**Circle Time:** noun 1. a time in which young children sit together and share news and stories

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**Deeann’s Desknote**

I love babies—the possibilities that lie ahead, their curiosity, the way they smile and reach. When I was a child care director, if I had a few free minutes, where did I go? The infant room, of course!

This issue of Circle Time highlights our work with infants and toddlers. Our work with families starts when families return to work or school and need care for their children. Most of the 20,000+ calls received through our Family Resource Center each year are from families looking for care for children under age three. What staff are hearing more and more from families is that finding care is nearly impossible in our region--especially for quality infant/toddler care.

One way CCR supports infant and toddler care is through a smaller lesser-known coaching program for providers caring for children under three. This coaching teaches infant and toddler providers ways to support children’s attachment and brain development through different types of engagement and activities. Currently this work receives very limited funding and is a low priority at the state level. And yet it is one of the areas of early learning in most need of expansion.

But there are bright spots! For instance, I can’t help but celebrate the good news about child care investments in our newly-passed state budget—including several wins for the communities CCR serves, and for our work with infants and toddlers.

All my best,

Deeann

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**Top Story**

**Program Highlight: Boosting the Success—and Happiness—of Infant and Toddler Care Providers**

We know that 80% of children’s critical brain development occurs by the age of three. We also know that child care professionals who care for infants and toddlers receive less support and training, and experience higher turnover rates than pre-school providers. To address this issue, Child Care Resources has been operating an Infant/Toddler Program to supplement the Early Achievers coaching that is increasing the overall quality of licensed care in our region. This supplemental work is funded by the Department of Children, Youth and Families, and CCR has been offering it for about eight years.

Our Infant/Toddler Support Program offers the following services to more than 220 licensed child care providers each year, upon request, or at the recommendation of our Early Achievers (EA) coaches:
Top Story continued

- **General on-demand support** for specific challenges observed by EA coaches, such as toddlers who are biting others.

- Filming Interactions for Nurturing Development (FIND), a **video coaching model** with a strength-based approach, to break down details of responsive caregiving. For example, showing a provider specific opportunities in her recorded caregiving for “serve and return” responses to the child. This coaching model includes five recordings and five follow-up coaching sessions over the course of three months.

- **Developmental screening training** and support—providers and parents at a child care site are taught over the course of three months how to use the Ages and Stages Questionnaire to identify development delays in infants and toddlers.

- **Mental health consultations** around teaching and responding to emotional expression to develop secure attachments.

Knowing and experiencing the importance of this work every day, Infant and Toddler Program Manager Elise Gooi would love CCR to play a role in changing and expanding this niche part of our early learning system. “I would love every child care provider to receive this training—I’m working with CCR’s amazing professional development team to see if/when we can start offering more group trainings on these topics. Developmental screening should be built into every child care program, and mental health consultation should be available to every program. I would also love to see more integration between child care providers and the Early Intervention field, as well as more racial diversification amongst infant/toddler care providers and early intervention professionals.”

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**Top 6 Reasons to Invest more in our infants and toddlers:**

1. Establishing secure attachments earlier in children’s development with parents and other close caregivers builds a strong social-emotional foundation that promotes confidence and curiosity, paving the way for the development of positive self-esteem and the complex social and cognitive skills necessary for success in school and life.
2. Technical support for providers caring for infants and toddlers could help improve the quality of their care, and their own job satisfaction.
3. Emotional support and the professionalization of infant and toddler caregiving would help providers see themselves as teachers rather than babysitters, improving retention.
4. Higher retention and effectiveness of infant and toddler caregivers could contribute to an increase in infant/toddler child care slots for families.
5. Lack of support for our youngest children disproportionately impacts children of color—for instance, when a child of color has an undiagnosed mental health issue or developmental delay, their behavioral challenges result in higher expulsion rates.
6. A lack of racial diversity within the early intervention field, along with a cultural stigma around mental health in many communities of color make it less likely that children of color access developmental screenings or mental health consultation.
Staff Spotlight: Bernie Dunlap, Infant Toddler Coach

1. What are you currently working on?
I am currently working on a training for June on the importance of a social emotional approach to language development for birth to three. I also am supporting infant and toddler providers for this upcoming cohort.

2. What is your favorite part of your job?
I have many favorites as an Infant Toddler Coach. One is supporting caregivers on an individual bases through building positive strength-based relationships. This happens many times through FIND (Filmng Interactions to Nurture Development). Another favorite part of my job is spending time in the classrooms with caregivers and interacting with the infants and toddlers.

3. What has been a recent challenge in your work?
One of the challenges of my work is not having enough time to do everything I feel would benefit the providers and children. There is just not enough time in the day!

4. What was your favorite book or game as a child?
I love to read and two of my favorite childhood books were The Story about Ping by Marjorie Flack and The Box Car Children by Gertrude Chandler Warner. My favorite activity as a child was building forts and exploring the woods behind my home.

5. What is one cool thing that most people don’t know about you?
One thing that I think is cool is I knew I wanted to go to college as a teen and life took many twists and turns however I never gave up on my dream. Finally, at 54 years old I completed my BA in Children’s Studies and have my dream job!

CCR in Action

Sarah Brady, Advocacy & Early Learning Policy Manager

Sine Die! The 2019 legislative session ended just minutes before the midnight deadline on April 28th, closing out our freshman year of advocacy at Child Care Resources.

The CCR community showed up to this new challenge armed with stories and passion. We were able to move the needle on many legislative priorities, including: growing new early learning champions in the legislature, engaging families and providers in advocacy, and elevating the stories and challenges of the community we serve.

We still have a long way to go to undo the opportunity gap and tackle the child care affordability crisis at the root. But we were successful in bringing child care to a stronger place in the conversation, and we have some exciting wins that translate to more quality early learning experiences for Washington kids.

Here are the commitments made to children and child care this session:
• **We received a $6 million increase in Early Achievers funding.** These funds go towards increased coaching, scholarships for providers, and needs-based grants.

• **Working Connections rates are increased.** The legislature committed to raise rates to the 55th percentile at Level 3 for centers and FCCs. This wonky jargon means that families using state child care subsidies can access 55% of the market, up from 40%. This does not translate to a substantial increase in pay for providers. A much bigger investment is needed to help providers keep their doors open and make sure low-income families have options. But it provides an added incentive and support for the many providers about to reach a Level 3 rating at the end of this year.

• **Facilitated play and learn groups receive $500,000 to expand statewide!** This is a very exciting win for CCR. At the beginning of the session, few legislators understood who Family, Friend and Neighbor caregivers are and what support they need. Through beautiful storytelling and network mobilization, we have laid the groundwork to grow programs like Kaleidoscope Play & Learn across the state and offer many more culturally relevant and accessible high-quality early learning experiences!

• **We passed H.B. 1391, implementing improvements to Early Achievers program.** This bill makes the rat-
Inside this season’s newsletter:

- CCR’s Infant Toddler Program
- Advocacy highlights

Thank you to all CCR supporters who helped us raise $3,077 for our GiveBIG Spring Campaign. Investing in our children’s earliest education is the key to a better future, and we are so excited to have you all with us on this journey to give ALL kids a great start in school and in life.

Thank you!

CCR in Action continued

- The Washington Childcare Access Now Act (HB 1344) was also passed. The legislation creates a workgroup to study the child care industry and make recommendations so that no family spends more than 7% of their income on child care.

- $1.5 million were invested in child mental health consultants. These new positions will be a huge support for our providers, especially those caring for children with behavioral challenges and experiences of trauma.

- For most single parents in school, it is no longer required that they be working to receive child care support. The Working Connections work requirement was lifted for students who are single parents and seeking vocational degrees at a technical, tribal or community college.

We worked hard this session to implement the lessons learned from our Homeless Child Care Program, and got very close to expanding access to the state child care subsidy for families living in homelessness from 4 to 12 months. Unfortunately, this bill met logistical challenges in the final days. I am optimistic that we will be able to move this effort through next year, but it is hard to know that some of our most vulnerable kids are still not receiving all the support they need to be ready for school.

Did I mention how great our staff were to work with this year?! Over 40 staff came down to Olympia for a day of visits with their legislators. We had folks testifying before committees, organizing card-making, making calls, and sending emails. **The way our staff channeled their passion into advocacy was a constant reminder that true change is both individual and systemic.** One supportive adult can have an enormous impact on the life of a child experiencing homelessness. One conversation on racial bias in early learning between a coach and a provider can deeply enrich the experiences of dozens of kids. It is our job to serve these kids and families, and also to dream about what it looks like to change economic structures so that all families can afford and find quality care. And where we are doing innovative work, engage our public institutions so we can share the lessons. I can’t wait to see what we can accomplish together in years to come!