



[ERH In Action with Legacy Parenting Center: Model Early Parenting Program in Oklahoma](#)

While baby supplies like diapers, formula, and car seats bring parents and caregivers to [Legacy Parenting Center](#) in Shawnee, Oklahoma, it's the connections and support for themselves — and the well-being of their babies, infants, and young children — that have made this nonprofit parenting education center a thriving community hub.

Early Relational Health (ERH) principles act as a central guide for how the organization engages with and partners with families, who attend classes and redeem points for diapers, clothing, baby equipment, and other parenting supplies through the center's novel parenting rewards system, the [Earn While You Learn Parent Education Program](#).

Learn more about Legacy's incredible work [at this link!](#)

[Read More](#)

Nurture Connection Parent Perspectives

This month we are featuring reflections from parents within the Legacy Parenting Center community, as well as our Family Network Collaborative (FNC) on the importance of [Family Resource Centers \(FRCs\)](#) in advancing ERH within their communities:

"Family Resource Centers in Alabama are vital resource hubs in communities. They help to promote positive outcomes for all children, families, and communities. In my

work with parents, I have provided classes on Parent Leadership at many Family Resource Centers. Those classes teach that Early Relational Health is vital for strong families."

— **Tish MacInnis, Nurture Connection Family Network Collaborative Parent Leader, Strengthening Families, Southern Families, Alabama**



"Legacy has taught me through their informational videos, along with talking to staff, that there will be many struggles with parenthood but always remember to have patience and love, for yourself and your child when it comes to these things."

Kassidy, Legacy Mom since 2021



"Legacy has helped me build a better relationship with my boys. They make me a better mama." Tonisha, Legacy Mom

"FRCs are a sanctuary for families in a chaotic world. My reflection on the value of FRCs is its importance for the community when they are in need of help, like applying for EBT or Medicaid, and offering health fairs so children can get their vaccinations. They know the people they serve. They know the perfect spice to blend in. They offer community engagement with parents and children, and community services for the full family like grandparents, cousins, uncles, and aunts.

We reach out and connect with one another, in the FRC that I serve in. We may be from different tribes, but we have an unspoken bond. How it's important to show up, give respect, honor the families and traditions, and reduce maltreatment to our most vulnerable children and seniors. We know the sense of humor that works well within our community -- like an inside joke that nobody else knows, but we know. I also bring ERH values within my community. Not treating it like a cure, but to add another tool to help my FRC community."

— **Nicole Loveless, Nurture Connection Family Network Collaborative Parent Leader, Native American community, New Mexico**

Announcing COMBO National Expansion!

COMBO National — the first study to look at *every known construct* of early childhood relationships (e.g. bonding, attachment) and how they map onto a child's lifelong development — **is about to expand enrollment to families across the country**. Quickly becoming the most comprehensive data set on Early Relational Health, this groundbreaking initiative is a huge step toward developing validated ways to promote relational health for children and families, starting as early in life as possible.

COMBO National is led by Nurture Connection steering committee members Dani Dumitriu, MD, PhD, Director of the Center for Early Relational Health at Columbia University and Nikki Shearman, PhD, Chief of Research and Innovation at Reach Out and Read. In collaboration with Nurture Connection's Family Network Collaborative, the Center for ERH and Reach Out and Read co-designed the study [*in equal partnership*](#) with parents and pediatricians, centering the voices and

experiences of those who will be most impacted by the research, and by any supports that come out of it.

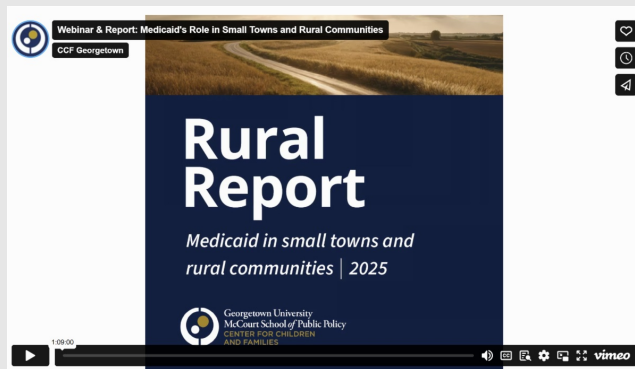


Spotlight On: National Pediatrician Day

In honor of National Pediatrician Day on January 28th, 2025, we are celebrating the importance of children's health and advocacy by sharing several articles that uplift the role pediatricians play in advancing ERH through client-patient relationships:

- [How Do Clinicians Help Prevent Trauma in Their Pediatric Patients? A Q&A with the authors of The Trauma-Informed Pediatric Practice](#)
- [The Crucial Role of Discussing Race and Racism in Pediatric Settings to Nurture Connection](#)
- [ERH in Action with Pediatrics Supporting Parents: Parents and Pediatricians Create Early Relational Health Partnership in Durham, North Carolina](#)

Explore More



[***New Webinar Recording and Resources!* Medicaid's Role in Small Towns and Rural Communities**](#)

Medicaid plays a larger role in providing health coverage to people living in small towns and rural communities than it does in metropolitan areas, a trend that is particularly striking among children, according to an extensive analysis by the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families (CCF). The new Congress, however, is considering large, [damaging cuts to federal Medicaid funding](#) along with other harmful Medicaid policy changes. These cuts would cause even greater harm to rural communities than metro areas.



What is Early Relational Health?

[Early Relational Health](#) is the state of emotional well-being that grows from emotional connection between babies and toddlers and their parents and caregivers when they experience strong, positive, and nurturing relationships with each other.

ERH is foundational to children's healthy growth and development and parents' and caregivers' sense of competence, connection, and overall well-being. These strong and enduring relationships also help to protect the family from the harmful effects of stress.

On Wednesday, January 15th, 2025, Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy CCF experts hosted a webinar to share the findings of [the new report, county-level maps](#), and hear from special guests about how massive Medicaid cuts would impact rural residents and health care systems.

Guest Speakers:

- Joan Alker, Georgetown University CCF Executive Director
- Aubrianna Osorio, Georgetown University CCF Research Manager
- Katy Backes Kozhimannil, Co-Director of the Rural Health Research Center and a Professor in the Division of Health Policy and Management, University of Minnesota School of Public Health
- Benjamin Anderson, President and Chief Executive Officer of Hutchinson Regional Healthcare System, Kansas

Moderator: Anne Dwyer, Georgetown CCF Associate Research Professor

Watch Here



**[*New webinar recording available!*
Courageous Leadership For & With Families: Policy, Systems, & Structural Change in a New Era](#)**

How can we courageously lead with and for families in order to affect policy, systems, and structural changes in today's new political context?

On Thursday, January 16th, 2025, Ascend at the Aspen Institute and the Future Caucus hosted a conversation focusing on how advocates for families – across philanthropy, policy, and systems – can lead with conviction to keep society moving forward when our political landscape is in flux. Building on their November conversation about public support and opinion on family well-being, this webinar offers

Core ERH Resources

Frameworks Institute. [Building Relationships: Framing Early Relational Health](#). May 2020.

Willis D, Chavez S, Lee J, Hampton P, Fine A. [Early Relational Health National Survey: What We're Learning from the Field](#). Center for the Study of Social Policy. 2020.

Willis D, Sege R, Johnson K. [Changing the Mindset: Foundational Relationships Counter Adversity with HOPE](#). (Blog) Center for the Study of Social Policy. May 2020.

Perspectives on ERH Video Series. [Perspectives on Early Relational Health Series](#). Center for the Study of Social Policy. 2022.

Center of the Study of Social Policy and Health+ Studio. [How to Communicate Effectively About Early Relational Health: What It Is and Why It Matters](#). 2022.

Find additional resources on our [website](#).

practical solutions for enhanced leadership in this new era, ahead of an upcoming February conversation on building trust.

Speakers:

- Layla Zaidane, President & CEO, Future Caucus
- Rep. Greggor Ilagan, Vice Speaker & Representative, Hawai'i State House District 4 (D)
- Rep. Aaron Pilkington, Representative, Arkansas State House District 45 (R)
- Anne Mosle, Vice President, The Aspen Institute, Founder & Executive Director, Ascend

Watch Here

What We're Reading



- From behavioral synchrony to language and beyond (2024), Eulau K., & Hirsh-Pasek. *Frontiers in Integrative Neuroscience*. Vol 18. DOI: 10.3389/fnint.2024.1488977. [Read here.](#)
- Child Health Care at a Crossroads - A Report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Kellerher, KL, Perrin, JM, Schuck, J. & Cheng, TL. *JAMA*. 2024 Nov 27. doi: 10.1001/jama.2024.24790. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 39602165. [Read here.](#)
- Parents, Caregivers and Peers: Patterns of Complementarity in the Social World of Children in Rural Madagascar (2023), Scheidecker, G. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 64 (3), pages 286-320. DOI: 10.1086/725037. [Read here.](#)
- "Poor brain development" in the Global South? Challenging the science of early childhood interventions (2023), Scheidecker, G., Chaudhary, N., Keller, H., Mezzenzana, F., & Lancy, D. *Ethos*, Vol. 51 (1), pages 3-26. DOI: 10.1111/etho.12379. [Read here.](#)
- *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (2021), adrienne maree brown. AK Press. ISBN 9781849352604. [Read here.](#)

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