



# CA Early Childhood Inclusion Support Summer 2025 Newsletter California Department of Education



## Inspirational Video



[Shelly Moore: Transforming Inclusive Education](#) (Video; 3:08)

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*"Teach to the margins,  
you will reach everyone"*

– Unknown Source



## Early Learning and Care Inclusion News

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in collaboration with WestEd, is happy to announce a series of free webinars, beginning in the fall of 2025, through the CDSS-funded Beginning Together project. Beginning Together will offer five webinars during 2025–26 designed to support inclusive practices for center-based programs, family childcare homes, Head Start and Early Head Start, preschool programs, and family, friend, and neighbor caregivers. Direct service providers, administrators, special educators, trainers, coaches, and others who support inclusion are all encouraged to attend. Each webinar will be held in English with Spanish interpretation.

Following each webinar, participants will be invited to a 90-minute virtual small group session called, "Collaborative Conversations:

Follow-up to Inclusion Webinars and Support on Inclusion." These sessions are designed to facilitate conversations with others in similar roles to discuss specific areas of interest or concern in relation to



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supporting inclusion. The sessions will be facilitated by a Beginning Together trainer who can provide technical assistance, additional information, and resources.

Visit the [Beginning Together](#) website to learn more and to register.

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## Inclusion Spotlight

As a regional leader in high-quality childcare and early education, Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO) operates 11 centers serving approximately 300 children. Demonstrating its commitment to inclusion, the program currently supports 55 children with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), with 38 integrated into three designated inclusion classrooms that feature on-site, daily collaboration with special education staff.

SBCEO received the Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program (IEEEP) grant in 2019. Their Inclusion Initiative team includes two Inclusion Specialists, one Inclusion Coach, and the Early Care and Education (ECE) leadership team. The work began immediately with supporting classrooms in their own agency and then expanded to interested external agencies countywide. The support system for educators and administrators evolved in response to needs identified as they began supporting programs. During the initial IEEEP grant period, the Inclusion Initiative provided more than 50 trainings with approximately 1700 participants. The professional development topics included: inclusive best practices, social and emotional development, trauma-responsiveness, universal design for learning, adaptations and accommodations, and how to support families of children with Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) in the transition from Early Start to preschool services.



### Countywide Professional Development

Early in grant implementation, the Inclusion Initiative identified that coaching was critical for bridging the gap between teacher training on best practices and classroom use. The coaching support for external agencies included a one-hour classroom observation by an Inclusion Specialist or Coach followed by a classroom team meeting to share observations and recommendations. These recommendations included support strategies, adaptations and accommodations, and professional development. This process also often included strategy modeling, with follow-up for further reflection or questions. Recommendations were provided in writing for teachers and administrators, to support ongoing learning and implementation. In its work with external agencies, the Inclusion Initiative primarily provided foundational training and coaching on inclusive best practices that can be broadly applied across diverse settings.

Within SBCEO's own classrooms, an Inclusion Specialist can offer more frequent and in-depth coaching to both general and special education staff. As collaboration deepens, there is a powerful shift in how

adaptations and modifications are included in lesson planning and daily routines. The frequent hands-on support helps to ensure IEP goals are seamlessly integrated into classroom goals and that all students are supported inclusively. The Inclusion Initiative also provides sensory regulation tools. To support their effective use, an Inclusion Specialist will coach classroom staff, in collaboration with special educators and other specialists, based on a child's individual needs.



Annette Suding Muse, Director of University of California Santa Barbara Early Childhood Care and Education Services, notes: *"As a community partner, we have found the in-classroom modeling and coaching, as well as the inclusive practices and strategies to be invaluable. The professional training and coaching services offered by SBCEO's IEEEP are vital to supporting and sustaining the high-quality inclusion we are committed to."*

### **Inclusion Community of Practice**

Each quarter, the Inclusion Initiative hosts an Inclusion Community of Practice (CoP), a collaborative space where early childhood educators and special education staff from SBCEO and other preschools come together to share ideas, build community, and learn. The CoP explores a variety of engaging topics like loose parts play, hands-on and sensory-rich activities, and "make and take" events for the creation of visual supports. Recently, the CoP took a field trip to a local reuse store, Art From Scrap, where educators discovered creative ways to incorporate recycled materials into their classrooms. Participants left with materials in-hand and a one-year membership they could use to continue collecting supplies for their students. The goal of the CoP is to provide meaningful learning experiences that educators can immediately apply in their classrooms. The CoP leadership team includes an Inclusion Specialist, an ECE Teacher on Special Assignment, and a Special Education Program Specialist, who are all dedicated to supporting and expanding the CoP together.

### **Collaboration and Partnership Between General Education and Special Education**

Through strong partnerships with both general and special education staff, the Inclusion Initiative seeks to foster a collaboration that enhances both general education and special education programming. Maintaining open lines of communication through email, phone calls, and planned in-person meetings ensures all educators feel supported, and concerns are promptly and collaboratively addressed. For example, regularly attending school site staff meetings to encourage collaboration between all teachers and administrators supports the alignment of special education programming needs with broader general education program goals, ensuring that all students receive appropriate support.

### **Partnership with Community Care Licensing Regional Office**

The Inclusion Initiative's collaborative relationship with their local Community Care Licensing (CCL) office came to fruition when programs began to see certain licensing regulations as barriers to implementing inclusion. To effectively address these concerns, the team reached out to CCL administration to discuss how to resolve these barriers. This collaboration provided clarification on various regulations and created

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a shared understanding of how compliance may appear in inclusive settings. Then Inclusion Initiative and CCL jointly provided professional development to childcare program leaders on these topics. In addition, a representative from CCL participated in a CoP for program directors to generate productive discussions on observed barriers. It has been incredibly beneficial for educators and providers to observe this collaboration and to see its positive impact.

The Inclusion Initiative has also given opportunities for CCL analysts to participate in training and discussion regarding inclusion, challenging behaviors, and IEPs and IFSPs to develop a common language and understanding. The goal of this work is to support analysts as they conduct site visits and build relationships with childcare programs in their county. In addition, the Inclusion Initiative continues to intentionally emphasize to programs that licensing can be a supportive resource in their work with inclusion.

Ana Tolentino, Licensing Program Manager, State Department of Social Services- Community Care Licensing, Santa Barbara Child Care Regional Division notes: *"Our partnership has strengthened understanding between licensing and early education professionals. Through our discussions, we've bridged gaps, clarified regulations, and better supported children with IEPs. These conversations have also given analysts valuable insight to better assist providers, reinforcing our shared commitment to inclusive care."*

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## Transitions



### PACER Center

The Parent Advocacy Coalition for Education Rights (PACER), now called the PACER Center, founded in 1977, is a Minnesota Parent Training and Information Center funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs. Their mission is to enhance the quality of life and expand opportunities for children, youth and young adults with disabilities and their families. Some of the resources include early development, early intervention and transition to kindergarten, tips for preparing children, especially those with disabilities for kindergarten. Click on the links below for more information on this topic and several others from the PACER Center.

- [Champions for Children with Disabilities](#) (PACER Center)
- [Transition to Kindergarten](#) (PACER Center)



## Social Emotional Resource Highlight

The [California Teaching Pyramid](#) website has a variety of resources for supporting social emotional development, including:

- [You Got It! Teaching Social and Emotional Skills \(English\)](#) (California Teaching Pyramid)
- [You Got It! Teaching Social and Emotional Skills \(Spanish\)](#) (California Teaching Pyramid)

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- [You Got It! Teaching Social and Emotional Skills \(Chinese\)](#) (California Teaching Pyramid)

The California Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) Network offers a variety of no-cost services, supports, and resources to childcare and development providers seeking to support the social, emotional, and relational health and development of children ages birth to five, and the adults who care for them. For more information, visit the [IECMHC Network](#) website.

The [National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations](#) (NCPMI) website has a resource library for supporting social emotional development, including:

- [Bringing Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Teaching Practices to Pre-K and Kindergarten Classrooms: Implementing the Pyramid Model](#) (NCPMI)
- [Preschool Module 3: Teaching Social-Emotional Skills](#) (NCPMI)

Additional resources can be found in the California Department of Education (CDE) [Inclusive Early Education Resources](#) website resource matrix.

### **Resource for Families**

The All About Young Children website includes information for families on important child development skills and ways in which parents can encourage development in these areas, with their child. Things like building language skills, learning about feelings and the importance of relationships, play and body movement to build gross motor development.

[All About Young Children: Information for Families on Children's Early Development \(English\)](#)

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## **Upcoming Events and Learning Opportunities**

### **California Early Childhood Special Education Network Symposium (October 7–8, 2025)**

["Reaching New Heights"](#) (California Early Special Education Network)

### **Division of Early Childhood 2025 Conference (October 7–10, 2025)**

We are thrilled to announce that registration is open for the Division of Early Childhood's (DEC's) 41st Annual International Conference on Young Children with Disabilities and Their Families! This year's conference is more than just an event — it is a movement. Join an international community committed to inclusive practices and equitable outcomes for every child. Visit the [DEC](#) (Division for Early Childhood) website for more information. Visit the [DEC2025 Conference](#) (Division for Early Childhood) website directly to register.

### **California Teaching Pyramid Training and Coaching for Family Child Care**

The CDSS, in collaboration with WestEd, is offering a no-cost comprehensive California (CA) Teaching Pyramid professional development package for family childcare providers (educators) and family, friend,



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and neighbor providers to begin in September 2025. This experience includes materials and is offered at no cost and will be offered in English and in Spanish.

The CA Teaching Pyramid is a comprehensive approach designed to help educators promote social-emotional competence, address behaviors that adults find challenging, and develop safe and nurturing group environments for all children.

There are ten training sessions held virtually (on-line), three coaching visits in the childcare home, and three reflective practice cadres held virtually or in-person, as determined by the group.

Visit the [California Teaching Pyramid](#) website to learn more.

### **Early Childhood Investigations Webinars (July 9, 2025)**

[How To Talk with Infants and Toddlers to Build Receptive and Expressive Language Development](#) (Early Childhood Investigations Webinars) by Cara Tyrrell, M.Ed.

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## **In case you missed it**

### **Program for Infant Toddler Care Webinars**

The Program for Infant Toddler Care (PITC) offered free webinars that are recorded and available for viewing.

- In 2023, the PITC held the webinar series: Infant Toddler Caregiving - A Guide to Social-Emotional Growth and Socialization
- In 2024, the PITC held the webinar series: Understanding Children's Behavior - Supporting the Individual Needs of Infants and Toddlers
- In May 2025, the PITC held the webinar series: Supporting Multilingual Development

Visit the [Past PITC Webinar Events Page](#) (PITC) to access the webinar recordings.

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## **Contact Us**

[Impact Inclusion Workgroup](#)

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