



Promoting Equity and Building Protective Factors:

Opportunities in the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative



**Center for the
Study of
Social Policy**
Ideas into Action

Introduction

The Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care (OCC) recently announced a competitive funding opportunity for States (and Territories) to develop, update, or implement a strategic plan that promotes collaboration and coordination among existing programs of early care and education (ECE) in a mixed delivery system.¹ Through this opportunity, the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5), OCC anticipates awarding up to 40 one-year grants ranging from \$500,000-\$15,000,000.

The purpose of the PDG B-5 Initiative is to support States to:

1. Develop, update, or implement a strategic plan—based on a B-5 needs assessment—that facilitates collaboration and coordination among existing ECE programs, particularly those designed to prepare low-income and disadvantaged children to enter Kindergarten and to improve their transition to Kindergarten;
2. Align and maximize federal, state, local, and non-governmental resources to strengthen and coordinate the delivery of ECE programs;
3. Encourage partnerships among Head Start, child care, and state-funded pre-Kindergarten providers; state and local governments, Indian tribes and tribal organizations; private entities (including faith- and community- based entities); and local educational agencies; and
4. Maximize parental choice and knowledge about the State's mixed delivery system of ECE program providers.²

This provides a unique opportunity for States to accelerate their efforts to build comprehensive early childhood systems that meet the needs of young children and their families. In particular, it offers specific opportunities for States to increase equitable access to high-quality ECE for low-income families of color; in part by improving quality through a focus on building protective factors.

States and their partners can use the recommendations in this brief to incorporate an intentional focus on advancing equity and building protective factors in their PDF B-5 applications. Where available, this brief includes links to related resources that States can use to inform specific activities and strategies in response to the PDG B-5 requirements.

Why it Matters

Young children ages birth to four years old are the most racially and ethnically diverse group in the United States and diversity in this age group is increasing every year.³ It is no secret that families of color, Native families, and immigrant and refugee families have systematically been denied opportunities and supports for much of our nation's history.⁴ Due to continuing structural and institutional racism, these families are more likely to live in areas of concentrated disinvestment with fewer high-quality opportunities for their young children to access critical developmental experiences.

When programs that serve families shift their focus to building protective factors, they raise the quality of the supports they are providing. Research shows that when protective factors are present in families, young chil-





dren thrive. CSSP’s Strengthening Families™ approach and Protective Factors Framework seek to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.⁵ The five protective factors are:

- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Social and emotional competence of children

The protective factors at the foundation of Strengthening Families also offer a framework for changes at the practice, system, and policy level—locally, statewide, and nationally. Nationwide, more than 30 states are shifting policy and practice to help early childhood programs and professionals take everyday actions that support parents to build their protective factors.

There are several opportunities for States to use PDG B-5 to take important steps to address inequitable access to high quality early care and education opportunities for young children of color. States also have an opportunity in the PDG B-5 grants to leverage partnerships, infrastructure, and resources already working to build a focus on protective factors in early child-

States can find more specific recommendations for how to use the PDG B-5 opportunity to advance implementation of the Strengthening Families™ approach and Protective Factors Framework in CSSP’s brief: *Guidance for Strengthening Families States: Opportunities to Promote Equity and Build Protective Factors in the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative*.

hood systems to meet many of the goals of this new opportunity.

Opportunities to Increase Equitable Access to High Quality ECE for Low-Income Families of Color

States can find more specific recommendations for how to maximize the additional funding under the Child Care and Development Block Grant to promote equity in CSSP’s brief: *Moving to High Quality Child Care for All: Addressing Inequities through CCDBG State Plans*

States should consider the following recommendations to maximize the opportunities in the PDG B-5 grant applications to advance equity and ensure that young children of color and their families can access high-quality programs and services that promote optimal learning, growth, and development.

Establish Equity as an Explicit Goal in the B-5 Mixed Delivery System Vision Statement and Needs Assessment

What the FOA Says

The PDG B-5 Funding Announcement Opportunity (FOA) requires each State applicant to describe the current landscape of its B-5 system and provide a vision statement for its continued development. This statement must identify the “populations of children targeted” and the intended short- and long-term outcomes that the State hopes to achieve for them. Each applicant must also provide a clear description of its plans for conducting or updating a B-5 statewide needs assessment and developing a B-5 statewide strategic plan that aligns with its vision.

The FOA scoring criteria assign points to those applications that include a thorough plan for analyzing both the quality and availability of ECE programming and other supports serving infants, toddlers and pre-school-age children. States can earn additional bonus points if they propose a meaningful plan to measure the unduplicated number of children being served and, to the extent practicable, the number who are awaiting services in each of their existing programs. Scoring criteria also focus on the extent to which the applicant clearly describes the specific populations of children who are vulnerable or underserved, as defined by the State, and children in rural areas. Criteria also address the extent to which States identify new data sources and propose revisions to their data systems, as needed, to report on their efforts to implement their strategic plan.

How States Can Respond

States should examine data to identify and address disparities in access to high-quality programs and services by race and ethnicity. Drilling down into data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, home language, and

other categories is a critical first step to identifying disproportionate gaps in access to high-quality ECE programs and support services. States have an opportunity in their PDG 0-5 application to explicitly propose examining disaggregated data across the full range of ECE programs and support services for evidence of disproportionate access by race, ethnicity, and other categories as possible.

States should propose using the results of this analysis to inform their definitions of those who are “vulnerable or underserved.” They can be explicit in calling attention to issues of equity for children and families of color across the B-5 service spectrum. They can establish a bold vision for greater equity and design their strategic planning process around strategies to achieve it. To the extent that States lack the capacity to examine disaggregated data, States can propose revising data collection systems within the scope of their strategic planning under the PDG 0-5 application.

Incorporate an Emphasis on Protective Factors Into Your Definition of Quality Early Care and Education

What the FOA Says

Under Activity 1, each applicant States must provide a clear plan for developing or updating a needs assessment that, among other things, describes how the State define key terms including quality early childhood care and education. It must also describe the State’s plan for developing and tracking measurable indicators of progress that align with the State’s vision and desired outcomes.





How States Can Respond

The protective factors are useful for defining family-level outcomes that research shows have the greatest impact on children's development. CSSP's field research of exemplary ECE programs identified a range of strategies that high-quality programs are already using to help families build protective factors. The tools that CSSP developed through the Strengthening Families initiative, such as the program self-assessment tools for child care settings and home visiting programs, offer concrete and observable indicators of quality that can guide practice and promote continuous quality improvement. Many states are already using protective factors to define aspects of quality, for example in their Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS). CSSP and other national organizations offer tools to measure protective factors at the individual and program-levels, and tools to support state administrators to aggregate data and monitor trends across programs. States have many options for how to implement a focus on protective factors in their definition of quality, and they should do so with an explicit intent to increase families' access to high-quality ECE choices.

Related Resources

For information on how states are integrating protective factors into ECE quality improvement processes, see the CSSP brief, *State Approaches to Integrating Strengthening Families into Quality Rating and Improvement*, at <https://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families/resources/qris/Strengthening-Families-in-QRIS.pdf>.

The Strengthening Families Program Self-Assessment outlines how the protective factors can be supported through small but significant changes in practice. It is

intended to support a reflective process of continuous improvement involving program staff, administrators, and families. For more information, visit <https://www.cssp.org/young-children-their-families/strengthening-families/practice>.

Visit the online Strengthening Families Evaluation Portal, provided by CSSP's national partner Mosaic Network, and take the self-assessment and develop an action plan based. State-level administrators can also aggregate data across multiple programs and monitor trends over time. For more information, visit <http://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/>.

The Parents' Assessment of the Protective Factors is a strengths-based measure to assess the presence, strength, and growth of parents' self-reported beliefs, feelings, and behaviors that are regarded as indicators of the Strengthening Families protective factors. Results of the assessment can be used to engage a parent as a partner in mobilizing resources to strengthen adult capabilities and strengthen protective factors. For more information, visit <https://www.cssp.org/young-children-their-families/strengtheningfamilies/practice>.

The Protective Factors Survey, developed by the FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention in partnership with the University of Kansas, is a pre-post evaluation tool that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of child and family-serving programs in building protective factors. For more information, visit <https://friendsnrc.org/protective-factors-survey>.

Propose Strategies to Engage Families Who are Deemed “Vulnerable or Underserved” in the Development of State PDG 0-5 Strategic Plans

What the FOA Says

States have an opportunity to engage parents in the development of their PDG 0-5 applications and strategic planning processes. The FOA emphasizes the importance of engaging a full range of stakeholders, including custodial and non-custodial parents, and/or parent council or association representatives. Other stakeholders include representatives of a wide range of services and supports, including school districts, Medicaid and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP), Head Start, child care, special education and early intervention, health, mental health, and child welfare, and representatives of Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations within the State.

How States Can Respond

States should invite parent leaders of color into the planning and implementation process. Some states already have a network of parent leaders in place through local parent advisory councils, family ambassador or navigator networks, café-style conversation leaders (see below for more information), parent-teacher associations, or other formal roles for parents. In the absence of an existing network of parent leaders, states can turn to Head Start parent councils and early intervention coordination councils

to recruit parents to the application development and strategic planning processes. In either case, it is important to engage parent leaders who have similar lived experiences as many low-income families of color. They can provide important insights into the barriers families face, including those caused by institutional and structural racism, in accessing information and services that meet their needs. Their input is critical to informing innovative strategies for meeting the PDF 0-5 focus on providing timely, accurate information in a culturally and linguistically sensitive manner about the variety, quality, access, and affordability of ECE programs.

Related Resources

States may find the following resource helpful in designing approaches to engaging families in the strategic planning process.

Ripples of Transformation: Families Leading Change in Early Childhood Systems <https://www.cssp.org/young-children-their-families/body/Ripples-of-Transformation-Family-Engagement-Toolkit.pdf>

Engaging Native Tribes in the PDG B-5 Grant Opportunity

States also have an opportunity to engage the leadership of Tribes within their borders and invite their participation in the strategic planning process. As sovereign nations, Tribes have different federal requirements and levels of funding for various early childhood programs and services. They typically have their own governance structures and administrative processes for delivering services to Native families. But



many Native families also access services and receive information outside their Tribe. The PDG B-5 grant offers an opportunity for States and Tribes to build bridges across systems to promote access and ease transitions for Native families from one system to the other. States have an opportunity to consider how they can better collaborate with Tribes to leverage funding and create opportunities for improving delivery of services that are culturally and linguistically responsive to the needs of Native families. For example, Tribes are not required to develop Child Care Consumer Education websites under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG) of 2014 and the ensuing Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Final Rule. Under the PDG B-5 grant, States might propose to expand and modify the content of their own Child Care websites to speak more directly and responsively to Native families seeking high quality early care and education options for their children. States can also propose inviting Tribes to engage in the strategic planning process to advise on the development of quality standards, curriculum and professional development opportunities that reflect Tribes' unique cultures, languages, and traditions.

Related Resources

For resources on implementing CCDF requirements for Tribes, see the National Center on Tribal Early Childhood Development at <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/centers/national-center-tribal-early-childhood-development>.

Include the Prevention of Expulsion and Suspension of Children from Care as a Goal in your Strategic Plan

What the FOA Says

The FOA encourages States to incorporate trauma-informed approaches to early childhood care and education to counter the impact of trauma and adverse childhood experiences. Additionally, States are encouraged to consider how best to improve the training and experience of B-5 early childhood care and education providers in their PDG B-5 response.

How States Can Respond

In their PDG B-5 applications, States should propose to focus on suspension and expulsion as a critical factor in achieving positive outcomes for young children, particularly children of color. In addressing the opportunities in the PDG B-5 FOA, States will also be laying the groundwork for significant reductions in the disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion of young children of color, especially boys, from ECE settings. Evidence suggests that children of color and white children demonstrate challenging behavior at the same rates. However, early childhood teachers are more likely to look for challenging behaviors among Black boys than among any other group.⁶ Lack of training on implicit biases of teachers, directors, and staff may contribute to this phenomenon. Other factors include a lack of training and support on trauma-informed care, positive behavioral supports, and effective practices to support children's social-emotional development, as well as training, support, and policies to promote protective factors and family engagement that foster positive relationships with families.⁷

Strategies to consider through the strategic planning process might include, for example, collecting and publicly reporting data on the number of children suspended and expelled from the full range of ECE programs, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, gender, family income, community, or jurisdiction. They can propose to expand training, coaching, and capacity-building among staff and program administrators on implicit bias, social and emotional development, trauma-informed care, protective factors, parent and family engagement, and positive behavioral supports. They can also consider integrating standards on culturally and linguistically responsive family engagement practices into continuous quality improvement processes (e.g., Quality Rating and Improvement Systems).

Related Resources

For recommendations on strategies to prevent expulsions and suspensions in ECE, see the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education joint policy statement, Reducing Suspension and Expulsion Practices in Early Childhood Settings: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/policy-statement-ece-expulsions-suspensions.pdf>.

States can also refer to Building a Comprehensive State Policy Strategy to Prevent Expulsion from Early Learning Settings, a resources from the National Child Care State Capacity Building Center, available at <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/building-comprehensive-state-policy-strategy-prevent-expulsion-early-learning-settings>.

Propose Innovative Strategies to Engage Parents and Families of Color as Informed Consumers and Partners in their Children's Learning and Development

What the FOA Says

Under Activity Three, the FOA asks applicants to articulate a plan with strategies and activities to ensure that parents and families are, “provided timely, accurate information in a culturally and linguistically sensitive manner about the variety, quality, access, and affordability of early childhood care and education programs for children from birth through Kindergarten entry in the State’s mixed delivery system of existing programs and providers.” States are encouraged to include related activities required by 2014 CCDBG reauthorization such as building better consumer information systems and websites to support parents in their decisions. It is important to remember that not all families look for, trust, or access information in the same formats and from the same sources, and there may be important cultural and linguistic differences to understand in designing a comprehensive, equitable consumer edu-

cation strategy. The FOA also asks States to describe how they will target particular populations of parents with parent education initiatives.

How States Can Respond

States should propose a range of strategies to engage and inform families of diverse backgrounds and cultures about their options for ECE and other support services. One strategy States can propose is to enhance existing efforts to comply with federal requirements to create child care consumer education websites. These websites connect parents to information about the location, quality, and affordability of care available to them, as well as provide information about child development, parenting resources, and family support services that may be available.

Websites are only one strategy to reach families, and not every family has easy access to the Internet or online resources. Many families will benefit from information offered in languages other than English and in non-print formats. States should also consider a range of other strategies through their proposed strategic planning process in order to reach more families, for example:

- Train intake workers and enrollment staff on culturally responsive messaging and practice and, when possible, hire intake workers who are from or reflective of the communities in which they serve.
- Ask families of color where they get their information, their preferred language for receiving information, who their trusted sources are, and what communications strategies, such as Internet, phone, or post mail, are most likely to reach them.
- Ensure consumer education information and



materials are culturally and linguistically responsive, translated into multiple languages, and available in multiple formats while also being offered in various venues and on numerous media platforms, such as radio and television.

- Include information regarding how and where to access additional public benefits and services, such as nutrition assistance programs and health care assistance, during enrollment in early care and education programs.

States should consider using protective factors as a framework for their response to Activity Three. The criteria under Activity Three emphasize the importance of connecting families to a range of supports and services, as well as reaching families with parenting education initiatives. These strategies align closely with key protective factors, including families' access to concrete supports, knowledge of parenting and child development, and promotion of the social and emotional competence of children. Applying a protective factors framework to strategic planning efforts can help agency leaders, administrators and service professionals develop common language, identify shared outcomes and leverage resources to reach more families more effectively. In addition, evidence-based parenting education models including Parents as Teachers® and Triple P – Positive Parenting Program® (Triple P) align with the Strengthening Families Protective Factors and offer approaches to parenting education and connections to developmental supports for young children.

States should also consider proposing the use of café-style conversations among parents, caregivers and community members. Many states are already using this approach, which offers a structure for facilitated

dialog on parenting and the protective factors. Several distinct models of cafés have emerged from the Strengthening Families National Network. Café-style conversations have proven to be effective in promoting relationship-building and parental leadership among participants.

Related Resources

The National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement offers resources that might be useful to developing and formatting content for diverse audiences of families:

- Consumer Education Websites: A Guide to Creating a Family-Friendly Experience: <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/consumer-education-websites-guide-creating-family-friendly-experience-and-assessment-tool>.
- Consumer Engagement: Orientation for Early Childhood and School-Age Care & Education Professionals: <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/consumer-engagement-orientation-early-childhood-and-school-age-care-education-professionals>.
- Learn more about Parents as Teachers® at <https://parentsasteachers.org/>
- Find information about Triple P – Positive Parenting Program® at <https://www.triplep.net/glo-en/home/>
- For more information about café-style conversations, see Using Café Conversations to Build Protective Factors and Parent Leadership, available at <https://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families/practice/body/CAFE-OVERVIEW-2015.pdf> (See below for a discussion about cafés and Strengthening Families)



Set Ambitious Goals to Build a Diverse, Highly Skilled ECE Workforce

What the FOA Says

The PDG B-5 FOA encourages States to consider how to improve the training and experience of B-5 early childhood care and education providers in their proposed approaches to improving outcomes for children and families. Given the current demographic trends in the U.S., a key component of quality ECE is a culturally competent, ethnically, and linguistically diverse workforce that is well-prepared to foster the healthy development of an increasingly diverse population of young children and families.

How States Can Respond

States should consider a number of strategies in their PDG B-5 applications to build a diverse, highly skilled ECE workforce. For example, they can propose to develop a strategic plan to integrate a focus on equity and protective factors within their core knowledge and competencies frameworks, professional development registries and offerings, and QRIS. They can propose using CCDF quality set-aside dollars to provide scholarships for providers from underserved communities to increase their qualifications and pursue necessary certifications. In addition they can offer incentives for child care programs in high priority communities to recruit, train, and adequately compensate staff who are from the community or are otherwise representative of the families they serve. And they can propose to draw on existing resources from CSSP and other national organizations to offer training, coaching, and technical

assistance that is accessible and language appropriate for providers who speak languages other than English.

Related Resources

The Relationship-Based Competencies to Support Family Engagement is a suite of resources from the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement that may be useful to State strategic planning efforts related to workforce development. They are intended to promote effective, research-based practices for ECE, home visiting, and family support professionals. For more information, visit <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/article/relationship-based-competencies-support-family-engagement>.

Bringing the Protective Factors to Life in Your Work – A Resource for Action is a free online training curriculum from The National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds (Alliance). For more information, visit <http://www.ctfalliance.org/onlinetraining.htm>.

Conclusion

The PDG B-5 Initiative is an unprecedented opportunity for States to engage in a thoughtful but ambitious strategic planning process to build a comprehensive system of supports and services for young children and their families. Thanks to significant previous investments such as the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge and increased CCDBG funding, most States are well-positioned to make the most of this new opportunity. Building infrastructure to support system change and continuous quality improvement is neither quick nor easy, but the expected long term payoff for



children and families are well worth the investment now. States can take full advantage of this federal funding opportunity by focusing specifically on reducing racial disparities, increasing equitable access to high quality ECE, and implementing strategies to help families build protective factors. CSSP stands ready to offer guidance and support to States as they seek to maximize this unique opportunity to build better systems and ensure that all children and families thrive.

¹ The Office of Child Care defines a mixed delivery system to mean, “a system of early childhood care and education services that are delivered through a combination of programs, providers, and settings, such as Head Start, licensed family and center-based child care programs, public schools, and other community-based organizations, that is supported by a combination of public and private funds.” Source: Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Competition, Technical Assistance for State Applicants webinar (Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services). September 18, 2018. Retrieved from: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/pdg_b_5_applicant_training_09_18_2018.pdf

² Funding Opportunity Announcement, Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Initiative (HHS-2018-ACF-OCC-TP-1379). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care, 2018. CFDA Number 93.434. Retrieved from <https://ami.grantso-lutions.gov/HHS-2018-ACF-OCC-TP-1379>

³ POP3 Race and Hispanic Origin Composition: Percentage of U.S. Children Ages 0–17 by Race and Hispanic Origin, 1980–2013 and Projected 2014–2d050. <http://www.childstats.gov/ameri-caschildren/tables/pop3.asp>

⁴ Minoff, Elisa. “Entangled Roots: The Role of Race in Policies that Separate Families.” Center for the Study of Social Policy, October 2018.

⁵ Harper Browne, C. (2014, September). The Strengthening Families Approach and Protective Factors Framework: Branching out and reaching deeper. Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy. https://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/2014/The-Strengthening-Families-Approach-and-Protective-Factors-Framework_Branching-Out-and-Reaching-Deeper.pdf

⁶ <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/01/17/445041/suspensions-not-support/>

⁷ https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/expulsion_ps_numbered.pdf

