



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

The Prenatal to Age 5 Workforce Development Project

Findings and Recommendations for
Cross-Sector Work in the Prenatal to Age 5 Workforce



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ZERO TO THREE would like to thank First 5 LA for their generous support of the Prenatal to Age 5 Workforce Development (P-5 WFD) Project. We would also like to thank the many First 5 LA staff members who contributed to the project. In addition, we would like to express our appreciation to the project's supporters and champions, including the Steering Committee, the ZERO TO THREE Staff Advisory



Introduction

Positive and caring relationships are central to the human experience. Early relationships are vital to young children's growth and development, and they continue to be meaningful throughout a person's life (Wittmer & Peterson, 2006). The social support and practical help adults get and provide through the positive relationships in their lives strengthens their feelings of belonging, security, and self-worth. At work, supportive collegial relationships promote the ability to reflect, learn, and grow as professionals. Responsive, high-quality, and effective services for expectant parents, infants, young children, and their families require careful planning, coordination, and collaboration among professionals. The relationship-building process with cross-sector colleagues can include a shared common understanding of what every prenatal to age 5 (p-5) professional should know and be able to do.

The *Cross-Sector Core Competencies for the Prenatal to Age 5 Field™* (ZERO TO THREE, 2014) were developed to strengthen p-5 professionals' capacity to collaborate and coordinate services on behalf of young children and their families. The Core Competencies are aimed to support the cross-sector efforts of professionals working in child welfare/social services, early care and education, early identification and intervention, mental health, and physical health. The Core Competencies provide a consensus of key *knowledge, skills, and attitudes* necessary for responsive, comprehensive, and collaborative services and work among the professionals working in the identified sectors. A shared understanding of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the p-5 workforce supports a cross-sector approach across the p-5 field. It also builds shared concepts and a shared language that can encourage and sustain practices that are more collaborative in order to promote the best possible outcomes for expectant parents, young children, and their families.

This report provides a summary of the development of the Core Competencies as part of the Prenatal to Age 5 Workforce Development (P-5 WFD) Project. The project, funded by First 5 LA, was developed and implemented in Los Angeles, California, at the ZERO TO THREE California Office located in Downtown Los Angeles. The P-5 WFD Project was a 5-year commitment to support cross-sector efforts across Los Angeles (LA) County. The Core Competencies and the Prenatal to Age 5 (P-5) Cross-Sector Core Competencies Training, also part of the project, were provided to LA County professionals working with expectant parents, young children birth to 5 years old, and their families (the p-5 population). The project's findings (collected as part of the project's evaluative component), lessons learned, and recommendations are also presented in this report.

Project Background and Objectives

The P-5 WFD Project began in 2013 with the aim to expand and refine the *Cross-Sector Core Competencies for the Prenatal Through Three (P-3) Field* (ZERO TO THREE, 2011). The *Cross-Sector Core Competencies for the P-3 Field* identified core competencies necessary to develop an effective prenatal to 3 workforce. The P-5 WFD Project expanded the core competencies to include professionals providing services to children 3 to 5 years old and their families, therefore expanding the project's focus to the p-5 field. The project also set out to field-test a cross-sector training approach for professionals working in the five sectors serving the p-5 population: (1) child welfare/social services, (2) early care and education, (3) early identification and intervention, (4) mental health, and (5) physical health. Additional project tasks included:

- articulating the relationship between the Core Competencies and the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2014),
- developing cross-sector training modules on each of the eight Core Competency domains,
- gleaning ongoing feedback of the training modules during development,
- implementing trainings in LA County and providing Community of Practice opportunities to training participants,
- developing the evaluation design and tools,
- evaluating the outcomes of the training, and
- identifying strategic partners to focus on embedding cross-sector professional development approaches throughout LA County.

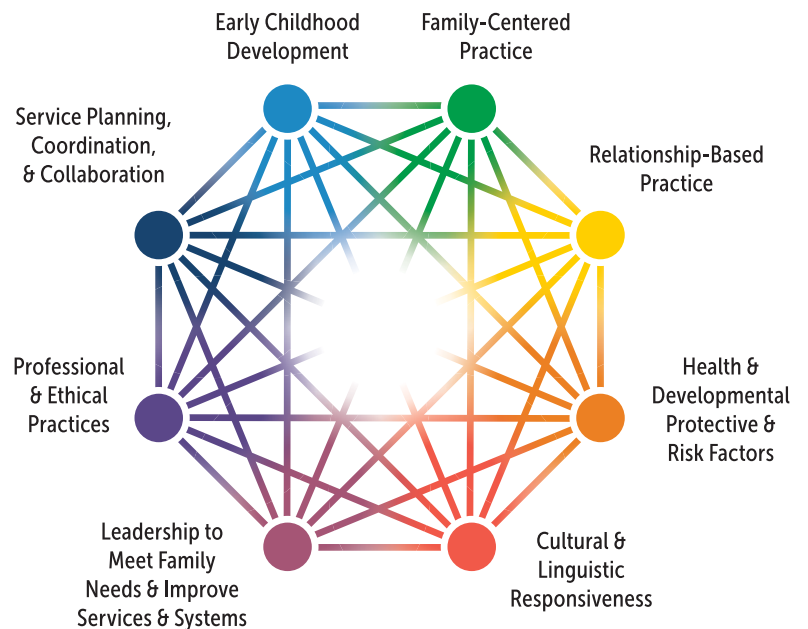
The project objectives included:

1. building shared knowledge, skills, and attitudes of professionals across the service sectors working with the p-5 population;
2. shifting participants' focus from discipline- and sector-specific to cross-sector and collaborative; and
3. integrating and embedding the Core Competencies and P-5 Cross-Sector Core Competencies Training within the LA County Health and Human Services delivery system, education institutions, and community-based organizations.

ZERO TO THREE enlisted the assistance of a multidisciplinary workgroup that supported the efforts of the project and included the review of training content. The expansion of the competencies included a literature review focused on the 3 to 5 age group and an additional review of the documents and sources used in the creation of the *Cross-Sector Core Competencies for the P-3 Field* for relevancy and focus on the widened age range. Training approaches to support the implementation of the Core Competencies were also reviewed. The result of the work was the creation of the *Cross-Sector Core Competencies for the Prenatal to Age 5 (P-5) Field* (ZERO TO THREE, 2014) and the Prenatal to Age 5 (P-5) Cross-Sector Core Competencies online training. Both of these focus on the Core Competencies necessary for working across disciplines and provide the foundational knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to provide effective services to families and children across the five service sectors.

The Cross-Sector Core Competencies for the Prenatal to Age 5 Field™

The Core Competencies include eight domains essential for professionals working with expectant parents, young children birth to 5 years old, and their families. The eight competency domains provide a foundation for a consensus of key practice components necessary to work collaboratively. The Core Competencies are not designed to replace the existing, discipline-specific competencies of the various professions. Rather, they have a broad purpose to strengthen professional competencies on shared fundamental concepts and to facilitate cross-sector partnerships and coordinated service delivery. Each of the eight domains describe the core knowledge—what p-5 professionals should know, skills—what p-5 professionals should be able to do, and attitudes—how p-5 professionals should approach their work. For each domain, p-5 professionals:



Domain 1: Early Childhood Development

Understand and are able to communicate how development unfolds across all areas of development. Understand the individual nature of development and that development happens interactively and simultaneously across multiple domains. Understand the critical impact of maternal health and well-being on prenatal development and positive birth outcomes and actively support expectant parents in creating positive environments that build protective factors and mitigate risk factors. Have knowledge of recent scientific and research findings and key developmental theories and concepts, and use this knowledge to support the healthy growth and development of young children. Responsively support children’s development, including monitoring development and connecting the family to developmental screening, assessment, referral, intervention, or a combination of these as appropriate.

Domain 2: Family-Centered Practice

Understand that services provided to children cannot be separated from the family context and the social connections surrounding each child. Effectively partner with families to support children’s health and development and understand that building positive, supportive relationships with families is central to successful service delivery. Understand that family systems are complex, dynamic, and unfold developmentally across a variety of relationships, such as family member to child, family member to family member, and family member to service provider. Appreciate the developmental progression of maturing relationships and use this knowledge to support the child, the family member(s), and other service providers connected to the family. Recognize the family’s strengths and vulnerabilities, and work to empower families to support the health and development of the expectant parents, young children birth to 5 years old, and their families.

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Domain 3: Relationship- Based Practice

Understand and value the central importance of relationships in supporting the development of children. Apply this knowledge to assess the quality of relationships children experience and to create constructive and supportive relationships with families. Apply this knowledge in their working relationships with other service providers to create responsive and productive relationships to collaboratively identify family needs and provide responsive, individualized services. Understand value and implement the practices of self-reflection and effective communication as tools to develop and maintain positive relationships with children, families, and other service providers.

Domain 4: Health and Developmental Protective and Risk Factors

Understand that multiple factors support or impede healthy development and the quality of relationships that support children's development, including community, economic, political, and cultural influences. Understand that the sources of resilience and risk, from an individual, family, and community context, are important to consider when evaluating a child's current and future health and development. Work with families to identify strengths and use these strengths as resources to reinforce protective factors, help manage challenges, and reduce risks. Understand that influences on the child and family system are bi-directional and dynamic, with parents and children influencing one another as well as others in their social networks.

Domain 5: Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness

Understand that culture has a profound effect on child and family development, and respond sensitively to cultural differences among families. Seek to integrate culturally responsive methods into their work with expectant parents, young children birth to 5 years old, and their families and caregivers. Are aware of their assumptions about cultural attitudes and values and check those perceptions with members of the cultural group as well as relevant, current research. Are committed to an ongoing effort to understand culture-specific information, family preferences, and evidence-informed practices that support child and family development in the cultural context. Understand that while linguistic and cultural competence are not predicated on being bilingual, appropriate supports and resources in the family's preferred language enhance the provider's responsiveness and communication with family members.

Domain 6: Leadership to Meet Family Needs and Improve Services and Systems

Exercise leadership in sharing knowledge and resources with families, colleagues, and the general public, to promote optimal outcomes for expectant parents, young children birth to 5 years old, and their families and caregivers. Intentionally express and demonstrate to other providers and clients evidence-informed practices in working with families and in working as part of a community system. Assist families in achieving their self-identified goals and objectives, engaging services and connections beyond their own work sector as needed. Are proactive in obtaining or providing appropriate services within their own program or from other programs. Take a strengths-based approach in working with families to ensure that family members are supported in advocating for their child's and family's needs. Identify potential improvements in program implementation or policy and advocate effectively for these improvements. Promote public awareness of the needs of expectant parents, young children birth to 5 years old, and their families and caregivers.

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Domain 7: Professional and Ethical Practices

Follow and apply high-quality practice consistent with the ethical and legal standards, behaviors, requirements, and obligations of their own work sector. Use evidence-informed approaches when they are available and appropriate for the children and families served. Develop and improve practice based on emerging knowledge on the best approaches to achieving expectant parents' and families' goals for children birth to 5 years old.

Domain 8: Service Planning, Coordination, and Collaboration

Are aware that they are part of a system of services that supports the multiple needs of expectant parents, young children birth to 5 years old, and their families. Effective, responsive service provision requires planning, including a coordinated effort with other sectors and service providers. Work to understand the services and connections beyond their own sector and work collaboratively with other p-5 service providers to proactively identify and coordinate services and meet the diverse, unique needs of individual families and young children. Take a strengths- and relationship-based approach in working with families and in collaborating with other service providers. Effective p-5 cross-sector work requires the devotion of time at the administrative, supervisor, and worker levels to develop and maintain responsive and effective partnerships.

The Prenatal to Age 5 Cross-Sector Core Competencies Training

The P-5 Cross-Sector Core Competencies Training was designed to take the Core Competencies directly to professionals including direct service providers, supervisors, and managers. The training consists of eight online lessons hosted on ZERO TO THREE's Online Learning Center and were designed to offer a self-paced experience with a recommended schedule to ensure successful completion. Each lesson focused on one of the Core Competencies and included:

- Lesson 1: Understanding Family-Centered Practice
- Lesson 2: Supporting Early Childhood Development
- Lesson 3: The Importance of Relationship-Based Practice
- Lesson 4: Recognizing Health and Developmental Protective and Risk Factors
- Lesson 5: Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness
- Lesson 6: Promoting Coordination and Collaboration Across Service Sectors
- Lesson 7: Leadership
- Lesson 8: Professional and Ethical Practices

The lessons included handouts, interactive activities, and optional fieldwork opportunities related to the competency domain. The lessons also allowed training participants to discuss the topics further and reflect on questions related to the content through a Discussion Forum. Within the Discussion Forum, participants were encouraged to post responses to discussion prompts and to reflect and comment on the responses of fellow participants.

The training integrated Community of Practice (CoP) sessions for each learning community. A CoP is defined as a group of people with a common interest that comes together to meet individual and group goals (Cambridge, Kaplan, & Suter, 2005). The CoPs stimulated discussion around cross-sector work and provided training participants a space to learn from one another and improve their own skills around topics related to the training content. Participants shared challenges and successes of

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cross-sector work and identified opportunities and strategies to promote a cross-sector approach. The sessions took place virtually as well as in person when participants offered to host them at their respective agencies or organizations.

An action planning worksheet was used to support participants in setting a goal and creating a plan of action that promoted implementation of core training concepts and that fostered collaboration with cross-sector colleagues. The goal addressed a specific challenge participants experienced in their aim to promote coordination and collaboration in their practice. The worksheet guided participants to set actionable steps, identify strategies, and measure their progress in meeting the goal. Participants were encouraged to share their action plans using reflective practice as a foundation for facilitating CoPs. Participants were also encouraged to offer feedback and develop implementation strategies with one another.

Implementation of the P-5 Cross-Sector Core Competencies Training was focused on connecting professionals across LA County. Information about the training was initially shared at the community level through contact with the First 5 LA Best Start Communities. As the training evolved, training presentations were completed at agencies across the county to share the training opportunity and garner interest. The training information and online application was also disseminated through email and shared by contacts at specific networks. After the training was well underway, ongoing recruitment worked on its own through continued information sharing from past participants about the training opportunity.

Professionals who completed the online application were contacted and encouraged to attend orientation sessions that provided more in-depth information about the training and its components. The professionals who continued with the onboarding process and began the training joined learning communities of approximately 25 professionals and completed the online training together. Each learning community had access to all the training components over a 12-week time-period. Participants who needed additional time to complete the training were provided a 2-week extension. The training opportunity was available from winter 2016 through fall 2017.

Evaluation Approach and Objectives

The P-5 WFD Project team developed an evaluation plan with various levels of measurement in mind to learn whether the P-5 Cross-Sector Core Competencies and Training would lead to substantive changes in practice, in client-level outcomes, or both. The measurements included near-term measures, including participant reaction and learning which provide information on how participants experience training information and CoP sessions. The measurements also included intermediate measures, including information on the support within an organization that might contribute to application of training content and "behavior" changes; and changes in processes, practices, or policies that participants engage in to apply training content to practice.

At the individual professional level and the workforce level, the training aimed to:

1. promote professional attitudes required to successfully work with expectant parents, young children birth to 5 years old, and their families;
2. increase the knowledge of professionals who work with expectant parents, young children birth to 5, and their families;
3. increase the skills of professionals who work with expectant parents, young children birth to 5, and their families; and
4. promote positive attitudes toward communication and collaboration among professionals from the five sectors.

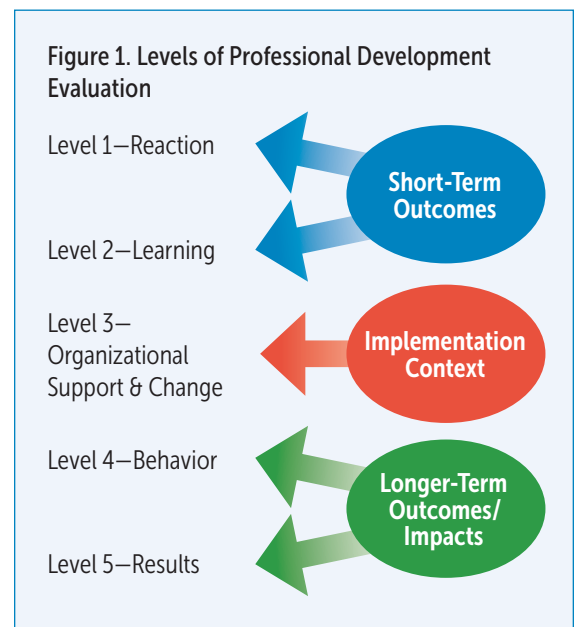
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At the workforce level, the training aimed to:

1. promote development of a shared language and understanding across disciplines and work sectors and
2. promote effective cross-sector communication, cooperation, and collaboration.

The evaluation approach was based on the work of Donald Kirkpatrick and his framework for evaluating training in the business sector (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2007). The framework was adapted by Thomas R. Guskey (2000) to assess professional development among educators. Guskey outlined five levels of professional development evaluation (see Figure 1) that build on each other. The levels are:

- **Level 1—Participants’ Reaction:** participants’ opinion of the professional development provided, including their satisfaction with the overall content and the formats in which it is presented
- **Level 2—Participants’ Learning:** whether the professional development resulted in changes in specific knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes among the participants
- **Level 3—Organization Support and Change:** whether the organizations that participants work within support and facilitate application of the learning gained through professional development
- **Level 4—Participants’ Use of Knowledge and Skills:** whether participants applied the knowledge and skills they gained from professional development in a meaningful way
- **Level 5—Results:** whether changes in participant behavior led to consequent improvements in client-level outcomes



The P-5 WFD Project team sought to evaluate the P-5 Cross-Sector Core Competencies Training at all five levels through various evaluation activities planned throughout the 12 weeks of training per learning community. Training participants completed a Pre-Training Survey at the beginning of the training to collect information about their professional background and work environment. Each lesson included a brief pre and post knowledge quiz designed to ensure that participants learned key concepts presented in the lessons for continuing education credit. At the end of the eighth lesson, participants were asked to complete a Post-Training Survey. The Post-Training Survey measured participants’ overall satisfaction, the extent to which they learned what they hoped to learn, their participation in the CoP sessions, and the application of training content in their practice. Lastly, Post-Training Interviews were completed with a select group of participants 4–5 weeks after the training. The interviews were completed by the evaluation team and focused on the application of training and changes in practice.

Evaluation Findings

The following sections summarize the evaluation findings of the P-5 Cross-Sector Core Competencies Training gathered from the learning communities that took place during the winter 2016 to fall 2017 training period.

Training Participants

A total of 165 professionals participated in the P-5 Cross-Sector Core Competencies Training beginning in the winter of 2016 to the fall of 2017. Of the participants who began the training, 76% completed it and received certificates of completion. And 72 participants (64%) also completed the pre- and post-lesson quizzes successfully for continuing education units. Due to incomplete survey data from various participants, only 112 of the participants that completed the training were included in the evaluation. The data collected from the 112 participants is reflected in the evaluation findings.

The participants represented agencies from across the LA County area. The agencies that were the most well represented included Child360, Pacific Asian Counseling Services, Child Care Resource Center, Children’s Institute Inc., Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, Foothill Family Services, Harbor Regional Center, and Penny Lane Centers. The participants represented all five sectors providing support to the p-5 population. The mental health and early care and education sectors were the highest represented sectors in the training (see Figure 2), representing 75% of the total participants.

Training participants demonstrated high levels of preparation for their respective work roles including education and years of experience: 54% of participants had a master’s degree and 26% had a bachelor’s degree (see Figure 3). The participants also represented a range of experience in the p-5 field: 31% of participants had more than 10 years in the field (see Figure 4 on the next page). The same number of participants had 1–5 years in the field. The roles identified by participants also reflect a range in levels of services for the p-5 population; from direct service to administration.

In terms of their experience with professional development, 72% of participants stated they had previously participated in an online training. Also, 74% agreed that staff development is a priority at their agencies, and 70% stated that they participated in the training because they identified it as a good professional development opportunity. Only 13% of participants stated they were required

Figure 2. Participants’ Employment Sectors

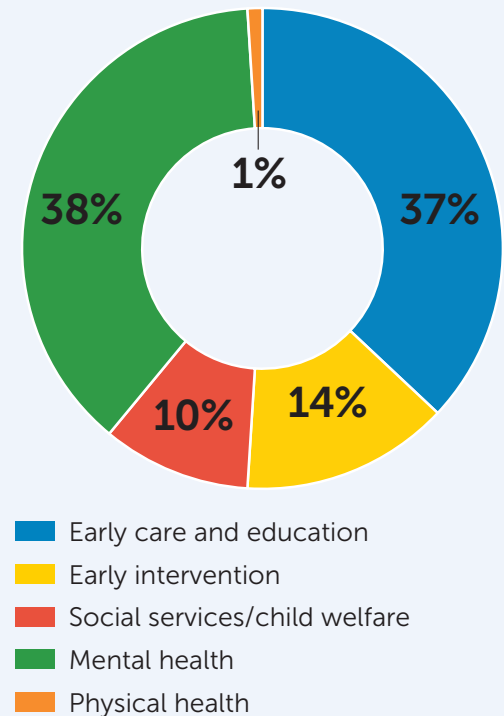
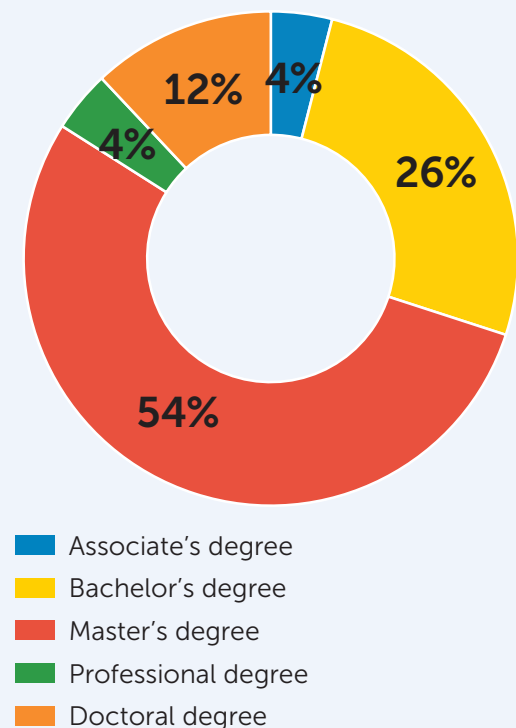
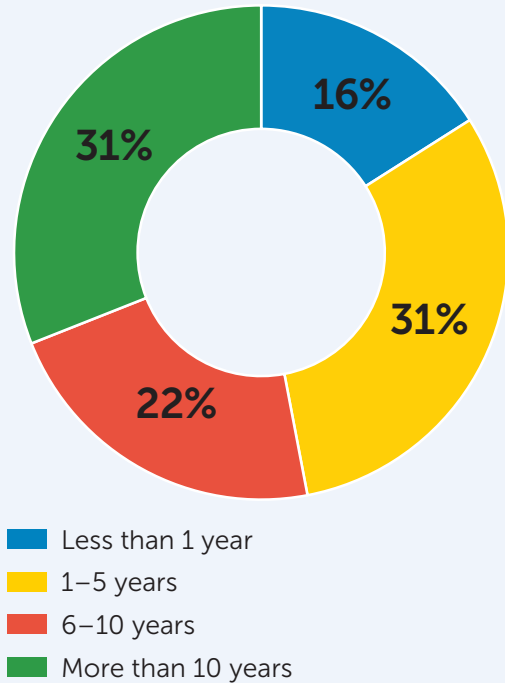


Figure 3. Participants’ Highest Level of Education



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Figure 4. Length of Time as a P-5 Professional

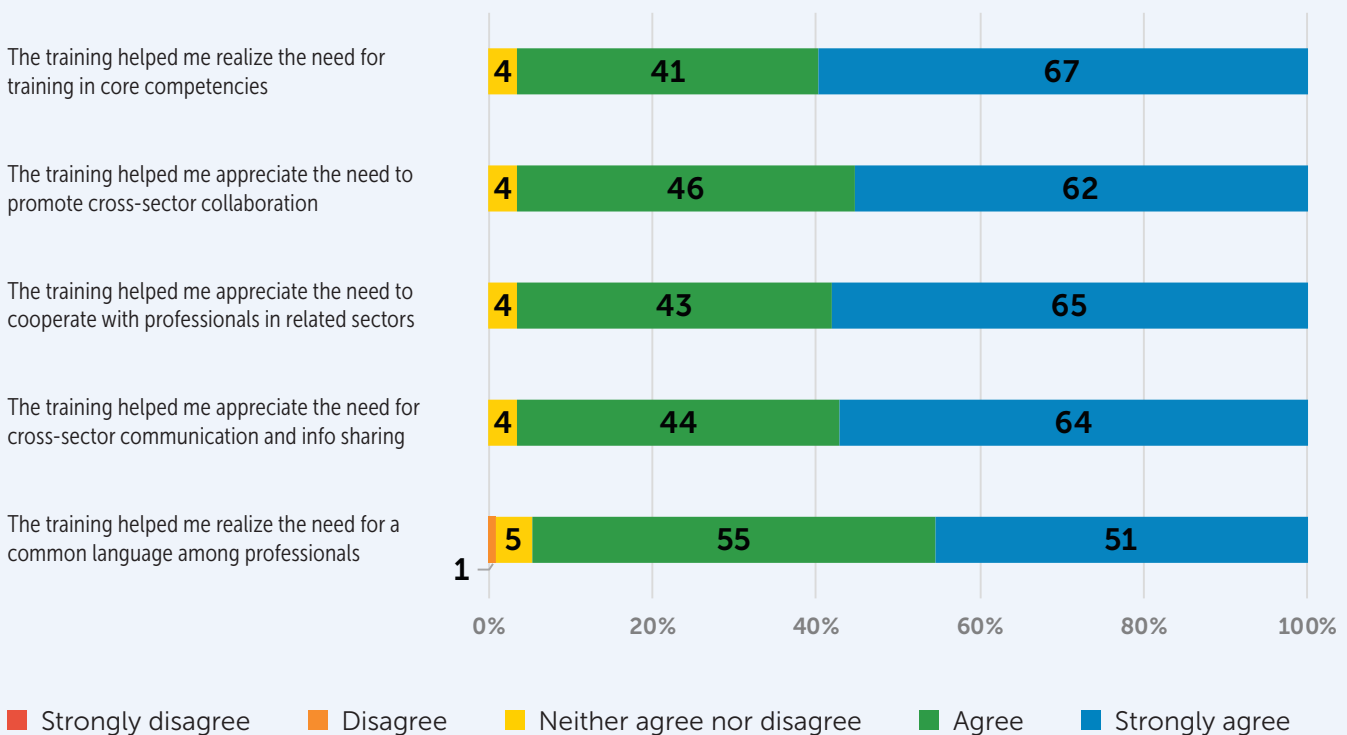


to participate in the training by their agency. Half of those participants were from the same agency and participated in the same learning community. Participants required to participate in the training had a higher rate of completion. Those who participated in the training with a colleague were also more likely to complete the training.

Promoting Positive Attitudes Among Professionals

Changes in attitudes toward cross-sector work were measured by the Post-Training Survey. Findings from the survey demonstrated that almost all participants agreed or strongly agreed that the training supported changes in their view of cross-sector work and collaboration (see Figure 5). Of participants, 96% gained a new appreciation to promote cross-sector collaboration, cooperation with professionals in related sectors, and cross-sector communication and information sharing, and 95% realized the need for a common language among professionals and core competencies that could be used as a foundation for collaboration and cooperation across the sectors.

Figure 5. Participants' Training Opinions



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During the Post-Training Interviews, participants stated that the training really opened their eyes to collaboration. It made them more cognizant of the need to collaborate and helped them realize that collaboration is a “two-way street.” Being mindful of the need to collaborate has led participants to seek opportunities to collaborate and be more open to the process. They stated that the training is a good start to promote collaborative efforts.

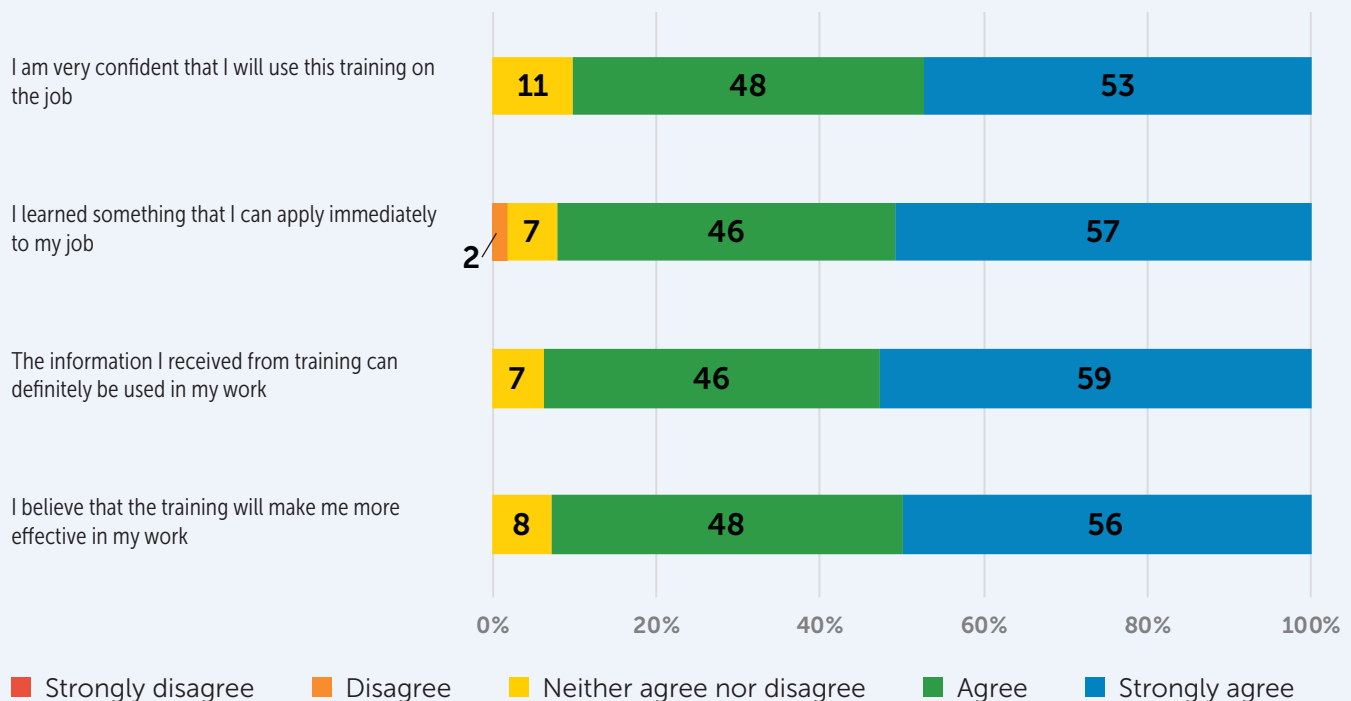
Increasing Knowledge and Skills Among Professionals

At the end of the training, 92% of participants agreed they had learned something from the training that they could apply immediately to their job (see Figure 6). Most (70%) agreed that the training provided new information and knowledge. More than 90% also agreed that the information received from the training could be useful in their work and could help increase their effectiveness. The Post-Training Interviews further support this, as interviewees shared the training helped further develop their engagements skills by:

- helping participants to engage with other staff members within their organizations,
- helping interviewees to build engagement skills to use with their own clients,
- providing helpful strategies for engagement, and
- supporting their efforts to build relationships and engagement with families, co-workers, and other providers.

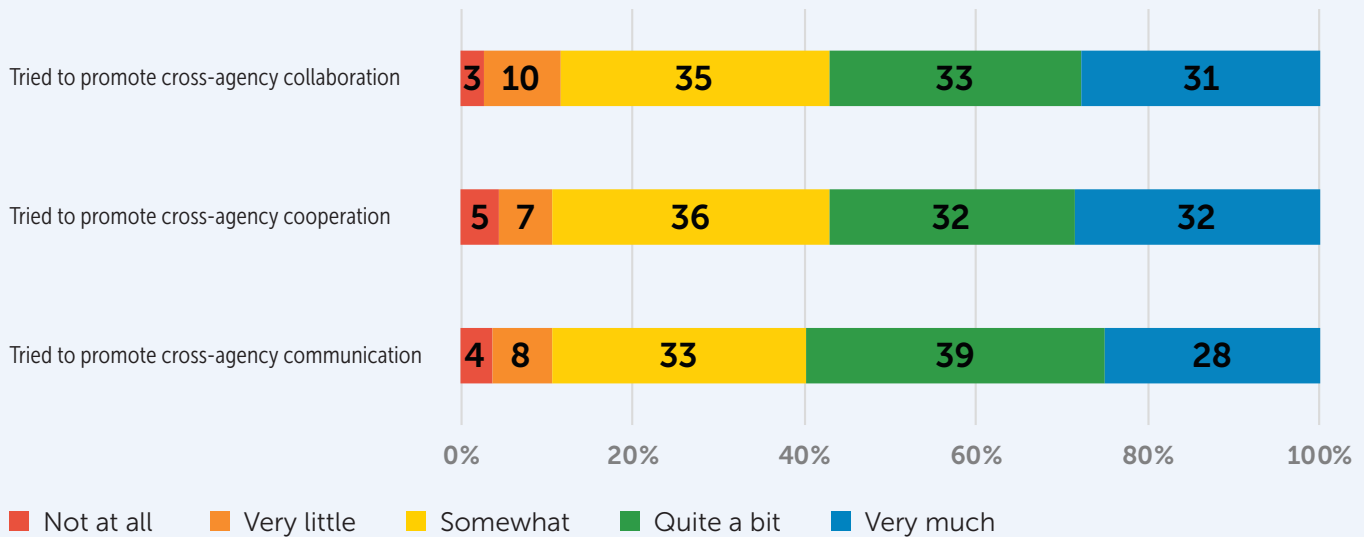
Interviewees also shared ways they began to put the information and skills learned in the training into practice by looking for opportunities to collaborate with other providers at case meetings with individuals from other organizations and systems, and by hosting and participating in “meet and greets”

Figure 6. Participants’ Training Opinions



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Figure 7. Training Impact



with other organizations to share more about who they are and the services they provide. Some participants stated their organizations began changing policies to invite other providers to meetings with families. Still, interviewees stated that change takes time and effort. They noted the support from agency administrators and changes in policy as necessary to encourage cross-sector efforts. Nevertheless, at the end of the training, about 80% of participants shared they had attempted to promote cross-agency collaboration, cooperation, and communication (see Figure 7).

Promoting Cross-Sector Communication Among Professionals

In terms of communication across the sectors, participants shared that the training helped them learn how important communication is between professionals. The training encouraged a broader perspective and helped participants understand the subtleties of families' needs. One interviewee stated the training enabled her to be more articulate and to communicate more efficiently with cross-sector professionals.

The CoP sessions were designed to encourage the communication between professionals from different sectors and to promote cross-sector work. Of the participants included in the evaluation, 81% participated in the CoP sessions. Of CoP participants, 75% identified CoPs as supporting their appreciation of other professional's perspectives, and 64% agreed the CoP's facilitated information sharing. Examples of the information sharing that took place during the CoPs included:

- participants recounting stories regarding their work with clients and sharing strategies to better support the client,
- participants reviewing training-related concepts and receiving information and insights from other participants,
- joint participation in action planning and strategizing to address a specific challenge,
- updating participants on the status of their action plan and rethinking strategies if necessary, and
- sharing successes with one another to encourage and learn from one another

For examples of participants' action plans see the participant spotlights in this report for a closer look.

Identified Barriers to Cross-Sector Work

Along with findings about participants' experience in the training, the evaluation also yielded information about the barriers and limitations to cross-sector work that participants experienced. Time was the most evident barrier identified in Post-Training Interviews. Participants stated that it is difficult to balance work responsibilities and professional development opportunities as well as managing cross-sector relationships. Time constraints and scheduling conflicts also affected participants' ability to participate in the CoPs. Interviewees also expressed the difficulty they encounter when engaging with outside organizations and/or professionals in other sectors.

Interviewees shared that an organization's or professional's experience and readiness to collaborate affects their ability to take part in cross-sector work as well. Some sectors, organizations, and professionals are farther along in their efforts to promote cross-sector coordination and collaboration than others. According to training participants, sectors, organizations, and professionals that are not accustomed to a collaborative approach are harder to work with and to build relationships with. This difficulty can discourage professionals from furthering efforts to work in partnership. Interviewees also shared that communication can be difficult because of the numerous and often varying opinions that make it hard to reach a consensus. Nevertheless, understanding and appreciating the differing perspectives of professionals in different sectors supports a shift in the lens through which professionals see the work done by others.

Participants also stated that much work is necessary to affect cross-sector work in the p-5 sector. They stated that the training provides a starting point to address the need for cross-sector collaboration and coordination, but more is needed to model the necessary change in the p-5 service sector. Interviewees stated that:

- All service providers need an attitude shift to think collaboratively and to help families navigate the system.
- There needs to be more support for cross-sector work from the administration within organizations.
- Policymakers and other key stakeholders need to make coordination and collaboration a priority to better support the p-5 population.

The resounding message from participants was that more cooperation and collaboration are needed at all levels of service to the p-5 population. In the words of a participant, "We are working for the same thing—we just might have a different approach."

Participant Spotlight:

Kalani Makanui PhD, Director of Psychology Training, Training Division, Project Director, Early STAR

The P-5 Cross Sector Competencies Training was a terrific experience that went beyond simply providing training tools; the training presented a comprehensive framework to service delivery, with the goal of empowering service providers to approach their respective working roles in a more collaborative/inclusive manner across various service sectors. First, the training provided valuable foundational knowledge in how to work effectively across service sectors to improve the client care experience. Second, the training provided Community of Practice meetings, which involved convening with professionals across disciplines/settings to discuss ideas to improve coordination/collaboration. Finally, the experience provided wonderfully practical tools for putting ideas into action (Action Plans) to ensure that ideas were seen to fruition, beginning with the formulation of attainable/actionable objectives. These tools helped our team to formulate approaches that are more consistent with a cross-disciplinary/sector, whole child/family approach to treatment.

Through our agency's participation in the P-5 Training, we were able to identify two key needs related to service delivery for clients from birth to 5 at our agency:

1. Children often present with comorbid developmental delays as well as traumatic experiences, requiring services across sectors to promote optimal development.
2. Families often experience difficulties accessing services from a single point of care.

Identifying these needs, our team developed an action plan for applying for additional grant funding to provide early, no-cost screening and developmental/trauma-informed assessment for our clients. As part of the grant, we also seek to improve successful service linkage with care providers across sectors, improving service delivery overall.

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Participant Spotlight:

Teresa Rodriguez, MS, Marriage and Family Therapist Intern

During this training experience, I was able to relate to the impact that culture (professionally and personally) had with accessing early intervention services for my own child. It is difficult gaining access to needed referrals to assess a child's needs, as it was with my own child. It was financially and emotionally draining to get providers to collaborate together to ensure the timeliness and effectiveness of treatment. Your training provided a great framework on understanding different ways to collaborate as professionals, and to understand the culture within the home and professional sectors, which highly impacts relationships with families and across professional sectors that builds therapeutic bonds that are key toward ensuring support services are identified, delivered, understood, practiced, and mastered for ongoing progress and growth. This training was very helpful, hopeful, and empowering to be a better advocate for my son and a stronger clinician. I took this training for professional growth but found it to be more impacting personally while re-evaluating my priorities in life. I want to create a system within my own son's network of providers to facilitate and support that needed collaboration. Many providers chose their field due to a personal calling, and sometimes the work pulls us away from the dream that brought us there and the passion/flame subsides. This training ignited my flame and gave me hope to do something better; not just for my son, but for others as well, while using my skills as a mental health provider and personal experience as a mother.

Participant Spotlight:

Gissely E. Torres, Preschool Lead Teacher

ZERO TO THREE's P-5 Competencies training has had a deep impact in my professional career. Before taking the course I didn't really think about how all the sectors that are involved in a child's life could actually benefit from working together. As a preschool teacher, I have at times made referrals to other services such as counseling or early intervention. Before the P-5 course, I didn't pay attention to all the sectors that are involved within those referrals. Moreover, I didn't really think about the frustration parents must at times go through from having to meet with a representative from each sector at different times. After learning about how sectors working and meeting together can benefit a child and a family better, I tried to start thinking of ways that I can better assist a family and about what is more beneficial for a child. Recently, working for a company that provides many social services to low-income families, I have had to work together with supervisors and family advocates to provide the best care and service to families and to improve their well-being and that of their children. I feel that the training from ZERO TO THREE has been very beneficial in these cases because it has helped me take the initiative to start these interactions with other sectors, and it has helped me improve the life of others. I am glad and feel privileged I had the opportunity to take the P-5 Competencies course.

Integrating and Embedding the Core Competencies and Training

The approach to integrating and embedding the Core Competencies within the LA County Health and Human Services delivery system, education institutions, and community-based organizations included: raising awareness of the Core Competencies, generating the evidence base for the Core Competencies, and strategic alignment and mapping. Presentations, piloting of the training, articulation of the relationships between the Core Competencies, and sector-specific competencies all supported the approach.

Local-, state-, and national-level presentations occurred throughout the duration of the project. Local presentations stimulated recruitment of training participants and enhanced the awareness and understanding of the Core Competencies and the value of the training. Statewide and national-level conference presentations served as opportunities to share preliminary evaluation findings and to promote the need for collaboration and coordination of services for expectant parents, young children, and their families. The training orientation sessions also served as opportunities to articulate the relationship between the Core Competencies and sector-specific competencies, organization and agency training plans, and other professional development criteria.

Statewide and national-level interest in the Core Competencies as a model also resulted from the presentations and was evident throughout the duration of the project. Interest emerged from communities in California—including the cities of Orange, San Louis Obispo, and San Bernardino, and from Riverside and Ventura counties. There has also been interest from outside the state, including

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Louisiana, Michigan, and Canada. The P-5 WFD Project team tracks and is currently exploring the opportunities to apply the Core Competencies model in these communities. ZERO TO THREE is developing new products and services to meet the statewide and national level interest and the specific needs.

The Core Competencies model is an integral part of ZERO TO THREE's competency-based models and professional development. ZERO TO THREE believes that there are core knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by professionals in all disciplines who work with young children and their families. The eight Core Competency domains enhance and do not replace professionals' existing sector or discipline-specific competencies. They encourage cross-sector coordination and collaboration on behalf of the p-5 population. For example, the targeted and specialized ZERO TO THREE *Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators*[™] (Dean, LeMoine, & Mayoral, 2016) build on the foundation provided by the eight Core Competency domains.

The *Critical Competencies* and the *Cross-Sector Core Competencies for the P-5 Field*[™] (ZERO TO THREE, 2014) both embrace and integrate the principles set forth in the Irving Harris Foundation's Diversity-Informed Infant Mental Health Tenets (n.d.; The tenets are used with permission of the Irving Harris Foundation.). The 10 Tenets provide a diversity, inclusion, and fairness lens that can and should be applied to all practices and services aimed at supporting infants, toddlers, young children, and their families. In addition, ZERO TO THREE suggests the Core Competency training provides relevant content for those implementing the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework (2014). Many states have adopted the protective factors framework to inform a strengths-based, universal approach to working with families and young children. ZERO TO THREE summarized additional examples of the relationship between the Core Competencies and sector specific competencies including:

- California Bachelors of Social Work Curriculum Competencies
- California Early Childhood Educator Competencies
- California Masters of Social Work Competencies
- California Transdisciplinary Infant Family Early Childhood Mental Health Practitioner Guidelines and Personnel Competencies
- Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children Recommended Practices
- Council for Exceptional Children Special Educator Preparation Standards Early Childhood Specialist Set

Recommendations for Future Work

The evaluation findings of the P-5 WFD Project identify a need for foundational Core Competencies to promote and support the work of p-5 professionals as they move toward a cross-sector approach. The findings suggest training in the Core Competencies can help professionals realize the need for core competencies, the need for cross-sector collaboration and communication, and a need for collaboration. The training also leads to attempts to promote cross-agency collaboration, cooperation, and communication and action planning efforts to put training content into practice. The following recommendations emerged to support this shift and to implement the Core Competencies model:

- **Support professional development by providing time for participation.** Interest in the Core Competencies training was evident during the recruitment and application process. Close to 600 applications were received, but only 165 professionals participated in the training and 76% completed the training. Most professionals who did not participate in the training shared that time commitment was the biggest barrier to participation. They shared that work responsibilities take precedence over professional development even though the desire to take part in the training is evident. Support from agencies and organizations is necessary for individuals seeking professional growth. Seeking online training opportunities that allow flexibility in participation can also support this endeavor.
- **Provide professional development opportunities that build p-5 professionals' skills, attitudes, and knowledge of ways to connect across the sectors.** Working collaboratively across the sectors takes training and practice. Providing professional development opportunities that focus on the strategies and skills necessary for professionals to work across the sectors can increase professionals' competencies in working across the various fields of support. The Core Competencies and the P-5 Cross-Sector Core Competencies Training focuses on strengthening professionals' core knowledge, skills, and attitudes for strengthened cross-sector collaborations.
- **Encourage professional development opportunities that allow professionals from various fields serving the p-5 population to participate together.** Professionals often engage in training opportunities with others from their specific sector. Providing professional development opportunities that engage professionals from a multidisciplinary lens allows them to learn from the practices, strategies, and experiences of other professions and to engage with cross-sector colleagues who are likely serving the same children and families.



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- **Provide CoP opportunities to strengthen learning and enhance implementation of knowledge gains.** CoPs provide a forum for reflections, information sharing, learning, and strategizing. It allows professionals to learn from other professionals, their perspectives of shared concepts, and their approaches to serving children and families, and also allows them to improve their own skills around specific topics. CoPs can support the advancement of a cross-sector approach in the p-5 field as professionals from all sectors meet with the focus on improving the outcomes of expectant parents, young children, and their families. CoPs can also provide the interpersonal connection necessary for relationship building in online trainings.
- **Strengthen leadership at all levels of service to best support the p-5 population.** P-5 professionals at every service level can lead and can advocate for the needs of the p-5 population. Each can exercise leadership in creating a responsive early childhood service system that strengthens families and supports positive developmental outcomes for young children. Leading, coordinating, collaborating, and advocating go hand in hand as p-5 professionals seek to improve practices and influence policies that benefit the p-5 population.
- **Encourage and lay the groundwork for cross-sector coordination and collaboration.** P-5 professionals are encouraged to participate and raise awareness of the benefits of coordinating and collaborating across the sectors to best support the p-5 population. Take time to reflect and identify the challenges and opportunities to participate in cross-sector efforts and plan accordingly to set actionable steps toward increasing and strengthening collaboration.
- **Research and data collection on coordination, communication, and collaboration is necessary.** Increased data on the impact of a cross-sector approach in the p-5 field can strengthen the evidence base for the practice and can further facilitate systems change. Programs such as the P-5 WFD Project can increase the knowledge of this model and can strengthen skills and attitudes necessary to take on cross-sector work.



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Resources

Center for the Study of Social Policy Strengthening Families
www.cssp.org/young-children-their-families/strengtheningfamilies/about

First 4 LA
www.first5la.org

P-5 Workforce Development
www.zerotothree.org/our-work/p-5-workforce-development

ZERO TO THREE Critical Competencies for Infant–Toddler Educators
www.zerotothree.org/resources/345-zero-to-three-critical-competencies-for-infant-toddler-educators

About Us

Founded in 1977 by leading child development, health, and mental health researchers and clinicians who came together under a common vision, ZERO TO THREE is today a national nonprofit organization with a mission to ensure that all babies and toddlers have a strong start in life. At ZERO TO THREE, we envision a society that has the knowledge and will to support all infants and toddlers in reaching their full potential.

Over the past 40 years, ZERO TO THREE has provided critical leadership in promoting understanding around key issues affecting young children and their families including child care, infant mental health, child welfare, early language and literacy development, early intervention, and the impact of culture on early childhood development. We work to ensure that in their critical formative years, all babies benefit from the emotionally nourishing relationships that are essential to their development. Our overarching goal is to transform society so that all infants and toddlers experience loving care, live in strong families and healthy communities, experience greater equity and fewer disparities, and develop the foundation for lifelong health and well-being.

In June 2004, ZERO TO THREE opened an office in Los Angeles to enhance the knowledge and skills of California professionals who care for very young children and their families. Nearly 15 years later, the California Office plays an essential role in building collaboration and capacities not only among early childhood professionals, but also those who inform policies and systems change, and parents and families locally and statewide. The California Office is staffed by early childhood experts with first-hand knowledge of the region's early childhood landscape, and who leverage the expertise of ZERO TO THREE staff, board, and partners nationwide to address local gaps and to ensure that the voices of Californians are heard.