



June 15, 2026

HRSA-26-057

**Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems SEED Project:
Scaling Effective Early Childhood Systems Development (ECCS SEED)**

[Nurture Connection](#) offers the following compiled resources to support state and tribal entities in the development of their applications in response to the HRSA's NOFO for [HRSA-26-057](#). Specifically, we are offering resources that support early relational health and flourishing in early childhood system building for improving early childhood health and development:

- Support centering family voice in system building
- Advancing child, family and community flourishing
- Evidence for transformation of basic primary care into high performing medical homes for young children
- Evidence-based models that advance Early Childhood Developmental Health Systems
- Policy levers to consider for sustainability of early childhood developmental health systems
- Learnings from early childhood system coordination
- Additional resources, including,
 - NASEM ERH Consensus Study
 - Nurture Connection's learning communities that are advancing the high performing medical home

HRSA-26-057 Summary: ECCS SEED Initiative will advance the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) priorities by preventing chronic disease and improving early childhood health and development. ECCS SEED will fund eligible entities to connect families to evidence-based health services in their communities. Parent leaders and state and local partners will guide this work to ensure services meet families' needs.

ECCS SEED represents the next evolution of the ECCS program. ECCS SEED moves from solely supporting statewide efforts to "seeding" community-wide projects, backed by state leadership, to establish impactful and scalable systems of care for P-5 families in high-need communities, including in rural areas. Both state and local components of ECCS SEED build on activities included in previous ECCS-funded statewide early childhood strategic plans.

Specifically, the next evolution of the ECCS Program:

- Moves from solely statewide planning to community-wide implementation
- Centers parent voice in governance
- Focuses on scaling sustainable systems of care

ECCS SEED recipients will select one high-need community of focus and implement an evidence based early childhood health and development model in that community.

- Offer parenting education
- Whole-family health (parent and child) screenings
- Support for timely well-child visits
- Selected model is universally accessible to all P-5 families in the community guided by family experiences

RESOURCES:

Support centering family voice in system building

- Nurture Connection's Family Network Collaborative (FNC)
 - [Nurture Connection Family Network Collaborative Fact Sheet](#)
 - [A conversation with the Family Network Collaborative](#); Nurture Connection, 2023
 - [“We wouldn't be here without the voices of families”: Celebrating Parent Leadership and Joy at Nurture Connection](#); Nurture Connection, 2026
 - [Reflections from the 2025 Nurture Connection Parent Survey](#); Nurture Connection, 2025
 - [Family Partnership: Positive Connections Help Families Thrive](#), Nurture Connection
- American Academy of Pediatrics
 - [2021 Policy Statement: Preventing Childhood Toxic Stress: Partnering with Families and Communities to Promote Relational Health](#)
- Center for the Study of Social Policy
 - [Two Guides, One Goal: Partnering with Families to Transform Early Childhood Systems, 2025](#)
 - [Manifesto for Race Equity & Parent Leadership in Early Childhood Systems](#) (Oct. 2024)
 - [CSSP's Parent Manifesto 2.0](#) (Mar. 2025)

Advancing child, family and community flourishing

- [Child Flourishing: A Critical Indicator for Early Relational Health](#), Nurture Connection, 2024
- [Early Relational Health in 2026: Building a Future of Collective Flourishing](#), Nurture Connection, 2026
- **References:**
 - National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *Early Relational Health: Building Foundations for Child, Family, and Community Well-Being*. National Academies Press; 2025. [doi:10.17226/29234](https://doi.org/10.17226/29234)
 - Garner AS, Saul RA. [Thinking Developmentally: Nurturing Wellness in Childhood to Promote Lifelong Health](#). American Academy of Pediatrics; 2025.
 - Bethell C, Jones J, Gombojav N, Linkenbach J, Sege R. Positive childhood experiences and adult mental and relational health in a statewide sample. *JAMA Pediatr*. 2019;173(11):e193007. [doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.3007](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.3007)

Evidence for transformation of basic primary care into high performing medical homes for young children

- Johnson, K., & Willis, DW, [Guide for Transforming Care of Young Children in Community Health Centers](#), Nurture Connection, Sept 2024.
- [AAP Early relational health.](#)

Evidence-based models that advance Early Childhood Developmental Health Systems

Evidence-based Models

- **HealthySteps** is an evidence-based, team-based pediatric primary care program. HealthySteps integrates a child development and behavioral health prevention and promotion expert into the health care team. All children ages 0-3 and their families receive a tiered model of services, from universal screening to risk-stratified supports, including care coordination and onsite intervention, as needed. Sites may also extend services through age 5.
 - Howland, R. E., Terlizzi, K., Frenette, E., Franz, S., Bushar, J., Briggs, R., Tracey, J., & Neighbors, C. (in press). HealthySteps Comprehensive Services and Preventive Care: A Medicaid Claims Analysis. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. doi:10.1016/j.amepre.2026.108482.
 - Valado, T., Tracey, J., Goldfinger, J., & Briggs, R. (2019). HealthySteps: Transforming the promise of pediatric care. *The Future of Children*, 29(1), 99-122. Available: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1220075.pdf>
- **Reach Out and Read**
 - Huiping Wu, Bi Ying Hu, Yu-Ju Chou, Jennifer LoCasale-Crouch & Chien-Ju Chang. (2026) [Contributions of nursery rhymes and parent–child reading to young children's language development: Variation across family socioeconomic status](#). *Child Development*. 2026, aacag106, <https://doi.org/10.1093/chidev/aacag106>
 - Needlman RD, Dreyer BP, Klass P, Mendelsohn AL. [Attendance at Well-Child Visits After Reach Out and Read](#). *Clinical Pediatrics*. 2019;58(3):282-287. doi:10.1177/0009922818822975
- **PlayRead VIP**
 - Roby, E., O'Connell, L.K., Griffin, M.G., Guevara, V.A., Aviles, A.I., Larkins, B.C., Guyon-Harris, K.L., Hunter, L.J., Mcloughlin, M., Ndee, C., Vaca-Condado, L., Canfield, C.F., Miller, E.B., Mendelsohn, A.L., Morris-Perez, P.A., Shaw, D.S., Gross, R.S., 2026. [Promoting early relational health and resilience in pediatric primary care: a qualitative study](#). *Pediatric Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41390-026-04842-7>
 - Chen, Y., Canfield, C., Roby, E., Wesleder, A., Farinelli, M., Cates, C., & Mendelsohn, A., 2026. Parenting Intervention in Pediatric Primary Care Promotes Child Mental Health: Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial of PlayReadVIP. *The Journal of Pediatrics*, 293: 115028. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2026.115038>.
- **Family Connects**
 - Kotake, C., Fauth, R.C., Stetler, K., Goldberg, J.L., Silva, C.F. & Manning, S.E., 2023. [Improving connections to early childhood systems of care via a universal home visiting program in Massachusetts](#), *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2023, Pages 105996. DOI: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2023.106995
 - Baziyants, G.A., Dodge, K.A., Bai, Y., Goodman, W.B., O'Donnell, K. & Murphy, R.A., 2023. [The effects of a universal short-term home visiting program: Two-year impact on parenting behavior and parent mental health](#), *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 2023, Pages 106140. DOI: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2023.106140

Policy levers to consider for sustainability of early childhood developmental health systems

- [A Decade Later, CMS Updates the Medicaid EPSDT Playbook for States: Here's What You Need To Know](#), Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy, June 2026
- [The Early Childhood Ecosystem: How Systems Shape Family Experience and Child Outcomes: NYS Council on Children and Families: David Willis, Nurture Connection and Cynthia Osbourn](#), Pn3 Policy Impact Center, May 2026.
- [State Leadership and Policy Action to Advance Early Relational Health](#), Johnson K, Nagle G, Willis D, Oct. 2023
- [Policy Change to Promote Early Relational Health](#), Center for the Study of Social Policy, July 2022
- Johnson K, Willis D, Doyle S. [Guide to Leveraging Title V and Medicaid to Support Social Emotional Development](#). Center for the Study of Social Policy and Johnson Group Consulting, Dec. 2020.
- Johnson K, Bruner C. [A Sourcebook on Medicaid's Role in Early Childhood: Advancing high performing medical homes and improving lifelong health](#). Child and Family Policy Center, 2018.

Learnings from early childhood system coordination

- [The Nuts and Bolts of Building Early Childhood Systems through State/Local Initiatives](#), Build Initiative, 2021
- [Measuring the Performance of Early Childhood Systems: New Toolkit Available](#), Center for Social Policy, 2019
- [Engagement in Action \(EnAct!\) Framework](#) features tools, policies, data and partnerships to scale evidence-based strategies to co-create with families and develop a coordinated system that promotes flourishing.
- [Roadmap for Collaboration among Title V, Home Visiting, and Early Childhood Systems Programs](#), Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP), 2023.

Additional resources:

NASEM Consensus Study: [Early Relational Health: Building Foundations for Child, Family and Community Wellbeing](#), 2025

Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

- [Center of Excellence for Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation \(IECMHC\), Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development](#)
- [Leadership Certificate in Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation](#)

[Certificate in Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Family Leadership](#), Thrive Center for Children, Families, and Communities, Georgetown University.

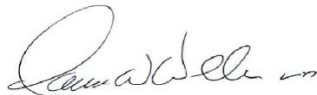
Nurture Connection’s “three-legged stool” community framework

Nurture Connection’s Strategic Plan 2026-2028 is focused on community-powered transformation in partnership with families and communities. At our first national Summit we introduced a model for advancing Early Relational health within local communities by integrating child health systems, early childhood/education systems, and family/parent partnership —the Three-Legged Stool. ([Nurture Connection: 2026 Prospectus](#))

Nurture Connection Early Relational Health Community Teams Network: These place-based community teams have formed a [network collaborative](#) to share learnings for advancing the “three-legged stool” and child, family and community flourishing. Contact: Patsy Hampton, pah86@georgetown.edu

Nurture Connection’s [Early Relational Health Principles](#), June 2026.

Nurture Connection’s [Early Relational Health Principles in Practice](#), June 2026.



David W. Willis, MD, FAAP
Founder and Director, Nurture Connection
Georgetown University
Thrive Center for Children, Families,
and Communities
dww53@georgetown.edu



Patsy Hampton
Deputy Director, Nurture Connection
Georgetown University
Thrive Center for Children, Families,
and Communities
pah86@georgetown.edu