

## EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVE BRINGS STRENGTHENING FAMILIES TO CHILDREN'S TRUST AND PREVENTION FUNDS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

The National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds is taking the Strengthening Families Initiative national. In January 2006 the National Alliance launched its three-year Early Childhood Initiative, which makes Strengthening Families an important child abuse and neglect prevention priority for Trust and Prevention Funds. Trust and prevention fund leaders convened in Atlanta, GA and Seattle, WA, to explore how Strengthening Families can integrate into expanded Trust and Prevention Funds' activities and funding. In addition to broader education with all Trust and Prevention Funds across the country, the Alliance, with the generous support of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, awarded nine seed grants of up to \$50,000 each over two years. Finally, the Alliance established a Learning Community, with the goal of supporting Children's Trust and Prevention Funds interested in preventing child abuse through the effective use of family strengthening strategies in early childhood settings. State trust funds receiving grants include: Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Maine, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and Washington.

Children's Trust Funds (CTF) are uniquely positioned to provide funding, build strong state coalitions, identify Exemplary Programs, create training opportunities and expand the awareness of other key stakeholders regarding the importance of working with early childhood settings to prevent child abuse and neglect. The Alliance and CTFs will take leadership roles and partner with early childhood staff, policymakers and other funders to implement this Early Childhood Initiative. The theoretical framework for the Alliance's Early Childhood Initiative will draw on the results of the Strengthening Families Initiative at the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). This initiative will include implementation of two primary targeted strategies during a three-year period.

Strategy I. The Alliance will implement a comprehensive approach to build the expertise and capacity of Children's Trust Funds to achieve the goals of the Early Childhood Initiative, including Regional Training Institutes, on-site training, technical assistance, publications and a final national convening.

Strategy II. The Alliance will provide seed grants and technical assistance to Children's Trust Funds that exhibit a high degree of readiness and the capacity to advance the goals of this initiative by serving as role models for other CTFs.

CTFs can become effective trailblazers and model strategies that will be widely disseminated to influence the work of other CTFs and child abuse prevention partnerships throughout the country. Activities might include:

- Enhancing broad collaboration and building a cohesive approach to preventing child abuse by increasing the use of effective prevention strategies in early childhood settings;
- Identifying and recognizing exemplary programs in their states in accordance with the guidelines developed by CSSP;
- Convening policymakers and practitioners from the early childhood and child abuse prevention fields to develop formal strategies for implementing aspects of this Initiative;
- Strengthening/building connections between local child care providers and community-based child abuse prevention programs in their states;
- Conducting formal training for groups of child care providers and child abuse prevention staff to increase understanding about strategies that reduce risk factors and increase protective factors in families and children;
- Hosting state training sessions and conferences to promote the concepts of this Initiative, share findings and increase participants' knowledge, skills and abilities in this area; and
- Advocating that any policy or practice changes related to early childhood programs (such as the tiered reimbursement system that is under discussion in many states) reflect the importance of focusing on strengthening

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## STRENGTHENING FAMILIES THROUGH EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

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families to prevent child abuse.

Throughout this three-year period, the Alliance will focus on creating lasting systemic change by infusing the Early Childhood Initiative framework into the CTFs' RFP processes; training proposal reviewers, state advisory board members and boards of directors; conducting targeted outreach to child care programs to ensure they have the opportunity to apply for CTF funds; working with policymakers to improve policies and practices; and building a relevant body of knowledge among broad audiences in their states regarding avenues for supporting the prevention of child abuse by working in early childhood settings.

The beneficiaries of this Initiative are the families and children who are involved in early childhood settings throughout the country. Other beneficiaries include the staff in child care programs that will benefit from the increased resources, training, materials and other supports provided by the CTFs as part of their child abuse prevention activities through this Initiative. The CTFs will benefit as their expertise and capacity is increased and their efforts to prevent child abuse will become more effective by incorporating these new strategies and expanding their partnerships with the early childhood field. Finally, communities benefit as families become stronger and parents become more effective in their role.