



ADDRESSING EARLY CHILDHOOD EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE

February 26, 2026

AGENDA

Part 1: Welcome

Part 2: Setting the Context

Part 3: Commissioner Kershaw and MA

Dpt. of EEC's work

Part 4: CALM Warmline

Part 5: Q&A



About the Children's Mental Health Campaign

Established in 2006, the Children's Mental Health Campaign (CMHC) is a large statewide network that advocates for policy, systems, and practice solutions to ensure all children in Massachusetts have access to resources to prevent, diagnose, and treat mental health issues in a timely, effective, and compassionate way. This will only happen through a shared responsibility among government and health care institutions working together to improve mental health care and access for children and youth.

CMHC Executive Committee consists of six highly-reputable partner organizations.



PANELISTS



Amy Kershaw,
Commissioner

Massachusetts Department
of Early Education and Care
(EEC)

Acting Secretary
Executive Office of
Education



Aimee Smith-Zeoli,
Supervisor of the
Behavioral Health Team

Massachusetts Department
of Early Education and Care
(EEC)



Christy Moulin, Director of
the Center for Early
Childhood

The Home for Little
Wanderers



Aditi Subramaniam,
Director Infant and Early
Childhood Mental Health
Policy

Massachusetts Society for
Prevention to Cruelty to
Children (MSPCC)

Our why?

- Be in right relationship
- Issues of Equity and Disproportionate Impact
 - Black children, specifically Black boys, account for over 40% of preschoolers expelled even though nationally, they represent 18% of all children enrolled (Meek & Catherine, 2020).
 - Boys 4.5 times more likely to be expelled than girls
- Children who are expelled are more likely to experience subsequent expulsions over time, placing them at greater risk for school dropout and involvement in the criminal justice system (Gregory et al., 2010) - *Preschool to prison pipeline*
- Disrupting this cycle from a strength based framework



Addressing Early Childhood Exclusionary Discipline

Chapter 177 of the Acts of 2022

On August 10, 2022, Governor Baker signed An Act addressing barriers to care for mental health (Chapter 177 of the Acts of 2022). Chapter 177 addresses a broad range of behavioral health issues, including the establishment of new EEC requirements related to mental and behavioral health supports.

EEC Mental & Behavioral Health System of Support



- 1 EEC Behavioral Health Team**
- 2 Early Childhood Mental Health Grant**
- 3 Pyramid Model Supports**
Pyramid Plus Program Sites, Training, Communities of Practice (UMASS Donahue / Pyramid Plus)
- 4 Statewide Training - Professional Development Centers and STREET initiative (OCA Partnership)**
- 5 Policy and Regulation Alignment and Support**

The EEC team collaborates across units to identify and address needs of educators across the Commonwealth. The behavioral health team closely collaborates with the Family Access & Engagement unit, Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) team and grantees, Head Start Collaboration Office, Educator Supports, and the EEC Licensing team.



Meet the Behavioral Health Team



Aimee Smith-Zeoli

*Supervisor and Western
Region*



Alexis Thibodeau

*Western and Central
Region*



Chris Lloyd

*Metro West and
Northeast Region*



Stacey Ware

*Northeast and
Southeast Region*



EEC Behavioral Health Team



Resources & Technical Support

- Social emotional development
- Positive behavior intervention strategies to de-escalate behaviors that challenge
- Exclusionary Discipline policy consultation



Collaborate & Coordinate Resources

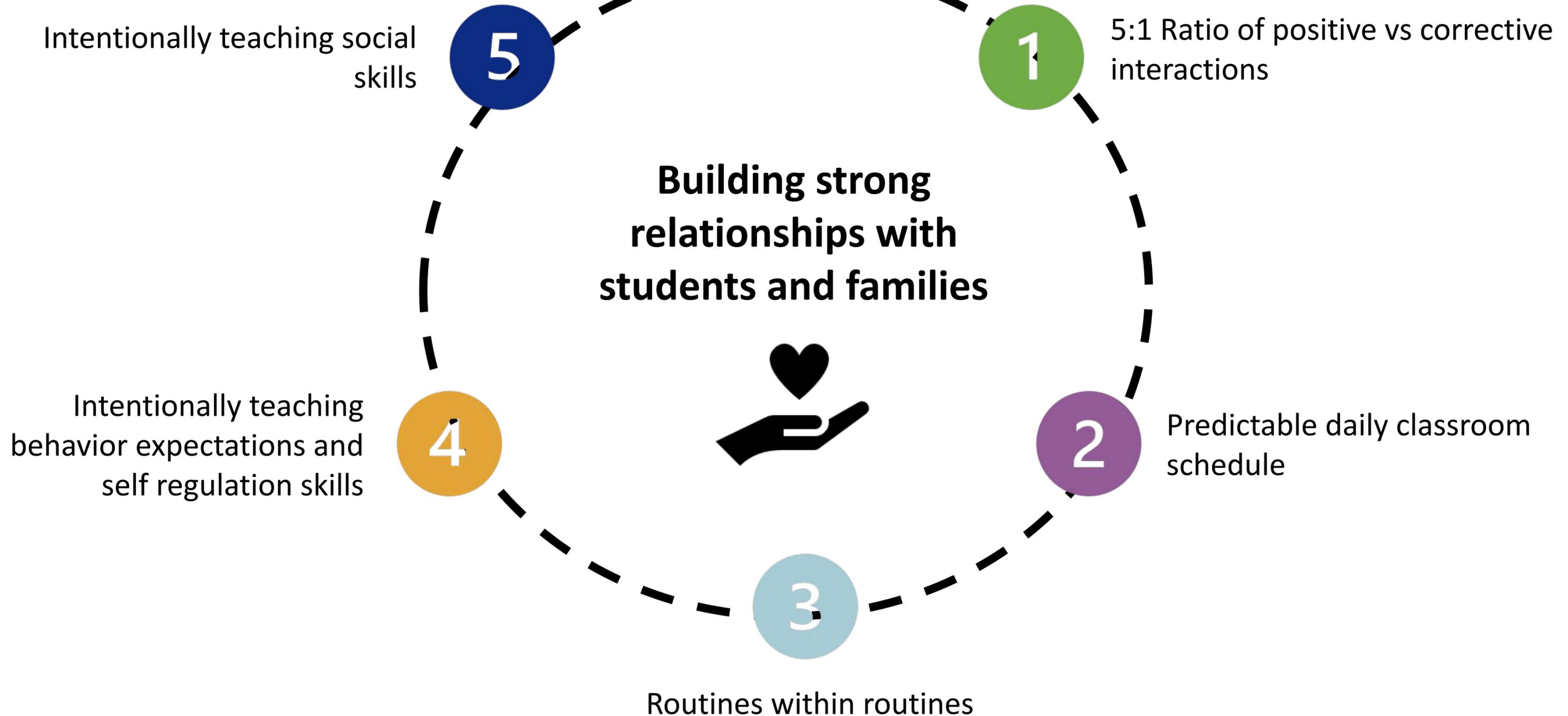
- Support coordination between EEC staff, regional teams, priority population contracted providers
- Continue to develop protocols, frameworks and guidelines to support implementation of support services



Facilitate Referrals to Grantees

- Referrals to the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) Grantees
- Coordination with the Professional Development Centers (PDC)

The Big 5



Inclusion and Support Toolkit

- **Toolkit** supports programs to
 - Establish behavioral health supports for children and educators and enhance social emotional learning
 - Utilize Big 5 Strategies to prevent behaviors that challenge and implement research-based practices
 - Develop program policies that reduce that use of exclusionary discipline
 - Address educator wellness and co regulation
- **Supplemental resource guide** for technical assistance to build reflective practice and sustain best practices in social emotional learning
- **Educator Workbook** for documentation, highlighting implementation with templates and ready to use materials



Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Grant Supports

- Classroom observations and strategies for creating supportive learning environments.
- Training and coaching for educators.
- Guidance for developing ongoing partnerships with families.
- Individual observation and assessments of children (with parental consent).
- Help with individualized behavior support plans for children, using input from parents and educators to prevent concerning behaviors.
- Referrals to community-based services that meet the basic needs of children and family (with parental consent).



To learn more or contact your local support [visit here](#).



Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Grantees

GRANTEE	SERVICE AREA
Behavioral Health Network / Collaborative Hampden/Berkshire 413-572-4111 (Matt Matroni) Hamden/Franklin 413-203-9194 (Vanessa Pashkoff)	Western MA /Berkshires
Empower, LGA Rhonda Stollerman 508-808-8044	Canton / Westboro/ Quincy / Foxboro
Community Healthlink - Together for Kids Beth Ciavattone 508-421-4454	Central MA / Worcester
Massachusetts Society for the Prevention and Cruelty to Children (MSPCC) Jayna Doherty 508-688-5408	Lowell/Lawrence / North Shore
Justice Resource Institute (JRI) Stacey Gay 508-828-1308	Southeast / Cape and Islands
Walker Inc. Amber Kule 781-292-2143	Boston

Pyramid Model Plus

Pyramid Plus is led by [Connected Beginnings](#)



What is Pyramid Plus?

Pyramid Plus offers professionals in the Massachusetts early childhood mixed delivery system multiple points of access to professional development focused on the evidence-based, highly effective strategies of the Pyramid Model to promote social emotional development and address challenging behavior in very young children.

Pyramid Plus is made up of three components.

- **Professional Development:** A variety of learning experiences are offered on the Pyramid Model strategies and related skills. In order to provide educators with greater access and choice, professional development opportunities
 - Are offered in multiple modes (e.g., professional learning communities, communities of practice, multi-session trainings, etc.);
 - Provide content across the early childhood developmental age-span, in addition to those focused on the needs of specific age-groups (infants, toddlers, preschool, school age);
 - Are focused on professional skill-building suitable for each of the program types in the mixed-delivery system (family child care, groups care, out-of-school-time); and
 - Are made available in 5 languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin, Cantonese).
- **Family Child Care Systems & the Pyramid Model:** Pyramid Plus provides training and technical assistance to Family Child Care Systems with the goal of increased understanding of the Pyramid Model, as well as the development of models that build the capacity of those partners to support Family Child Care educators in the use of Pyramid Model strategies.
- **Support for Programs Implementing the Pyramid Model:** Pyramid Plus supports programs in understanding best practice in classroom, program, and system-wide implementation of the Pyramid Model.

Educator Wellness Conference

Rise and Renew Wellness Conference 2025 Registration

FREE!

Please join us for the Early Childhood Professionals

RISE & RENEW

WELLNESS CONFERENCE

Saturday, March 28, 2026 | 9am–3pm

Doubletree by Hilton Boston Westborough | 5400 Computer Drive, Westborough, MA 01581

STRATEGIES, EXPERIENCES & TAKEAWAYS TO EXPAND YOUR WELLNESS TOOLKIT
LIGHT BREAKFAST, LUNCH & SNACKS PROVIDED | RAFFLES!

Give yourself permission for real self-care!

Keynote Speaker

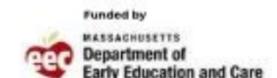
POOJA LAKSHMIN, MD

Dr. Pooja Lakshmin is a board-certified psychiatrist and a leading voice in women's mental health, specializing in the intersection of self-care, motherhood, and systemic change. She is the author of the acclaimed book, *Real Self-Care: A Transformative Program for Redefining Wellness*.



REGISTER TODAY!

► tinyurl.com/ecc-wellness-2026



Professional Development Centers

- **Technical Assistance**
- **Coaching**
- **Training**

PDCs and the Academy offer access to an array of training topics designed to support continuous quality improvement and build educator knowledge and skills. This includes training and professional learning communities (PLCs) that are provided in person, online, or through a hybrid or blended model.

Trauma Informed and Responsive Training Opportunities

Partnership with **the Office of the Child Advocate, Center on Child Wellbeing and Trauma**

Established the **STREET** Initiative (Strategic Trauma Responsive Early Education Training) to implement training series for educators and leaders



STREET Initiative Training Opportunities



Strong Start Learning Management System (LMS) Trauma and Resilience Training
For all providers



EEC Regional Staff TIR Training and Communities of Practice
For all EEC regional staff (licensors, investigators, support staff)



Core Champions Train-the-Trainer Program: Deeper Dives in Trauma and Resilience
For selected participants



Regional Deeper Dives in Trauma and Resilience Early Childhood Educator Training
For all providers



EEC Contracted Provider Training
Initial planning underway

Outreach Flyer for the TIR Training



Click here to view the Strong Start Learning Management System (LMS) Trauma and Resilience Trainings in your preferred language:

[Click here for ENGLISH](#)

[Click here for PORTUGUESE](#)

[Click here for SPANISH](#)

[Click here for SIMPLIFIED CHINESE](#)

Through a collaboration between the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care and the Office of the Child Advocate's Center on Wellbeing and Trauma six learning modules on creating trauma-responsive and resilience-building early education and care settings have been developed.

Using your smartphone?
Scan the QR code to access the course.



Access the flyer at:
mass.gov/doc/tir-lms-flyer-english/download

DRAFT EEC Policy and Licensing Regulations

Policy and Licensing regulation aim is to prevent, severely reduce and ultimately eliminate expulsion and suspension in early education settings and more broadly to improve climates for children and educators across the care spectrum.

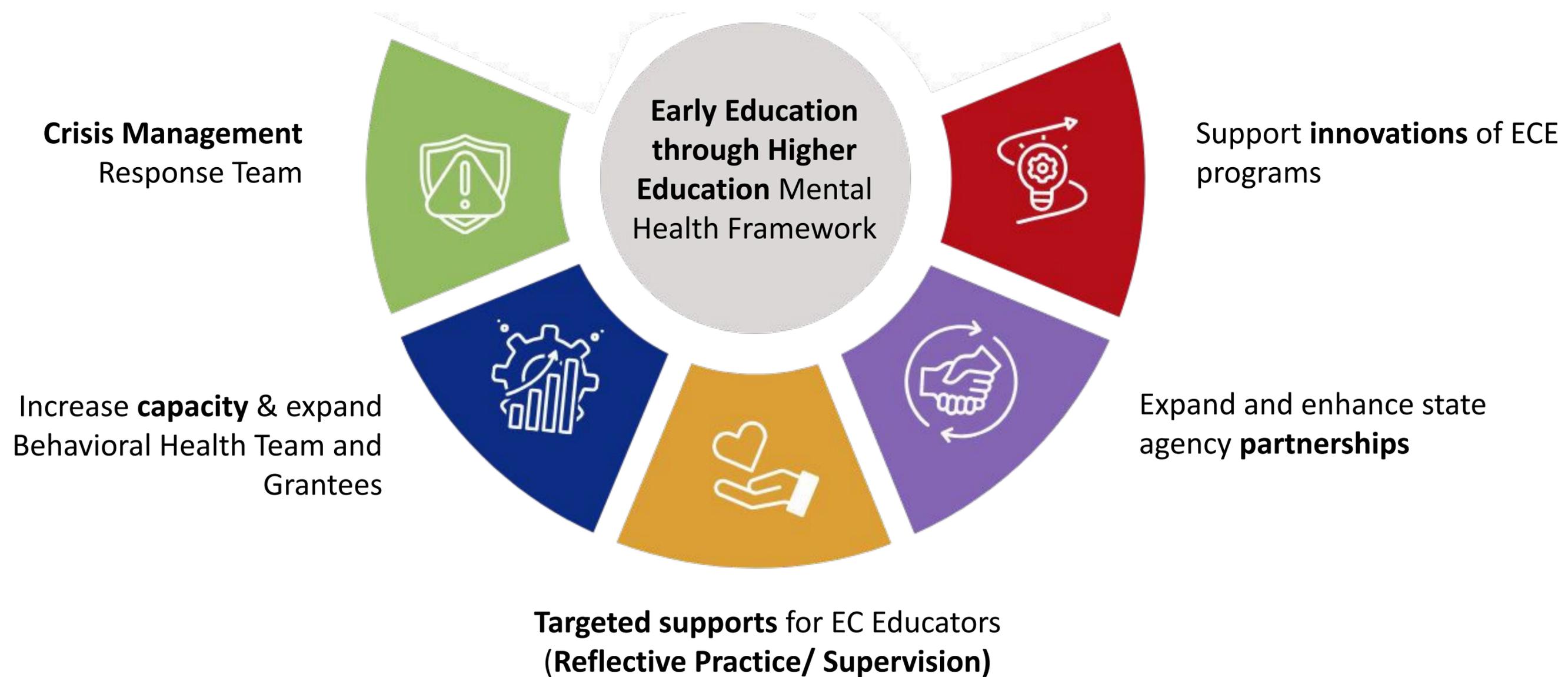
Our draft Prevention of Suspension and Expulsion Policy is built around several key principles:

- Suspension and expulsion must be rare and extraordinary.
- Programs must document accommodations and interventions before exclusion is considered.
- Programs are strongly encouraged to:
 - Engage in ECMHC support prior to suspension or expulsion consideration.
 - Provide written notice and documentation to families.
 - Develop transition support plans when children return from suspension.

But more importantly —This policy is not simply about restricting expulsion. It is about:

- Increasing educator knowledge, tools and supports
- Supporting children with disabilities
- Partnering with families
- Addressing trauma — including staff trauma
- Creating relationship-centered behavioral support practices

Ongoing Efforts and Aspirations



Thank you!



MASSACHUSETTS
**Department of
Early Education and Care**

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Aimee Smith-Zeoli

Special Education Specialist
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THE HOME



THE HOME



THE HOME



BETTER, BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR KIDS

THE HOME



THE HOME



The Center for Early Childhood

Caregiver Assist Line of Massachusetts:

Bringing CALM to the early childhood
ecosystem

February 26, 2026

Christy Moulin, IMH-E®

Director

The Center for Early Childhood

cmoulin@thehome.org

617-620-3406

CALM Listeners on duty Monday!

March 2, 2026



Introducing CALM, a free support resource for those in the early childhood field, caring for children from infancy through age 5.

Whether you're down on the floor leading circle time, supporting parents caring for little ones or managing the operations of an entire team, each of us plays a crucial role in meeting the needs of thousands of families across Massachusetts every day.

Our work is meaningful and impactful—and it can also be demanding and stressful. The Caregiver Assist Line of Massachusetts (CALM) is a free warmline you can call to talk with a trained, empathetic expert who understands your work.

HOW WE HELP

- ♥ Provide social support during times of stress
- ♥ Offer space to confidentially process anxieties and challenges
- ♥ Give peer-to-peer guidance, reassurance and validation
- ♥ Recommend next steps and appropriate community resources
- ♥ Address gaps in care and improve access to information

If it matters to you, it matters to us. Contact CALM: Services available in English and Spanish

📞 Call Us: 617-437-8688

Listeners are available Monday through Friday, 8am to 6pm. If you leave a voicemail, our team will return your call as soon as possible.

📱 Text Us: 617-437-8688

Connect with our team via text for support or to set up a time to speak by phone.

📄 Submit an Online Form: thehome.org/cec-calm

Fill out a short intake form to schedule a call from the CALM team.

✉ Email Us: CALM@thehome.org

Contact us via email to connect with a team member who will assist you in scheduling a call.

Program made possible by



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CAREGIVER ASSIST LINE of MASSACHUSETTS
FROM THE CENTER for EARLY CHILDHOOD

You're There for Everyone Else. Let Us Be There for You.

Individuals working in early childhood give so much of themselves every day—and can carry considerable stress. The Home for Little Wanderers' Caregiver Assist Line of Massachusetts (CALM) is a non-crisis helpline created specifically to support members of this crucial workforce who are supporting children from infancy through age 5.



PROVIDING CONFIDENTIAL PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT
FROM PEOPLE WHO UNDERSTAND THE WORK

After processing a difficult interaction, feeling the weight of burnout or looking for next steps, we can connect you to experienced listeners and relevant community resources. Through early support and connection, CALM aims to prevent burnout and reduce the risk of turnover, supporting a healthier, more sustainable workforce for the children and families who depend on us.

ABOUT OUR STAFF



Mental health consultants
who are experienced early educators



Clinically trained
and supported

Services available in English and Spanish

8am to 6pm
Monday through Friday, 8am to 6pm. If you leave a voicemail, our team will return your call as soon as possible.



...resources, reducing professional stress—because caring for yourself is an essential part of caring for others.

HOW WE HELP

- ♥ Provide social support during times of stress
- ♥ Offer space to confidentially process anxieties and challenges
- ♥ Give peer-to-peer guidance, reassurance and validation
- ♥ Recommend next steps and appropriate community resources
- ♥ Address gaps in care and improve access to information

About The Center for Early Childhood

The Center for Early Childhood (CEC) at The Home for Little Wanderers provides comprehensive, relationship-based services that support young children and the adults who care for them. Through direct care and prevention-focused consultation, the Center works with children, families and professionals to build strong social-emotional foundations for happy, healthy childhoods. Services are age-appropriate, culturally responsive, and offered by master's-level clinicians and experienced consultants in a variety of settings—including a child-friendly clinic, homes, early education programs, shelters and community spaces—meeting families where they are.

THE H
BETTER, BRIGHTER
800-HOME-321

Contact CALM: Services available in English and Spanish

Call Us: 617-437-8688

Listeners are available Monday through Friday, 8am to 6pm. If you leave a voicemail, our team will return your call as soon as possible.

Text Us: 617-437-8688

Connect with our team via text for support or to set up a time to speak by phone.

Submit an Online Form: thehome.org/cec-calm

Fill out a short intake form to schedule a call from the CALM team.

Email Us: CALM@thehome.org

Contact us via email to connect with a team member who will assist you in scheduling a call.



CALM, Cool, Connected



Monday to Friday

8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

English and Spanish speaking staff

Phone translation support

617-437-8688

CALM@thehome.org

Thehome.org/CEC-CALM

Connect with a CALM Listener:

- Answering live
- Returning voicemails
- Responding to emails
- Bookings page
- Texting* will be live soon.

*Pending government approval process.



Caregiver Assist Line of Massachusetts

YOU'RE THERE FOR EVERYONE ELSE. LET US BE THERE FOR YOU.

Individuals working in early childhood give so much of themselves every day—and can carry considerable stress. The Home for Little Wanderers' Caregiver Assist Line of Massachusetts (CALM) is a non-crisis helpline created specifically to support members of this crucial workforce who are supporting children from infancy through age 5.

Designed with the realities of early childhood work in mind, CALM connects callers with an empathetic and knowledgeable listener who possesses experience and expertise in the field. Our team offers support before, during and after workplace concerns arise, offering professionals a compassionate space to pause, connect and talk through work-related challenges and associated personal issues.

In addition to active listening, CALM provides useful tools and resources, reducing professional stress—because caring for yourself is an essential part of caring for others.

HOW WE HELP

Services available in English and Spanish



Contact Us

Call, text, email or submit an request below to connect with our support team.

Listeners are available Monday through Friday, 8am to 6pm. If you leave a voicemail, our team will return your call as soon as possible.

617-437-8688

CALM@thehome.org

CONNECT

The Web Page

Caregiver Assist Line of Massachusetts

Talk to a CALM listener

habla con un CALM Oyente



0 minutes
Free

Talk to a CALM listener



30 minutes
Free

March 02

< > March 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S	8:00 AM	8:30 AM	9:00 AM
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9:30 AM	12:30 PM	1:00 PM
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	1:30 PM	2:00 PM	4:00 PM
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	4:30 PM	5:00 PM	5:30 PM
22	23	24	25	26	27	28			
29	30	31							

The Bookings Page

After pressing 1 for English:

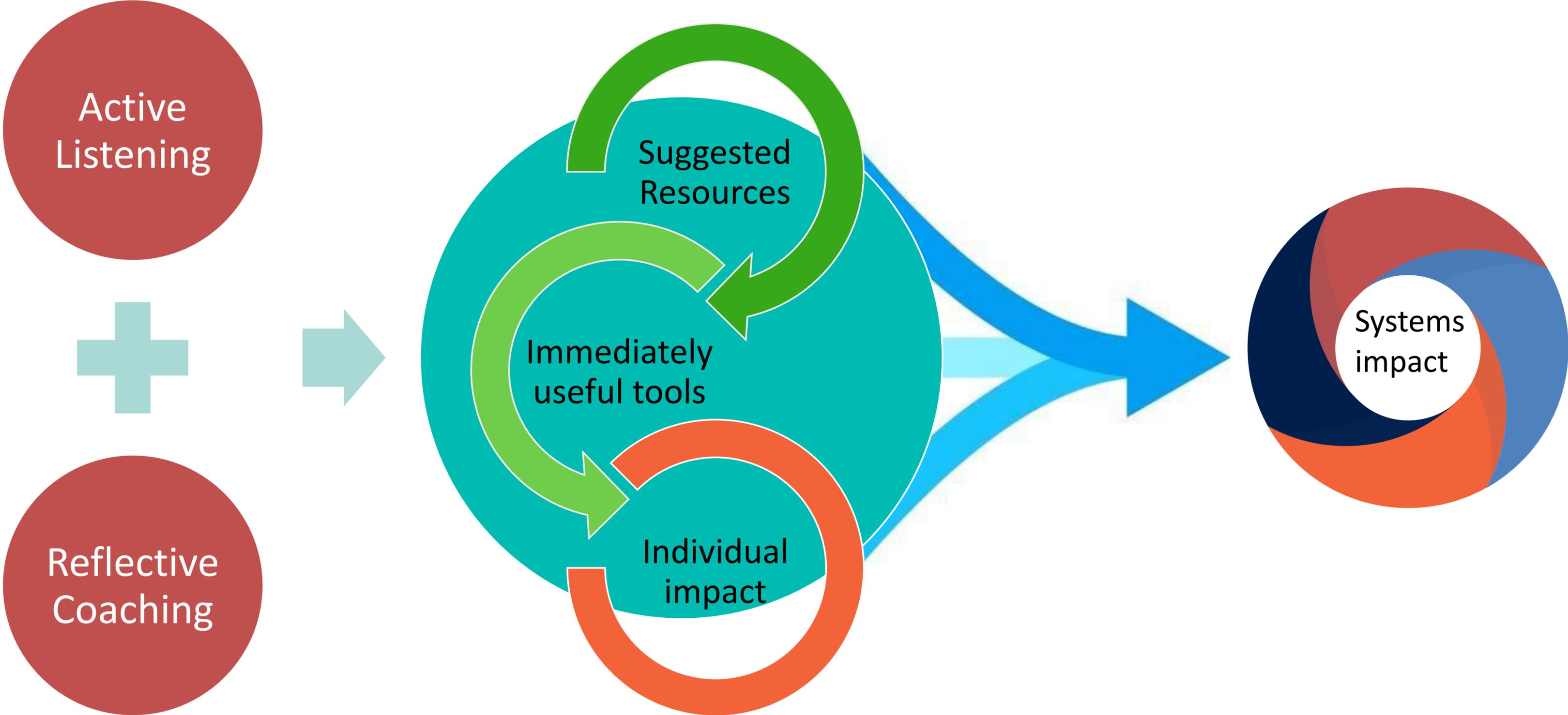
Welcome to the Center for Early Childhood Caregiver
Assist Line of Massachusetts.

If your call is a medical emergency, please hang-up
and dial 911. If you are experiencing a behavioral
health crisis, hang up and call 988.

A CALM listener will be with you momentarily.

The Phone Call

Caregiver Assist Line of Massachusetts Model





The Children's Mental Health Campaign (CMHC) is a statewide network that advocates for policy, systems, and practice solutions and shared responsibility among government and institutions to ensure that all children in Massachusetts have access to resources to prevent, diagnose, and treat behavioral health issues in a timely, effective, and compassionate way.

CONTACT

For questions, contact

Courtney Chelo, Assistant Director for Government Relations at

cchelo@mspcc.org or call (781) 861-0890

<https://childrensmentalhealthcampaign.org/>