

# **National Quality Improvement Center on Early Childhood**

**(formerly National QIC on Preventing the Abuse and Neglect of Infants and Young Children)**

## **WHO WE ARE**

In FY 2009, the Children's Bureau funded the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) to create the National Quality Improvement Center on Preventing the Abuse and Neglect of Infants and Young Children (QIC), hereafter known as the QIC on Early Childhood (QIC-EC). CSSP will partner with ZERO TO THREE: National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families, and the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds.

The purpose of this 5-year project is to improve the social, physical, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional well-being of children 0 to 5 years old and their families who are at risk of abuse and neglect, including those impacted by substance abuse and/or HIV/AIDS. The QIC will support a number of collaborative research and demonstration projects across the child abuse prevention, child welfare, early childhood, and other health, education, and social service systems. The research and demonstration projects will explore a broad range of issues about gathering child abuse and neglect prevention evidence, how to improve developmental outcomes for infants and young children, what kind of collaborations and systems are effective, and how these efforts can result in better outcomes for young children and their families at greatest risk for child maltreatment. The new knowledge that emerges from the research and demonstration projects will be built around three key components: (a) a social-ecological approach to prevention that addresses child maltreatment at multiple levels—individual, family, community, and policy; (b) evidence of effectiveness that integrates professional experience and expertise in the context of families' culture, characteristics, and values with scientifically rigorous methodology; and (c) a more thorough understanding of how building protective factors, in addition to reducing risk factors, can reduce maltreatment for young children and their families.

## **BACKGROUND**

This project was initiated because of growing research in the neurobiological, behavioral, and social sciences that points to the critical importance of early life experiences in shaping the developmental outcomes for children in later life. These early years are critical because this is the period of the most rapid development in the areas of brain development, physical growth, motor skills, language formation, emerging self-concept, and social and behavioral skills. Negative experiences that occur during these formative years can have long-lasting, detrimental effects on children's learning, behavior, and physical and mental health.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The QIC has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Develop knowledge about evidence-based and evidence-informed strategies aimed at preventing the abuse and neglect of infants and young children.
- Promote collective problem solving through funding selected early childhood and child abuse prevention research and demonstration projects that advance innovative evidence-based and evidence-informed practice improvements and knowledge about preventing child maltreatment and promoting child and family well-being.
- Establish a national information-sharing network to disseminate promising practices
- Evaluate the impact of projects implementing evidence-based or evidence-informed child abuse prevention programs in reducing the risk of child maltreatment
- Identify barriers to prevention and recommend changes in policies, procedures, and practice

## RESEARCH

Research takes place over two phases.

### Phase I: Planning

The first phase (Year 1) involves the following:

- Forming a National Advisory Committee for the QIC-EC
- Conducting a comprehensive needs assessment on preventing the maltreatment of infants and young children
- Conducting a literature review that includes promising practices for prevention
- Fine-tuning the work plan and evaluation plan
- Developing a plan for reviewing and selecting grant recipients and for awarding dissertation support
- Developing a preliminary design for the Phase II implementation plan that presents a clear and comprehensive vision of how the proposed QIC-EC would operate

### Phase II: Implementation

In Phase II, the QIC will announce, award, monitor, provide technical assistance to, and evaluate 48-month research and demonstration projects. These projects will test and rigorously evaluate a variety of models or hypotheses related to improving the social, physical, cognitive, and emotional well-being of children 0–5 years old who are at the greatest risk of abuse, neglect, and poor developmental outcomes. Supported projects will exhibit cross-agency partnerships that target young children and their caregivers, including those who are impacted by substance abuse and/or HIV/AIDS. The QIC also will support up to four 2-year dissertation research awards to advanced level doctoral students conducting research in this area. The QIC will build a regional and national learning network of public and private organizations that are working to address child abuse and neglect prevention to ensure that they receive timely updates on lessons learned. The QIC will actively collaborate with the existing federal resource centers and TA network throughout the grant period to provide them with the latest knowledge emerging from the QIC. The QIC will conduct a cross-site evaluation of the research and demonstration projects it supports and will evaluate the overall impact of the QIC.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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