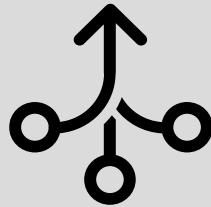
Fiscal Year	Appropriation/Line Item Language	Budget
2025	Center-Based and Family Child Care Rate Increase for EEC	\$20,000,000
	Center-Based Rate Increase (FY24 Closeout)	\$2,500,000
2024	Center-Based and Family Child Care Rate Increase	\$65,000,000
2023	Center-Based Child Care Rate Increase	\$60,000,000
2022	Center-Based Child Care Rate Increase	\$20,000,000
2021	Center-Based Child Care Rate Increase	\$20,000,000
2020	Center-Based Child Care Rate Increase	\$20,000,000

# FY24 CCFA Rate Increases and Changes

In FY24, for the first time, the EEC Board approved transformative changes to CCFA rates, informed by the cost of care, including:



5.5% across-the-board increase.



Consolidation of rates across regions with similar costs.



Targeted adjustments to rates by region and age group that made significant progress on long-standing inequities in rate amounts, using both market rate survey and cost of care findings.

After the rate increase in FY24, all rates were at least 72% of the 2022 estimated cost of care.

# FY25 Update: Use of Federally Approved Cost-Informed Methodology in Massachusetts

- EEC received federal approval in January 2024 from the Office of Child Care (OCC) to develop and execute a cost-based alternative methodology to inform adjustments to child care financial assistance rates.
  - EEC contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) in May 2024 to update, refine, and expand cost models.
  - As part of alternative methodology proposal and CCDF plan, EEC committed to implementing CCFA rate adjustments that are informed by an updated estimate of the cost of care by Spring 2025, pending available resources.
  - EEC is on track to meet this timeline.
  - A final report summarizing findings from the 2024 cost study and how the cost of care methodology informed CCFA rate adjustments this year will be complete by Spring 2025.

# Summary of Options

	Option 1- <b>Recommended</b>	Option 2
<b>Estimated Cost</b>	\$22.2 M	\$22.2M
<b>Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Center-based: 1.5%</li> <li>Family child care: 1.0%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Center-based: 2.0%</li> <li>Family child care: 1.5%</li> </ul>
<b>Distribution of Funding (excluding add-ons)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Center-based: \$12.7M (68%)</li> <li>Family child care: \$5.9M (32%)</li> </ul> <p><small>*An additional \$2.5M was included in the FY24 close out supplemental budget for center-based programs.</small></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Center-based: \$12.9M (69%)</li> <li>Family child care: \$5.7M (31%)</li> </ul> <p><small>*An additional \$2.5M was included in the FY24 close out supplemental budget for center-based programs.</small></p>
<b>Rate Adjustments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All CCFA rates will be at least 67% of the cost of care                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lowest % of cost of care increases from 63% to 67%</li> </ul> </li> <li>CCFA rates increase between 1% and 9%, depending on region and age served</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All CCFA rates will be at least 66% of the cost of care                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lowest % of cost of care increases from 63% to 66%</li> </ul> </li> <li>CCFA rates increase between 1.5% and 6%, depending on region and age served</li> </ul>
<b>Add-On Rate for Comprehensive Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retroactive increase of \$0.50 per day to add-on rate period for July-Sept 2024</li> </ul>	





## **Child Care Financial Assistance (Subsidy) Rate Increase Proposal - VOTE**

To comply with FY25 line-item language, federal rate reimbursement, and family access requirements, and to continue much needed support and financial stability to early education and care providers across the state, the Board of Early Education and Care hereby directs the Department to implement the FY25 rate increase for providers of subsidized early education and care as follows:

- Implementing an "across the board" Cost of Living Adjustment ("COLA") of 1.5% for Center-Based programs.
- Implementing a targeted increase to Center-Based rates to at least 75% of the cost of care, with priority for the regions and age groups farthest from cost of care.
- Implementing an "across the board" COLA of 1% for Family Child Care providers.\*
- Implementing a targeted increase to Family Child Care rates to at least 67% of the cost of care, with priority for the regions and age groups farthest from the cost of care.\*
- Implementing a retroactive increase of \$0.50 of the daily add-on rate for supportive, young parent, and homeless contracts for the rate period July-September 2024.

All rate increases will be retroactive to July 1, 2024.

**Vote:** The Board of Early Education and Care hereby approves the Department's recommendations for implementing FY25 child care financial assistance rate increases.

\*Pursuant to G.L. c. 15D, § 17(g) and the CBA between Local 509 SEIU and EEC, the rate structure for family child care providers is subject to negotiation.

A background image of numerous colorful wooden blocks (red, yellow, blue, green) scattered on a white surface. A prominent red block stands upright in the center foreground. A dark red horizontal banner with rounded ends is positioned across the middle of the image, containing the text '2 FY25 Student Loan Repayment - VOTE'.

2

## FY25 Student Loan Repayment - VOTE

# Student Loan Repayment Legislative Language

The Board of Higher Education in consultation with the Board of EEC will establish an educator loan repayment program and process for the dissemination of funds.

- The Early Childhood Educator Student Loan Repayment Program is funded subject to the availability of funds and appropriation from the Massachusetts Legislature G.L. c. 15A, Section 16. The program provides financial assistance to early childhood educators in the repayment of college expenses while prioritizing the recruitment and retention of a racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse educator workforce.
- Preference for loan forgiveness shall be given to applicants identified as early childhood educators in the commonwealth who have displayed a proven commitment to early childhood education and who either: work in communities predominantly serving children and families with high needs; or work in regions with a shortage of early education and care slots.
- The board, in consultation with the board of early education and care, shall promulgate regulations or guidelines necessary to implement this section, which shall include procedures for default of the loan forgiveness program for a recipient who participates in the program but fails to complete the commitment or other requirements.

# Student Loan Repayment Details

For FY25 (between July 2024 – June 2025) there is \$7.5 Million available for student loan repayment for staff working in EEC licensed or funded programs



## Eligibility

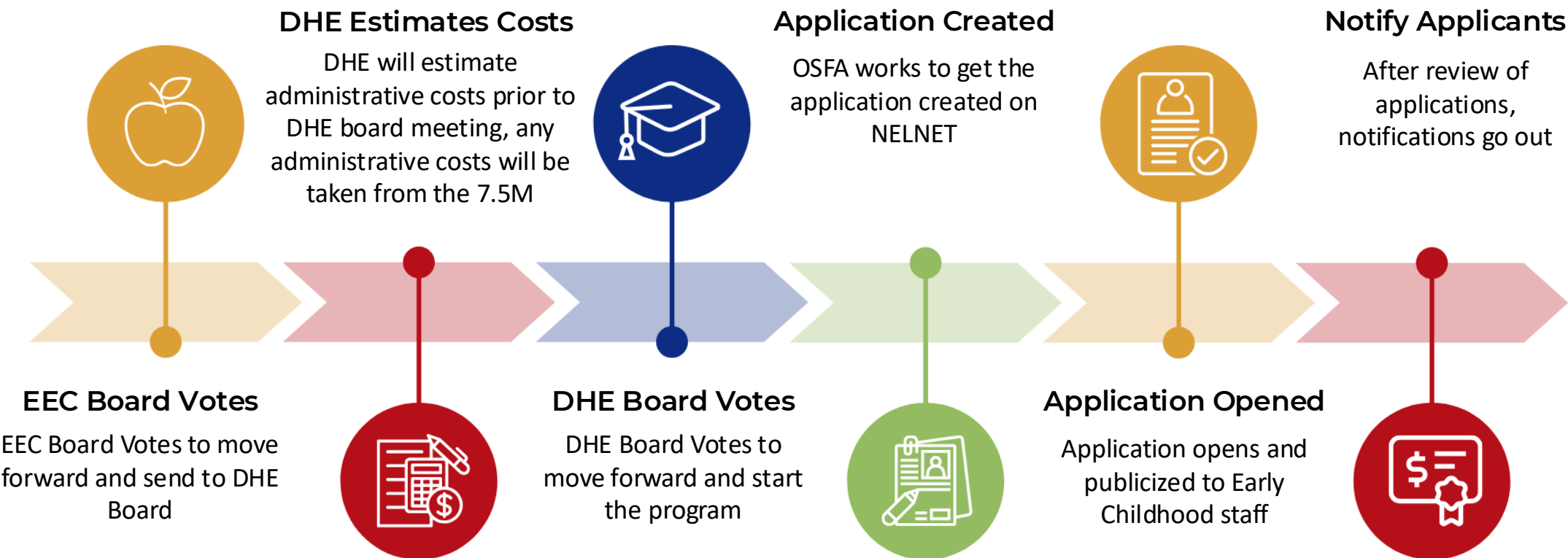
- Received an undergraduate degree after July 1, 2013
- Consistent with Early Educator Scholarship program, staff working in early education, child care and residential programs
- Priority for those who have served for a minimum of 5 years
- Are a U.S. Citizen or a lawful permanent resident, or non-citizen eligible under Title IV regulations; or have an approved eligibility status designated by the BHE pursuant to the Massachusetts Tuition Equity Law
- Committed to working for a minimum of one year in an EEC licensed or funded EEC program following the award



## Program Details

- Awards up to \$7,500 per year
- Program administered by the Department of Higher Education (DHE)
- Educators are required to provide proof of active full-time status working in an EEC Licensed or funded program
- Educators can apply annually

# Student Loan Repayment Next Steps



The loan repayment application will be made available, subject to action by both boards. **Awards are proposed to be retroactive to July 1, 2024.**

# Student Loan Repayment Motion

EEC respectfully requests the Board's adoption of EEC's proposal to submit to the Board of Higher Education for its approval, that the Department of Higher Education ("DHE") administer the Early Childhood Educator Student Loan Repayment Program, in accordance with G.L. c. 15A, § 19G.

**MOVED:** that the Board of Early Education and Care, subject to revision by the Commissioner, approves the Department's proposal to submit to the Board of Higher Education for its approval, that DHE administer the Early Childhood Educator Student Loan Repayment Program, in accordance with G.L. c. 15A, § 19G.



A background image of numerous colorful wooden blocks (red, yellow, blue, green) scattered on a white surface. A dark red horizontal banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the title text. The number '3' is enclosed in a thin yellow circle on the left side of the banner.

## 3 Early Childhood Mental & Behavioral Health – Overview and Key Initiatives

# Early Education through Higher Education Mental Health Framework

The FY25 budget included \$5 million to develop an early education through higher education mental health framework for students across Massachusetts.

In collaboration with health and human service agencies and other key stakeholders, the Executive Office of Education (EOE) and its agencies aim to use this framework to identify, guide, and align collective efforts to better understand and address mental and behavioral health wellness needs among students -- infants/toddlers through adult learners-- and use common language, strategies, and metrics.

The framework will inform a statewide strategy for mental and behavioral health supports through the public education and licensed child care systems in Massachusetts.



In December, EOE and DESE posted a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to solicit vendors to support development of the framework.

Interested vendors can find the RFQ on [COMMBUYS](https://www.commbuys.com).



# Impact of Behavioral Health & Social Emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning is an essential part of a child's development. It helps them build positive relationships with their peers, teachers and families. This can have long-term benefits in terms of academic performance as well as social skills and relationships



Self Regulation &  
Self Awareness



Enhanced Social Skills

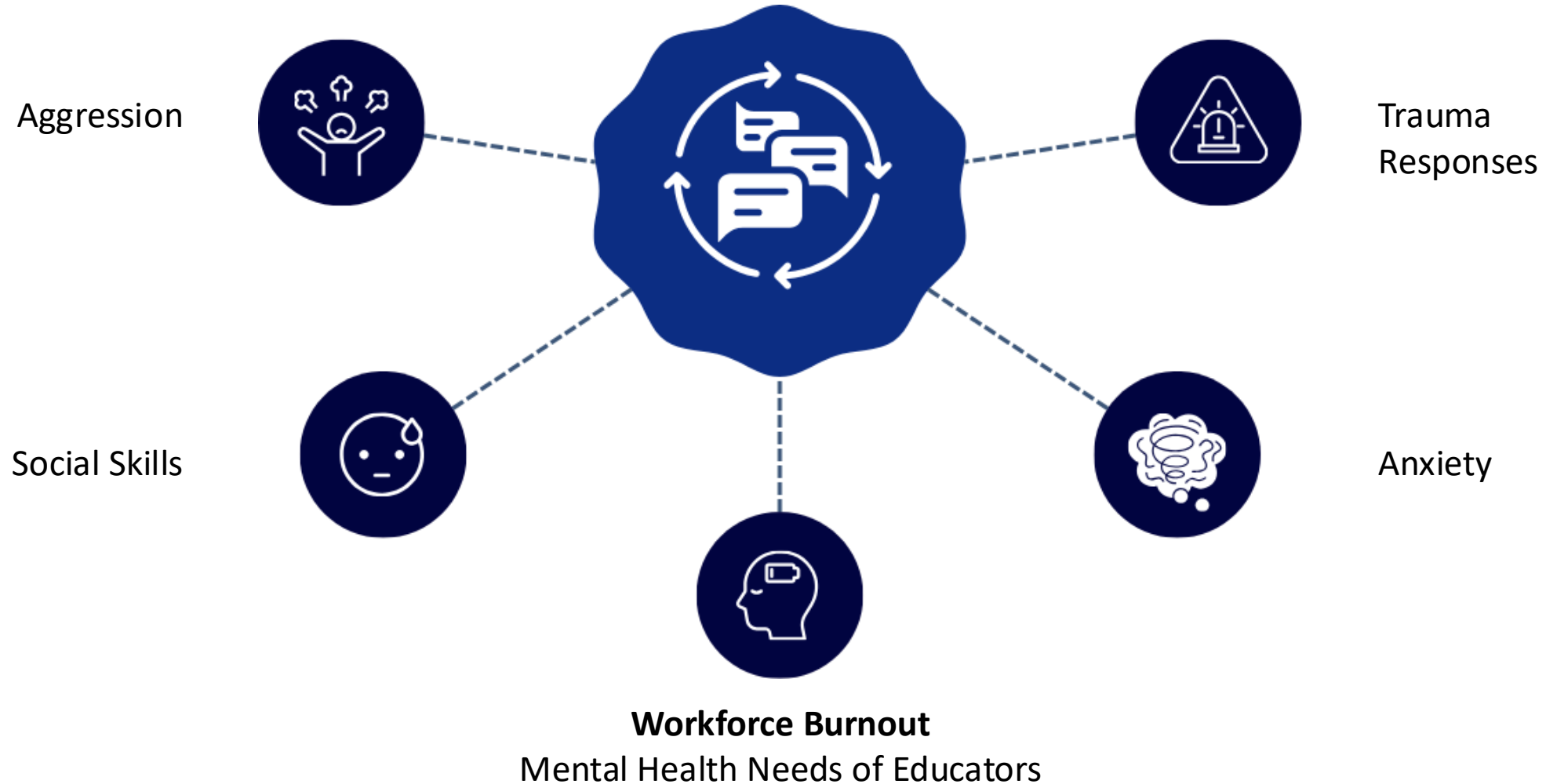


Improved Academic  
Performances, Engagement,  
Curiosity and Wonder



Positive Long-Term Outcomes &  
Relationships

# Responding to the Field: Current Challenges



# Goals of Mental & Behavioral Health Supports



To help educators build a foundation of effective, research-based practices to support healthy **social emotional learning and development** to prevent behaviors that challenge and dysregulation



To reduce the use of **exclusionary discipline** across the early education mixed delivery system



To provide support and training opportunities to be **trauma informed and responsive**



To support early educator wellness

# EEC Mental & Behavioral Health Resources and Support



- 1** EEC Behavioral Health Team
- 2** Early Childhood Mental Health Grant
- 3** **Pyramid Model Supports**  
Pyramid Plus Program Sites, Training, Communities of Practice
- 4** **Statewide Professional Development Academy**
- 5** **Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative**  
Support to communities around inclusion, special education & Pyramid Model

The EEC team collaborates across units to identify and address needs of educators across the Commonwealth. The behavioral health team closely collaborates with the Family Access & Engagement unit, Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) team and grantees, Head Start Collaboration Office, Educator Supports, and the EEC Licensing team.

# Partnerships & Collaboration





# Meet the Behavioral Health Team



**Aimee Smith-Zeoli**

*Supervisor and Western  
Region*



**Alexis Thibodeau**

*Western and Central  
Region*



**Chris Lloyd**

*Metro West and  
Northeast Region*

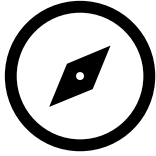


**Stacey Ware**

*Northeast and  
Southeast Region*



# EEC Behavioral Health Team



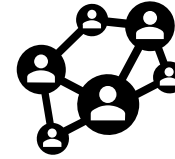
## Resources & Technical Support

- Social emotional development
- Positive behavior intervention strategies to de-escalate behaviors that challenge
- Exclusionary Discipline policy consultation



## Collaborate & Coordinate Resources

- Support coordination between EEC staff, regional teams, priority population contracted providers
- Continue to develop protocols, frameworks and guidelines to support implementation of support services



## Facilitate Referrals to Grantees

- Referrals to the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) Grantees
- Coordination with the Professional Development Centers (PDC)





# Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Grant Supports

- Classroom observations and strategies for creating supportive learning environments.
- Training and coaching for educators.
- Guidance for developing ongoing partnerships with families.
- Individual observation and assessments of children (with parental consent).
- Help with individualized behavior support plans for children, using input from parents and educators to prevent concerning behaviors.
- Referrals to community-based services that meet the basic needs of children and family (with parental consent).



To learn more or contact your local support [visit here](#).





# Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Grantees

GRANTEE	SERVICE AREA
<b>Behavioral Health Network / Collaborative</b> Hampden/Berkshire 413-572-4111 (Matt Matroni) Hamden/Franklin 413-203-9194 (Vanessa Pashkoff)	Western MA /Berkshires
<b>Empower, LGA</b> Rhonda Stollerman 508-808-8044	Canton / Westboro/ Quincy / Foxboro
<b>Community Healthlink - Together for Kids</b> Beth Ciavattone 508-421-4454	Central MA / Worcester
<b>Massachusetts Society for the Prevention and Cruelty to Children (MSPCC)</b> Jayna Doherty 508-688-5408	Lowell/Lawrence / North Shore
<b>Justice Resource Institute (JRI)</b> Stacey Gay 508-828-1308	South Boston / Cape and Islands
<b>Walker Inc.</b> Elise Naventi Reid 781-292-2143	Boston

# New Initiatives for 2025



## Inclusion and Support Toolkit

- EEC will be soliciting a vendor to **develop a toolkit** that supports programs to
  - Establish behavioral health supports for children and educators and enhance social emotional learning
  - Develop program policies that reduce that use of exclusionary discipline
- **Supplemental resource guide** for technical assistance to build reflective practice and sustain best practices in social emotional learning
- **Training** for educators, leaders and support partners



## Trauma Informed and Responsive Training Opportunities

- Partnership with **the Office of the Child Advocate, Center on Child Wellbeing and Trauma**
- Established the **STREET** Initiative (Strategic Trauma Responsive Early Education Training) to implement training series for educators and leaders

# Meet the Office of the Child Advocate Team



**Maria Mossaides**

*Director of the Office of the  
Child Advocate*



**Audrey Smolkin**

*Executive Director,  
Center on Child  
Wellbeing & Trauma*



**Joy Cohen**

*Deputy Director,  
Center on Child  
Wellbeing & Trauma*



**Alix Rivière**

*Senior Policy & Research  
Analyst*

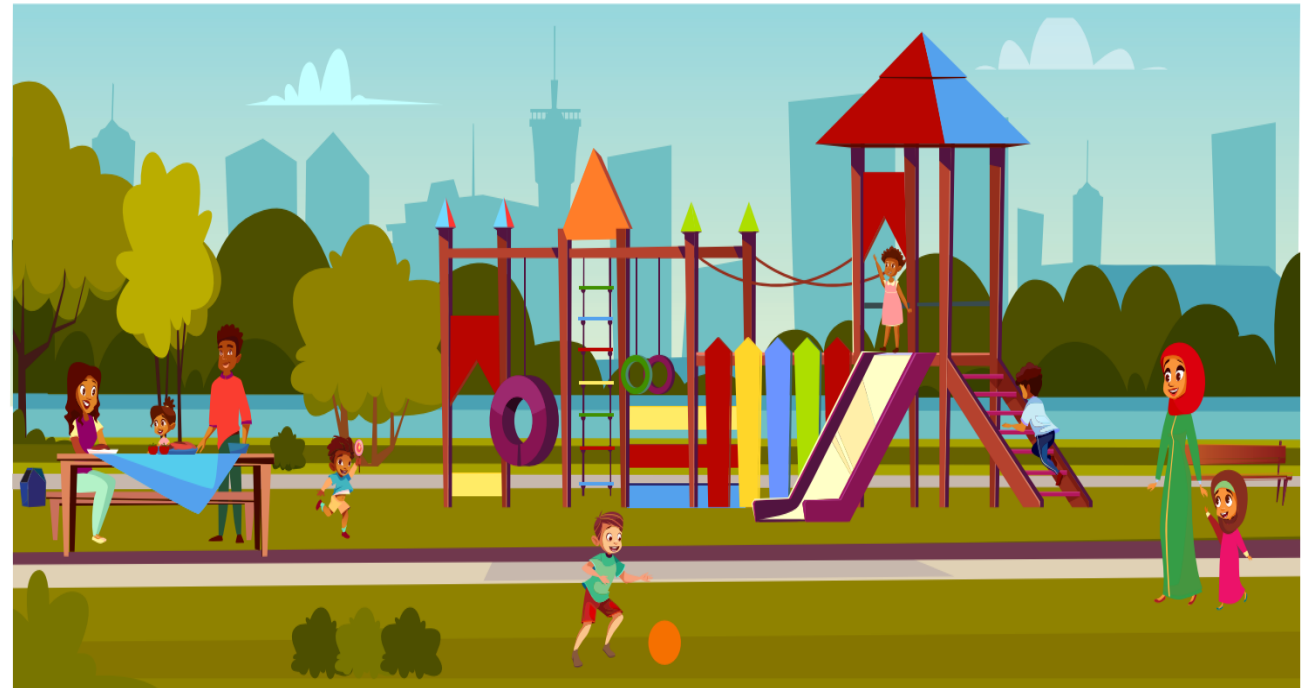
# STREET Initiative – Partnership with OCA

Early education and care settings that apply **trauma-responsive knowledge and tools** promote child well-being, build resilience, and foster a healthy workforce.

EEC in collaboration with the OCA's Center on Child Wellbeing and Trauma is offering a range of opportunities for **learning** the information and **tools** needed to create a **positive** and **resilient** early education setting and system.

Join us on the **STREET** to child wellbeing!

**Strategic Trauma Responsive Early Education Training**



# STREET Initiative Training Opportunities



**Strong Start Learning Management System (LMS) Trauma and Resilience Training**  
*For all providers*



**EEC Regional Staff TIR Training and Communities of Practice**  
*For all EEC regional staff (licensors, investigators, support staff)*



**Core Champions Train-the-Trainer Program: Deeper Dives in Trauma and Resilience**  
*For selected participants*



**Regional Deeper Dives in Trauma and Resilience Early Childhood Educator Training**  
*For all providers*



**EEC Contracted Provider Training**  
*Initial planning underway*



# Strong Start Learning Management System (LMS) Trauma and Resilience Training

For all providers

- Early education professionals can use the LMS to complete **learning modules** on creating trauma-responsive and resilience-building early education and care settings
- Each module focuses on understanding the **Guiding Principles** to be trauma responsive in early education and care settings
  - Safety
  - Transparency and Trust
  - Empowerment, Voice and Choice
  - Equity, Anti Bias and Cultural Affirmation
  - Healthy Relationships and Interactions







# EEC Regional Office TIR Training and Communities of Practice

For EEC regional staff

- This **all-day in-person** training will provide EEC regional staff with the knowledge and tools to understand how trauma shapes behavior
- Participants will be able to **apply this learning** to existing regulatory framework
- Following this in-person day, **three virtual communities of practice** will be offered to provide additional information and ongoing technical assistance





# Core Champions Train-the-Trainer Program: Deeper Dives in Trauma and Resilience

For selected participants

- A train-the-trainer series will prepare selected applicants to train early childhood educators to extend their trauma-informed and responsive learning further
- Core champion trainers will leave with materials to help support training for providers in their region
- Registration for this train-the-trainer series will be posted to EEC's website in January with trainings beginning in February







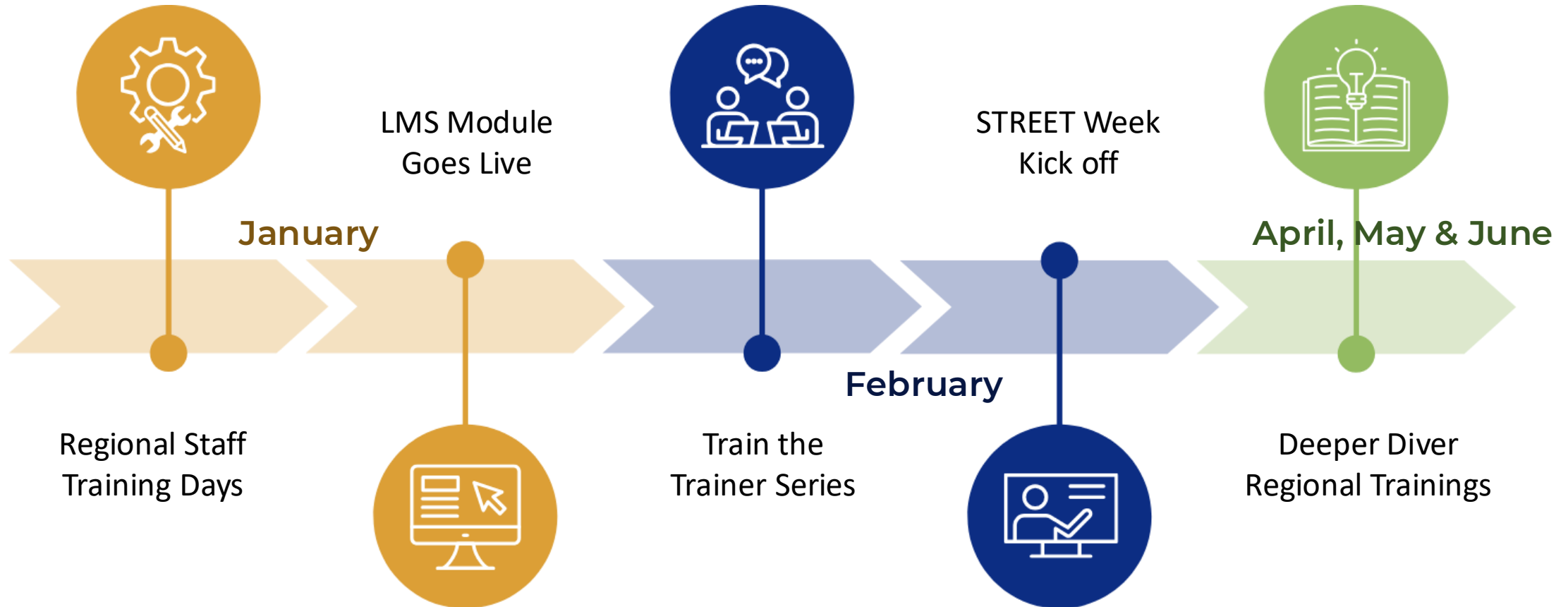
# Deeper Dives in Trauma and Resilience Early Childhood Educator Training (Regional Training)

For all providers

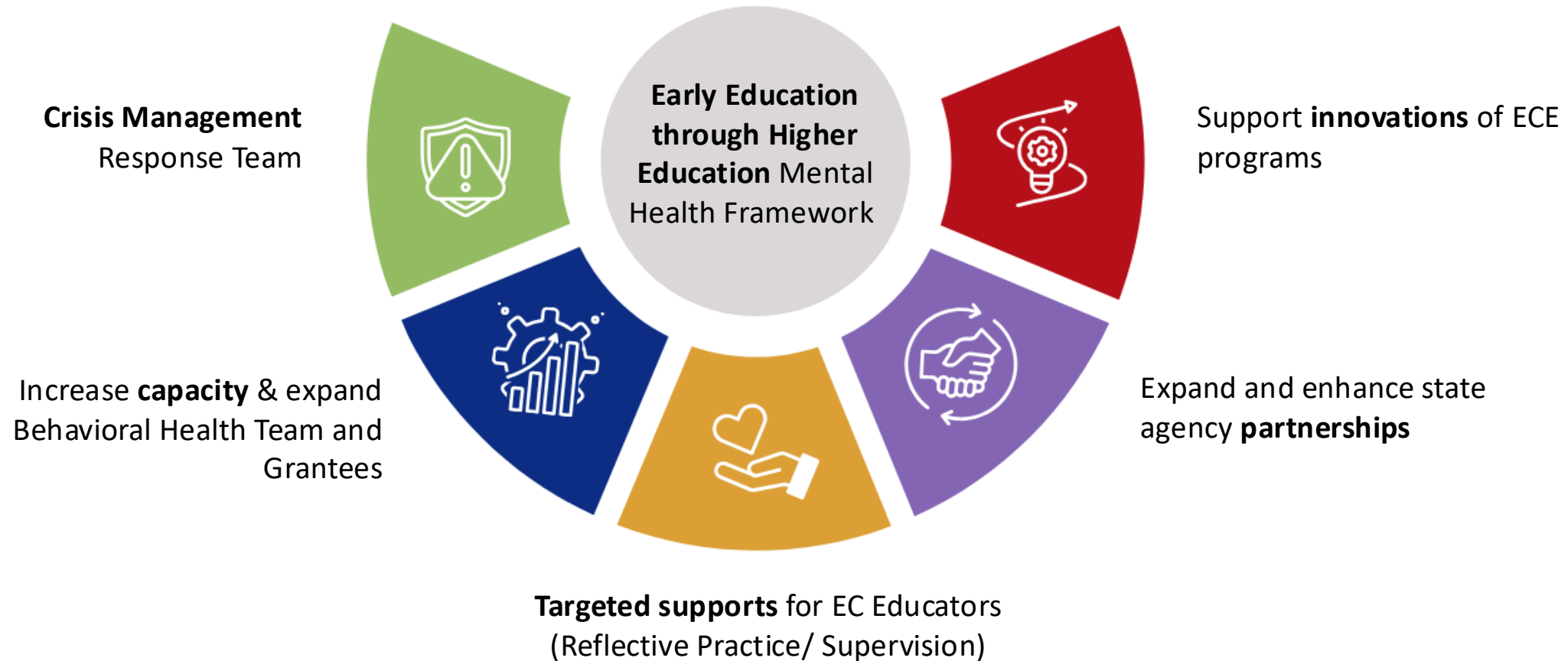
- Deeper Dives in Trauma and Resilience training will be offered to **early education professionals** who have completed the initial trainings in the Strong Start LMS
- These trainings will provide participants with **extended learning opportunities around the TIR Guiding Principles, real-world application, and practical strategies**



# Upcoming STREET Opportunities



# Ongoing Efforts and Aspirations





4

## FY25 Mid Year Review



# FY25 Strategic Initiatives, Projects and Priorities



## FAMILY ACCESS

- ✓ Implement new CCFA program contracts
- Operationalize CCFA policies
- ✓ Launch CCFA eligibility system design
- Strategy to better support Family, Friend & Neighbor Care
- CFCE alignment & rebranding



## PROGRAM STABILITY

- Develop and implement FY25 rate increase
- ✓ Alternative methodology approval
- ✓ C3 program updates & analysis
- ✓ Further capital investment strategy



## PROGRAM QUALITY

- Residential licensing regulations
- Child care licensing regulations
- CCFA contract monitoring
- CQI pilot



## WORKFORCE SUPPORT

- Ongoing BRC process improvement
- Launch educator credential
- ✓ New apprenticeship and “pipeline” programs
- ✓ Further improvements to higher education scholarships and support
- ✓ Student loan repayment



- 2026-2030 Strategic Action Plan
- Continue key capacity building (e.g., Internal Controls, Program Integrity)

- Establish Family Advisory Committee
- Establish Data Advisory Commission
- ✓ Launch KPI Dashboards

## AGENCY INFRASTRUCTURE

# Major Topics for Board Input and Action in FY25

