

Connecticut Office
of Early Childhood

PYRAMID PARTNERSHIP

— CONNECTICUT —

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Annual Report
September 2019 to June 2021



**Message from the Commissioner
of the Office of Early Childhood,
Beth Bye:**

OEC understands the challenges programs and families have been facing. The Connecticut Pyramid Partnership and OEC have worked to ensure that Pyramid resources are available for all, and we hope you find them as valuable as we do.

Social emotional learning and development is fundamental to children's success in school and beyond, and it's importance is understood now more than ever. The Pyramid Model promotes young children's healthy social and emotional development; and provides tools, strategies, and resources for teachers and caregivers to support children and families who may have experienced reduced social interaction and traumatic events during COVID-19.

This framework and resources can help guide programs to think about what supports are in place for building social and emotional competence in young children. The available resources help ensure that programs are addressing responsive relationships; and creating high quality, supportive environments that are especially important at this time. This framework is aligned with the CT ELDS and the CT CKCs, and can be used in conjunction with any SEL curriculum or on its own.

I encourage you to look for Pyramid resources on the OEC website.

Beth Bye, Commissioner

WHAT IS THE PYRAMID MODEL?

Pyramid is a framework that outlines multiple tiers of support for supporting social and emotional development, and to reduce persistent challenging behavior. This framework can be a guide to think about what supports are in place for building social and emotional competence in young children; and for addressing persistent challenging behavior. The framework also addresses family engagement, equity and using data, as well as scale up and sustainability efforts.

The Pyramid Framework:

- ◇ Specifically focuses on early childhood (birth through five)
- ◇ Designed to build social and emotional competence, and prevent challenging behaviors
- ◇ Promotes research-based practices for supporting infants/toddlers and preschoolers
- ◇ Builds upon the foundation of an effective workforce

The framework promotes the use of specific, evidence-based practices implemented by early care and education providers that support nurturing and responsive relationships; high quality supportive environments; and social and emotional competence.

The components of full implementation of the Pyramid Model in early childhood settings are outlined in the Program-Wide Benchmarks of Quality. At the state and program level, Leadership Teams use the Benchmarks to develop an Action Plan that guides their work with data decision making. Those engaging in program-wide implementation have demonstrated readiness to engage in the deep and sustained work necessary for full implementation to fidelity. Full implementation on the program level includes developing a leadership team, collecting data, and coaching teachers and/or practitioners.

Connecticut continues to be a member of the Pyramid Model Consortium, a consortium of states working with the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovation (NCPMI) to increase the use of Pyramid Model practices across states and countries that are encouraging implementation in selected communities, homes, programs, and classrooms.

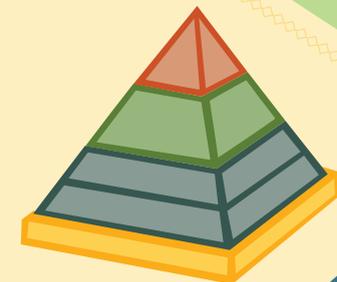
The Pyramid Model builds upon a tiered approach to providing universal supports to all children to promote wellness; targeted services to those who need more support; and intensive services to those who need them.

PYRAMID IN CONNECTICUT

It has been a hard 18 months for everyone. No different for Pyramid implementation. We have watched as programs and centers closed and reopened; reconfigured; continued their work while extremely short staffed, and worried about the health of the children, staff, and families at their centers. The CPP worked hard to support coaches and programs not only to continue all their other work, but also to do the work of Pyramid. The bottom, foundational layer of the Pyramid is an Effective Workforce. This includes policies, procedures, and training; but also includes helping teachers, coaches, and other caregivers with self-care techniques that are so important, and help us be there for children and families.

To support the workforce CPP:

- ◇ Developed multiple topic-driven video resources for families and educators
- ◇ Continued to offer program coaching and a community of practice for coaches
- ◇ Developed Connecticut-specific 18-hour module training that connects to CT ELDS, CKCs, and Head Start standards offered on-line as an asynchronous training
- ◇ Offered virtual training for programs, teachers, and coaches



CONNECTICUT PYRAMID PARTNERSHIP (STATE LEADERSHIP TEAM) CPP

Throughout the pandemic, the CPP continued to meet monthly to address the needs of the programs in our two cohorts and to shape the future of Pyramid implementation in Connecticut. The CPP developed general information for programs outside of our Cohorts, but sought social emotional and behavioral supports and resources that are available on the **OEC website**. As expected, attendance at CPP meetings increased and then dipped as members' responsibilities and commitments changed during COVID-19. But it is on its way back up as we continue our work. The commitment of each member of our leadership team is obvious and admirable. Our benchmark is 70% attendance and we have been close to meeting that.

Membership on the CPP includes representation from each of the entities listed below:

- ◆ Head Start Training and Technical Assistance
- ◆ Head Start Collaboration Office
- ◆ University of Connecticut University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD)
- ◆ Mental Health Consultation (ECCP)
- ◆ Connecticut Infant Mental Health Association
- ◆ Connecticut Office of Early Childhood
- ◆ State Education Resource Center
- ◆ State Department of Education (Part B 619)
- ◆ Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center
- ◆ All Our Kin (A Family Child Care Network)
- ◆ 2-1-1 Childcare, Child Care Resource and Referral (United Way of Connecticut)



The CPP continued to work during the year to infuse equity in all of our Pyramid work, as well as to continue our focus on family engagement. Through grant funds from the AUCD, resources for families and for teachers to share with families were developed.

Program Coaches and leadership team members continued to meet virtually during COVID-19 to continue conversations around race and equity. This has been eye opening for all of us and has shaped the way we do all of our work. Several members of the CPP attended a multi-day convening of states to discuss Equity and Pyramid Model Implementation.

The CPP was pleasantly surprised by the number of centers in our cohorts that managed to continue work on their Action Plans and Benchmarks of Quality, and other implementation efforts; and get their data submitted in a timely manner. This, in large part, is a result of the dedication and commitment of our Program Coaches who did not give up. Check-in calls every month to programs, supporting programs to work on Action Plans and complete their BOQs, offering helpful solutions and resources, and letting the CPP know what it's like in the "trenches".

The CPP continued to be supported by the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations for the second year of a technical assistance opportunity. Our TA providers attended meetings and assisted us to develop and conduct relevant trainings, all virtually! The support of the National Center (NCPMI) will be missed, but they have left us with a strong foundation for moving forward.

Throughout the pandemic, the CPP continued work on our Action Plan and saw gains in implementation through the State Benchmarks of Quality completed annually.

The challenge for the CPP has been how to support the programs in our Cohorts who were struggling, but wanted to continue Pyramid implementation. Some of the Cohort Administrators and others recognized that pushing toward full implementation would benefit everyone, even in this difficult time.



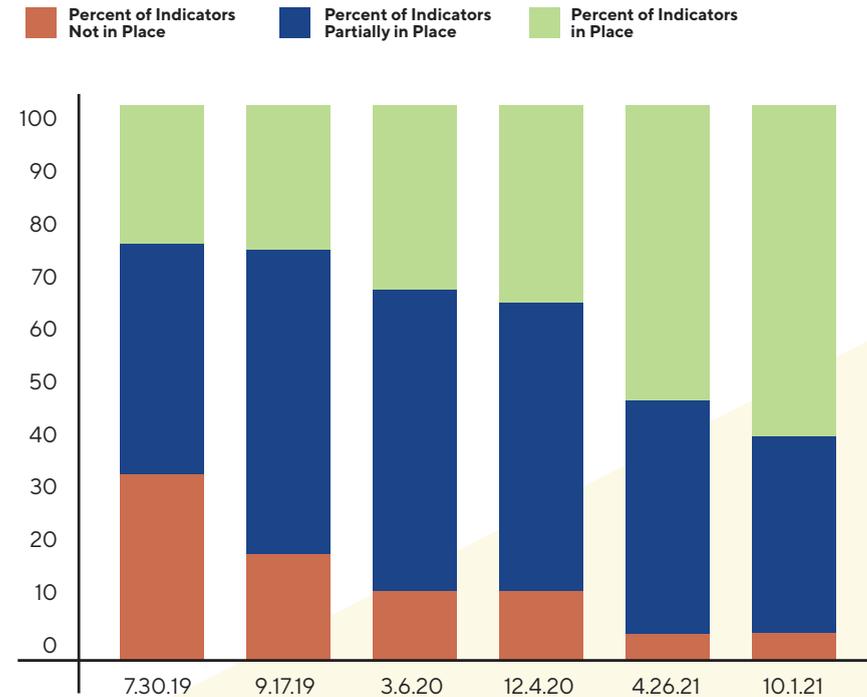
IMPLEMENTATION

The programs currently working toward fidelity (Cohorts 1 and 2) are located:

- ◇ Hartford (3)
- ◇ New Haven (4)
- ◇ New London (1)
- ◇ Windham (1)



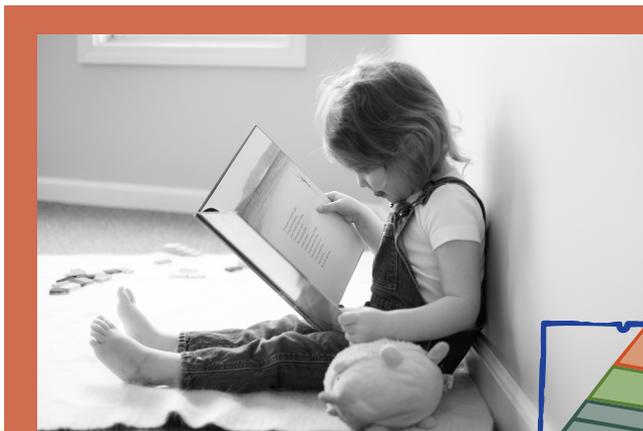
The program summary for this program is a great example of the consistent improvements made, even during COVID-19.



Of the programs that were able to submit data:

- ◇ Cohort 1 programs show 98%-100% of BOQ indicators in place or partially in place
- ◇ Cohort 2 programs had 49%-85% in place or partially in place

Program Leadership Teams complete the Early Childhood Benchmarks of Quality (EC-BOQ), a fidelity of implementation measure for the Pyramid Model. This measure allows teams to rate their implementation of the critical features of the Pyramid Model and identify next steps for implementation. Here is an example of the tremendous growth experienced by a Program in Cohort 1 with the Connecticut Pyramid Partnership, even during the pandemic of the last 2 years.



SCALING UP THE PYRAMID MODEL IN CONNECTICUT

As part of our effort to scale up capacity in Connecticut, we have been increasing the number of trainers available, and developing a cadre of Program Coaches qualified to train staff on the Pyramid Model. We have a total of 10 Program Coaches who have been trained on Pyramid Model implementation and supports who can train future Program Coaches on Pyramid and leadership team development at the program level.

The CPP has developed a professional development plan for Program and Practitioner Coaches. The topics were chosen based on information gained through training and year-long TA from the National Center; and from needs identified by Program and Practitioner Coaches.

While we continue to support the Pyramid Model implementation in Cohorts 1 and 2, the CPP is broadening our focus for the next few years on Family Child Care. Moving to a new ECE sector involves new partnerships, and re-tooling for materials and training to be prepared.

Training and coaching are significant strategies toward scale-up and sustainability.

TRAINING AND COACHING

Training and coaching are integral aspects to Pyramid implementation. Training is offered at several levels, including:

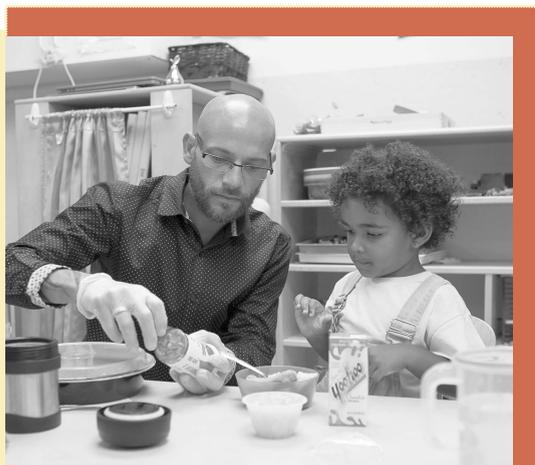
- ◆ Awareness – Pyramid Awareness Training. This training is usually offered as 1-3 hours.
- ◆ Implementing the Practices (Module Training) – Module Training is online and asynchronous 16-18 hours with a focus on equity and family engagement; and alignment to our CT ELDS, DOTS, CKCs, and Head Start Standards.
- ◆ Full Implementation Toward Fidelity – A 2- to 3-year commitment, full implementation includes plans for sustainability and scale-up.

Full Implementation/Fidelity Training includes:

- ◆ Practices/Modules
- ◆ Practice-based coaching (PBC)
- ◆ Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT)
- ◆ Leadership Team Development
- ◆ *Behavior Incidence Reports (BIR)
- ◆ *Prevent Teach Reinforce for Young Children (PTR-YV)

Attendance at PTR-YC during COVID-19: 85

Attendance at BIR Training during COVID-19: 75



Due to the significant challenges early care providers have faced during COVID-19, the need presented itself for more virtual resources to address specific concerns; and information on how to find and use the resources. Our CPP members are all well-versed in early childhood, SEL, and behavior, but not as well-versed in using technology. Thanks to all that became technology and virtual training experts when the need arose! With the OEC, Pyramid resource videos were created that highlight information from NCPMI to support teachers, administrators, and families. The following are videos produced:

Resource/Training	Number of Views
The Connecticut Core Knowledge and Competencies and the Pyramid Model	40
The Pyramid Model's Alignment with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework	85
CT Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS) and CT DOTS Aligned with the Pyramid Model	85
CT Pyramid Partnership: A True Collaboration (This is an overview of the Pyramid Model resources available to early child care providers and where to find them)	30
Adult Self-care/Managing Stress—2 Part Series	55
Emotional Literacy—3 Part Series	65
CT Pyramid Partnership Resource Video: The Funnel	40
Connecting with Families During COVID-19	125
Helping Children with Wearing Masks During COVID-19	137

All full implementation/fidelity training opportunities were offered during COVID-19 to Cohort 2 early childhood educators, as well as any Cohort 1 new staff. The trainings were also available to those who wanted to repeat the trainings as refreshers. All trainings were provided virtually and recorded for future use, except TPOT Reliability

Training which is currently only available from NCPMI. Denise Binder from NCPMI conducted a virtual TPOT that was not recorded.

All trainings maintained our focus on Equity and Family Engagement, and alignment with Connecticut standards.



The following were developed to be used by families and providers:

Ten Backpack Connection Series were translated into Portuguese; the briefs were developed by NCPMI as a method for parents/caregivers and teachers to work together on social emotional skills and reducing challenging behavior. The following Backpack Series have been translated into Portuguese and Arabic (Translated materials were shared with NCPMI and are available on its website):

- ◇ Transitions between places and activities
- ◇ How to handle hitting
- ◇ How to handle meltdowns
- ◇ How to help your child understand and label emotions
- ◇ How to handle biting
- ◇ How to use positive language

A Welcome Back to School COVID-19 social story was developed and translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and Mandarin; the social story is on UCEDD, the State Department of Education website, and the Office of Early Childhood website.

Seven toolkits were developed by the UConn UCEDD with assistance from CPP members that focus on social emotional development. Toolkits are available on the following topics:

- ◇ Building Relationships
- ◇ Supportive Environments
- ◇ Friendship Skills
- ◇ Emotional Literacy and Problem Solving
- ◇ Positive Behavioral Supports
- ◇ Resilience
- ◇ All About Play



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For more information about the Pyramid Model in general:
www.challengingbehavior.org

For more information about Pyramid
implementation in Connecticut:
www.ctoec.org/professional-development-and-technical-assistance/pyramid-model

Or send the Pyramid team an email at ctpyramid@gmail.com

Work to infuse Pyramid Model Practices in early care and
education settings across Connecticut is facilitated and
supported by the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood.

