

**ZERO TO THREE  
REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO STATES ON INCLUDING AND EXPANDING  
EARLY HEAD START IN THEIR EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS**

The ZERO TO THREE Policy Center is pleased to offer technical assistance to support states in intentional integration of Early Head Start and their early childhood system to expand high-quality services for infants and toddlers. ZERO TO THREE is a national nonprofit organization that informs, trains, and supports professionals, policymakers, and parents in their efforts to improve the lives of infants and toddlers. The Policy Center is a nonpartisan, research-based resource for federal and state policymakers and advocates on the unique developmental needs of infants and toddlers. This technical assistance is supported by the Birth to Five Policy Alliance.

**Background**

Congress created Early Head Start (EHS) in 1995 to provide comprehensive child development and family support services to low-income pregnant women and families with children under the age of 3. Twenty states have implemented initiatives to expand and enhance EHS services. As of 2008, federal funding covered only 3% of eligible infants and toddlers. The reauthorization of Head Start and Early Head Start in 2007 prioritized the expansion of EHS and allowed for the conversion of preschool Head Start grants into EHS grants based on local needs and capacity. In 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided \$1.1 billion specifically designated for Early Head Start, which approximately doubled the reach of the program.

Given this context, states have an opportunity to build on the federal investment in EHS by coordinating training and technical assistance opportunities, fostering partnerships between new and expanding federal grantees and other early childhood programs, and supporting EHS programs so that they can better meet the needs of families for full-day or full-year care. State policymakers are also facing challenges in determining appropriate roles in this federal-to-local program, initiating and sustaining state initiatives to expand access to Early Head Start, linking EHS programs to other early childhood services, and supporting EHS programs with training and technical assistance. To this end, ZERO TO THREE is offering technical assistance to state teams in integrating Early Head Start and their developing early childhood systems so that more infants and toddlers receive high-quality services.

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), another Alliance-funded organization, is developing a set of tools to assist state leaders in considering how best to build on and coordinate with EHS, with the ultimate goal of expanding access to services. CLASP staff will participate in this technical assistance opportunity for states.

**Technical Assistance Opportunity**

Five states will be selected for participation in this technical assistance opportunity. Chosen states will receive the following:

- Each state may bring a 4-person public-private team to a meeting of the five states focused on including and expanding Early Head Start in their early childhood system. The meeting will offer both “expert” and peer technical assistance. States will share their expertise and explore possible solutions to their current challenges. The meeting will be held between mid-May and mid-June 2010. ZERO TO THREE will pay for participants’ travel, lodging, and meals.
- Each state will receive one on-site visit of up to 2 days within the year following the meeting. This technical assistance will offer support in dealing with a specific challenge around inclusion or expansion of EHS in the state’s early childhood system. This support could entail facilitation of a meeting, presentations to groups or at conferences, information on exemplary practices in other states and/or early childhood system components, help in using CLASP’s state self-assessment tools on expansion of EHS initiatives, or assistance in replicating another state’s model. Related phone and e-mail technical assistance will also be provided as needed.
- Each state will receive assistance in customizing a professionally designed ZERO TO THREE policy brief on Early Head Start (see [www.zerotothree.org/earlyheadstart](http://www.zerotothree.org/earlyheadstart)) to address a state need for information-sharing.

### **Eligible Applicants**

Each application must identify a lead contact person who represents a state-level entity working to incorporate Early Head Start programs into the state’s early childhood system. The lead contact person will assemble the state team for the meeting, participate in planning calls prior to the meeting (first call scheduled for February 25 at 2 pm eastern time), and coordinate follow-up with the technical assistance provider(s). Each state team attending the meeting shall consist of four persons representing both the public and private sectors. Participants may include the Head Start State Collaboration Director, EHS State-Based Infant-Toddler Specialist, state agency staff such as the child care administrator or Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems coordinator, representatives of advocacy or provider organizations, and other relevant stakeholders.

Other interested persons may be involved in the follow-up technical assistance opportunities as appropriate. Technical assistance may be tailored to fit the needs of the state and may include topics such as:

- Including EHS in a particular system component, such as the state’s governance structure, professional development system, quality rating and improvement system, early learning guidelines, etc.
- Initiating a state EHS initiative based on successful models from other states.
- Expanding or sustaining a current state EHS initiative.
- Linking EHS with other early childhood programs, such as child care or home visiting.
- Supporting the EHS model through communications and messaging.

## **Application Process**

Interested states should identify the lead contact person for this application and provide brief, specific answers to the following questions:

- What is the current status of quality early childhood services for infants and toddlers in your state? Where are the needs and gaps? What strengths and assets exist?
- What are your state's current political, regulatory, funding, or other challenges in including or expanding Early Head Start in your early childhood system?
- Who would comprise your state's team to attend the meeting, and what would each participant contribute?
- What one or two technical assistance topics from the above list seem most relevant to your state's needs?
- What would your state hope to accomplish through participation in this technical assistance opportunity?

Responses should not exceed five pages. States' responses are due no later than January 29, 2010 and should be submitted electronically to Barbara Gebhard at [bgebhard@zerotothree.org](mailto:bgebhard@zerotothree.org) and Liz DiLauro at [edilauro@zerotothree.org](mailto:edilauro@zerotothree.org).

## **Selection Criteria**

Selection of states to participate will be based on:

- Understanding of their state's context relative to this technical assistance opportunity.
- Strength and commitment of the team proposed to participate in the meeting.
- Specificity of the technical assistance request.
- Likelihood that technical assistance will lead to improvements in the state's inclusion or expansion of EHS in its early childhood system.

Some preference will be given to states funded by the Birth to Five Policy Alliance: California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Washington, and Wisconsin. Consideration will also be given to the geographic diversity of the group of states selected.

If necessary, follow-up discussions regarding applications will be conducted with state representatives by telephone.

## **Questions**

Questions may be addressed to Barbara Gebhard ([bgebhard@zerotothree.org](mailto:bgebhard@zerotothree.org) or 304-776-2940) or Liz DiLauro ([edilauro@zerotothree.org](mailto:edilauro@zerotothree.org) or 202-857-2634).