

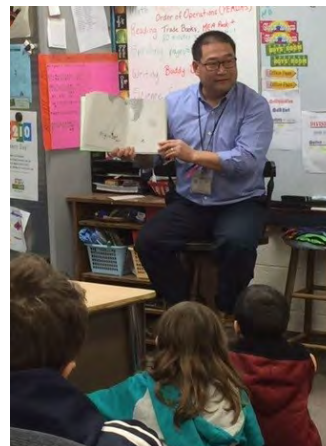
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2018 Annual Report of the Maine Children's Growth Council



A CALL TO ACTION



The Voice for Early Childhood

Dear Governor Mills and Members of the 129th Maine Legislature,

We are pleased to provide you with our 2018 report, **A Call to Action**.

In this report, we share with you our **Council's Vision** for all Maine children and families, our **Framework for Action**, and our **Action Plan**.

We see this **Call to Action** report as a path toward giving all Maine children from birth to five years of age the opportunity to thrive during the most crucial years of brain development. We identify successful programs that can be expanded to reach more families across Maine. We propose strategies that improve the quality and accessibility of valuable services for children and families. We propose collection of more data to clarify needs. Some strategies are more global and propose options to explore system changes and improvements in government oversight.

Our Call to Action is one step in the process, and the Maine Children's Growth Council will continue to work toward improving the future of Maine children and families. We believe healthy children and strong families lay the best foundation for Maine's future prosperity. We look forward to working with the new Administration and the Legislature to address the needs of our youngest citizens and their families.

Sincerely,



Peter Lindsay
Co-Chair



Newell Augur
Co-Chair

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Maine Children’s Growth Council, established by statute in 2008, was created to “develop, maintain and evaluate a plan for sustainable social and financial investment in the healthy development of the State’s young children and their families” (5 MRSA §24002). Since its inception, Council members and stakeholders have been dedicated to working together with private and public sector partners to improve the lives of young children and their families.

A Call to Action includes the Council’s Framework for Action and corresponding Action Plan, which include goals and strategies that are based on scientific information about children’s early care and education and on the experience and knowledge of the Council members and other stakeholders. Participants in the planning process relied on national and local research that explores the building of brain architecture in newborns and young children, studies the effects of toxic stress on brain architecture, seeks to understand the building blocks of resilience, and maps out the steps that build executive function skills during the earliest years of life. The Framework for Action includes the following unifying vision, guiding principles and shared goals that serve as a roadmap to move comprehensive change forward:

THE COUNCIL’S VISION

All Maine children and their families are healthy, learning and thriving, now and in the future

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Involve communities and families as equal partners
- Sustain a unified early childhood system
- Respect diversity and uniqueness of young children and their families
- Focus on quality
- Reduce barriers to collaboration and coordination
- Hold ourselves accountable
- Consider the whole child
- Promote public-private partnerships

GOALS

- Promote the health of children and families and reduce exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Foster strong, stable families and communities
- Encourage effective positive early learning experiences
- Build a stable early care and education workforce
- Measure and evaluate progress

The Council identified **Action Plan Strategies** to move the goals forward. The Action Plan is intended to be a living document. During the next phase, the Council will engage a broad spectrum of partners, enhance our understanding of complex issues, and mobilize our collective will to achieve the strategies within the Action Plan. We will identify key collaborating partners, leadership roles, and accountability metrics that will shape the implementation of the Action Plan.

The Council Co-Chairs and staff thank current and past Council members as well as the stakeholders from across Maine who contributed their time and expertise to help create **A Call to Action**. We look forward to working with you as we pursue comprehensive change that will benefit both current and future generations.

BACKGROUND

About MCGC

The Maine Children’s Growth Council (MCGC) is pleased to submit this Report to the Governor and the joint standing committees of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health, human services, taxation and education matters, as required in Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5 Administration Procedures and Services, Chapter 621.



The Council and the Council’s committees have worked on a number of initiatives over the years, from projects aimed at system-building efforts that realign resources and services for children ages birth to five and their families to our most recent study Maine Social and Emotional Learning & Development Project, completed in 2017. The Council also has served as a conduit for new ideas and projects that have grown and thrived on their own, such as the Maine Resilience Building Network and the Developmental Screening Initiative.

Annual reports and publications, membership, background information, and early childhood resources are available at our website: www.maineecgc.org.

“Healthy development in the early years provides the building blocks for educational achievement, economic productivity, responsible citizenship, lifelong health, strong communities, and successful parenting of the next generation.”

- Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2017).
<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/three-core-concepts-in-early-development/>

Scientific Innovation & Early Education

Scientific advancements in the study of early childhood now provide us with unprecedented information about how a young brain develops.

Research in the areas of brain architecture, toxic stress, resilience and executive function, among others, allow us to develop best practices for a strong foundation of future learning and health for our children – both with respect to what advances and what restricts early brain development.

We recommend targeted solutions that can address these issues and significantly improve the lives of children and families.



Leadership and Collaboration



Science-based advancements can only bring us so far. Public and private sector leaders must work together to improve our early childhood organizations and delivery systems.

In order to achieve systemic change, leaders must explore new ways to break down organizational silos and barriers and work together across multiple organizations and systems.

By embracing these new opportunities for collaboration, state policy makers, civic leaders, parents and community members can build a better future for our youngest citizens and improve the lives of children and families, especially those facing significant adversity.

Strategic Planning Process

The Council is charged by statute to:

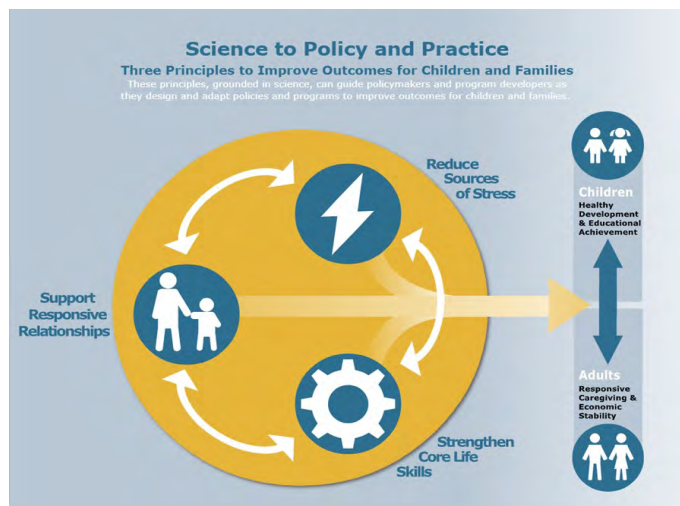
“develop, maintain and evaluate a plan for sustainable social and financial investment in the healthy development of the State’s young children and their families.”

In 2018, the Council began the first stage of its strategic planning process by reviewing the early strategic planning processes undertaken by other states across the country. The Council, along with a broad array of stakeholders, then developed a framework that included the Council’s vision, a set of guiding principles, and common goals.

The next stage of the process was to build an Action Plan with specific strategies for each goal area.

The Action Plan is intended to be a living document and is subject to change as specific strategies are further discussed and developed. During the next phase, the Council will engage a broad spectrum of partners, and will identify key collaborating partners, leadership roles, and ways to measure and evaluate progress over time.

Intersection of Science and Policy



Council members, as policy makers and practitioners, worked together to identify and prioritize the Framework's five goals in a deliberative manner that reflects their understanding of the science of brain architecture and three groundbreaking core principles* that underpin this scientific research:

- Support responsive relationships for children and adults.
- Strengthen core life skills.
- Reduce sources of stress in the lives of children and families.

Source for principles and chart: Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2017). Three Principles to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families. <http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu>

Investing in Early Education

"Estimates of the return on investment for high quality early education programs for low-income children range from \$4 to \$17 for every \$1 spent, depending on the program. In many cases, these early childhood investments produce greater returns than most other economic development projects. What we are finally starting to understand is that we need to invest earlier in children's lives to ensure that every child gets the right start in life."

-Dana F. Connors, President, Maine State Chamber of Commerce, Investing in Maine's Youngest Children, Maine Policy Review, Volume 18, Number 1, p.28

FOR EVERY \$1 INVESTED IN HIGH QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAMS...



THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT RANGES FROM \$4 - \$17.



FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Vision
Statement



Framework –
5 Goals



Action Plan-
Strategies

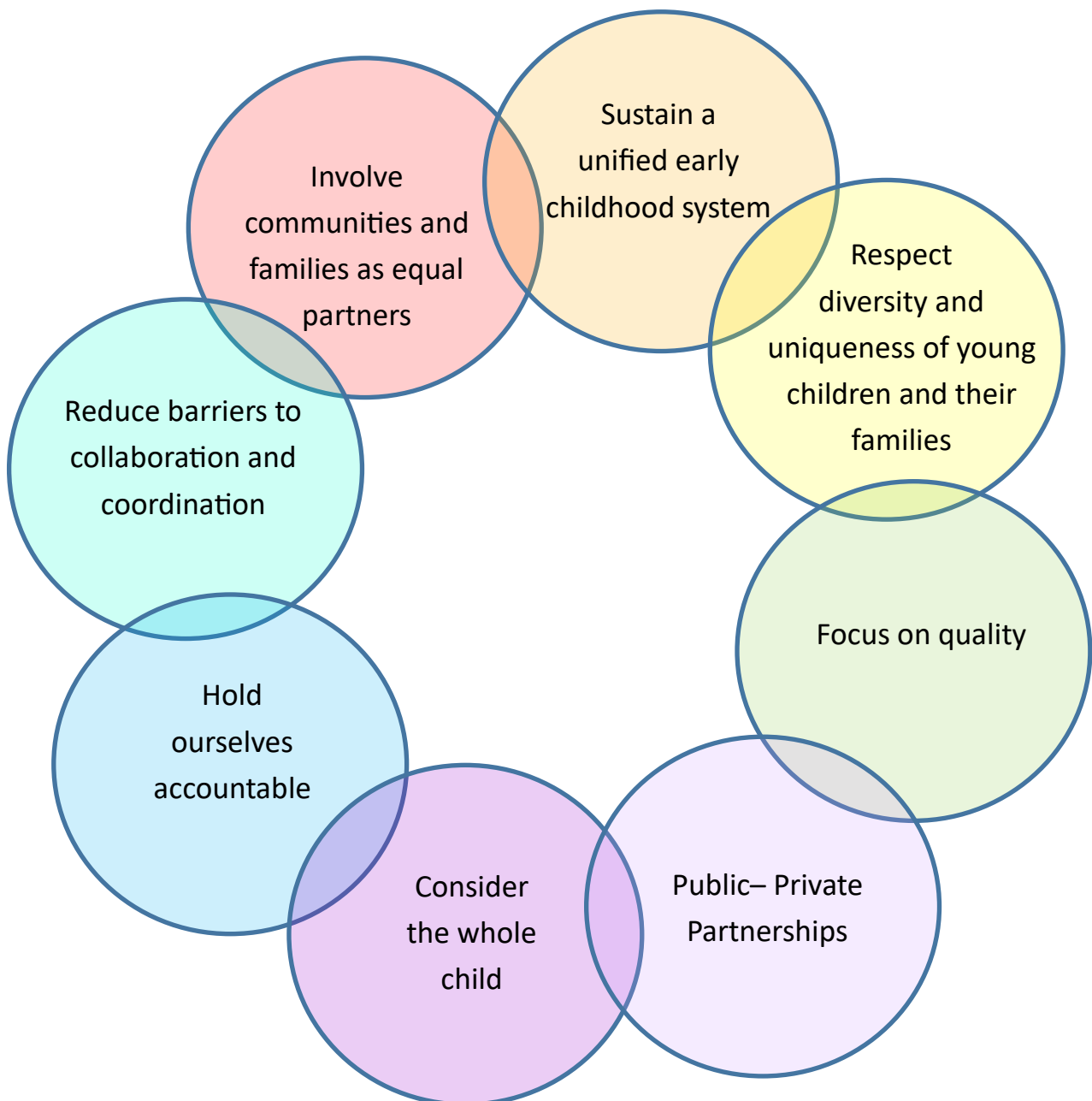


The Council's Vision

All Maine children and their families are healthy, learning and thriving, now and in the future.

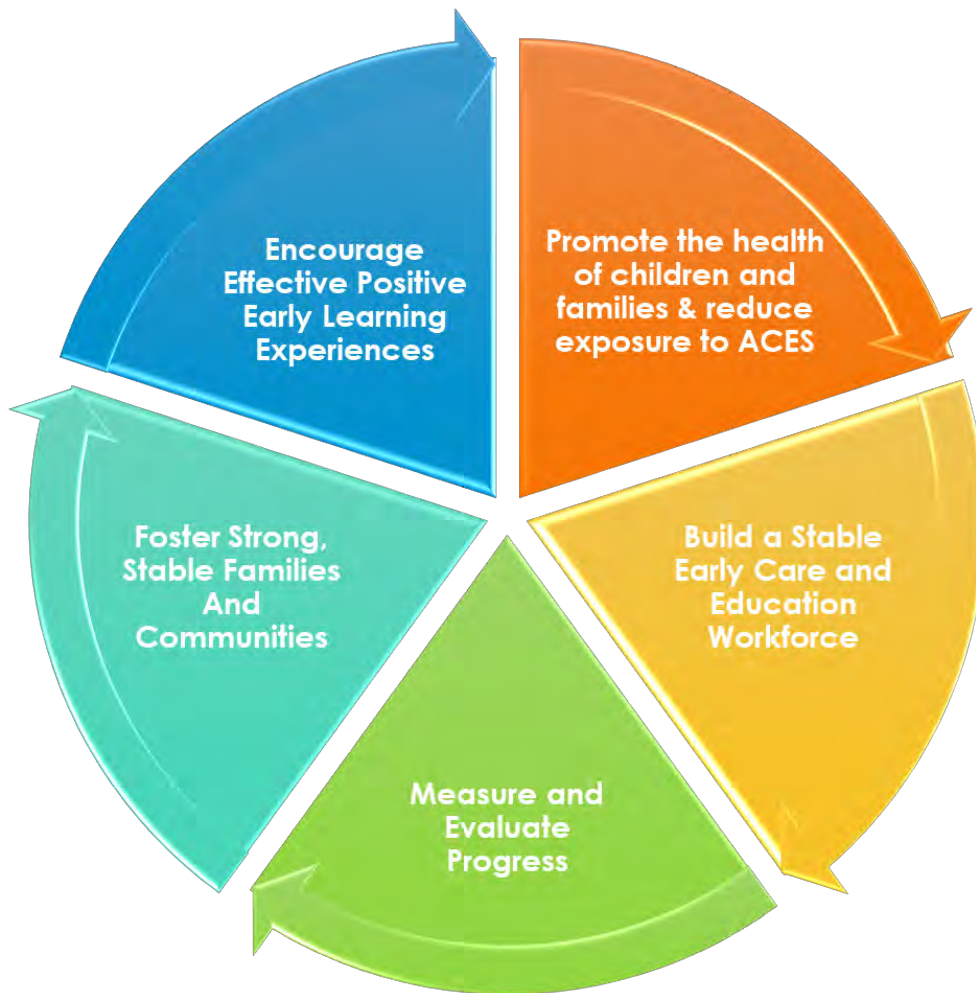
The Framework's Guiding Principles

The Planning Team developed Guiding Principles to inform the process of selecting and prioritizing the Council's goals for the Framework.



THE FRAMEWORK'S FIVE GOALS

The Council identified the following five goals that established the foundation for the Action Plan strategies.



THE ACTION PLAN



The following pages list the Action Plan strategies identified as priorities for each of the five goals. Council members aimed to have strategies that focus on addressing the needs of a broad array of early childhood populations, including foster children, families with grandparents or other relatives as the primary caregivers, and children with disabilities.



GOAL ONE: Promote Health of Children and Families and Reduce Exposure to ACEs*

- Support research and education to promote public policy development (substance use treatment, ACEs).
- Support universal home visiting, prenatal to age 5 and ensure that it follows all children including those in adoption, foster and kinship care.
- Promote opportunities for mental and behavioral screening for developmental delays (Help Me Grow), social determinants of health, and family protective factors.
- Enhance public education of the root causes and stigma, 2-1-1 wraparound supports, Help Me Grow, childbirth education classes and substance use disorders (SUD) awareness.



GOAL TWO: Foster Strong, Stable Families and Communities



- Support strengthening the delivery of programs and services that maintain family stability, including evidence-based family support programs and peer-to-peer opportunities.
- Promote cross-sector partnerships to support comprehensive needs of families.
- Promote “No Wrong Door” for families to access services.
- Collect data on unmet needs, such as flex funds for families and respite care options.

* **ACEs:** Adverse Childhood Experiences (read more about ACEs and toxic stress on page 15)

* **SUD:** Substance Use Disorders



GOAL THREE: Encourage Effective Positive Learning Experiences

- Ensure enough basic safe child care for each community through:
 - * Increasing availability of all forms of local childcare
 - * Increasing public awareness of parental options for childcare
 - * Increasing state-funded subsidies
 - * Increasing outreach to parents with newborns
 - * Ensuring tiered reimbursement
 - * Supporting tax deductions
 - * Enhancing social and emotional supports
 - * Furthering strategies to identify special needs and service referrals
- Increase access to Head Start, with strategies to identify special needs and service referrals.
- Increase public Pre-K.
- Facilitate the expansion of voluntary Early Childhood Consultation Programs.

GOAL FOUR: Build a Stable Early Care and Education Workforce

- Increase compensation and benefits for early care workers by increasing child care subsidy levels and exploring scholarships and loan payment forgiveness options with educational institutions.
- Support the education, technical assistance and training needs of early care and education personnel, by expanding options for professional development and training, and access to grants and other funding sources for providers and supplementing payroll.
- Increase the reach of the Maine Roads to Quality (MRTQ) Professional Development Network (PDN) and connect this strategy to Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).



GOAL FIVE: Measure and Evaluate Progress

- Develop systems measures for early childhood system, inventory currently available measurements, review other states' measurements, and improve the quality of government oversight.
- Identify structural gaps and work with state agencies to develop data compatibility.
- Explore the option of unifying all relevant early childhood programs and to the extent possible, unifying funding sources (excluding all child welfare) under one department.
- Track and report measurements; report results biannually.
- Reconvene the Commissioner-level Children's Cabinet (or similar inter-departmental group) to implement cross-department strategies to reduce silos.



LOOKING AHEAD

Looking ahead in 2019, the Council anticipates that it will request a briefing of its annual report to legislative committees of jurisdiction during the new legislative session.

The Council also will begin its second phase of the strategic planning process by further developing the Action Plan, identifying necessary resources and partnerships to ensure a robust process moving forward.

The time is now for us build a broad coalition from the private and public sectors to align ourselves around a shared goal: to ensure that all Maine children and their families are healthy, learning, and thriving.

“Nationally, 1 in 5 children experiences three or more “adverse childhood experiences” such as abuse, domestic violence, neglect, mental illness in the household, or substance abuse in the household.”

–Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html>



The Voice for Early Childhood

Maine Children's Growth Council Members

Membership as of November, 2018

Peter Lindsay, Co-Chair
Newell Augur, Co-Chair
Senator Rebecca Millett
Senator Amy Volk
Representative Richard Farnsworth
Representative Heather Sirocki
John Butera
Alicia Giftos
Crystal Arbor
Nena Cunningham
Alan Cobo-Lewis
Mallory Banks Harnden
Anastasia Hicks

Pam LaHaye
Steven Brier
Lorinda Bozeman
Marnee Harke
June Holman
Todd Brackett
Susan Mackey Andrews
Judith Kaut
Jaci Holmes
Brian Duprey
Patricia Hamilton
Melanie Anne Collins
Jeannette Goddard

Council Staff

Natalie Haynes, Planning Consultant
Amie Marzen, Communications Consultant

WHAT ARE ACEs?

AND HOW DO THEY RELATE TO TOXIC STRESS?

"ACEs" stands for "Adverse Childhood Experiences." These experiences can include things like physical and emotional abuse, neglect, caregiver mental illness, and household violence.



The more ACEs a child experiences, the more likely he or she is to suffer from things like heart disease and diabetes, poor academic achievement, and substance abuse later in life.

TOXIC STRESS EXPLAINS HOW ACEs "GET UNDER THE SKIN."

Experiencing many ACEs, as well as things like racism and community violence, without supportive adults, can cause what's known as **toxic stress**. This excessive activation of the stress-response system can lead to long-lasting wear-and-tear on the body and brain.



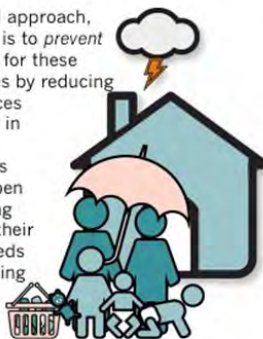
The effect would be similar to revving a car engine for days or weeks at a time.

WE CAN REDUCE THE EFFECTS OF ACEs AND TOXIC STRESS.



For those who have experienced ACEs, there are a range of possible responses that can help, including therapeutic sessions with mental health professionals, meditation, physical exercise, spending time in nature, and many others.

The ideal approach, however, is to *prevent* the need for these responses by reducing the sources of stress in people's lives. This can happen by helping to meet their basic needs or providing other services.



Likewise, fostering strong, **responsive relationships** between children and their caregivers, and helping children and adults build **core life skills**, can help to buffer a child from the effects of **toxic stress**.

ACEs affect people at all income and social levels, and can have serious, costly impact across the lifespan. **No one who's experienced significant adversity (or many ACEs) is irreparably damaged,** though we need to acknowledge trauma's effects on their lives. By reducing families' sources of stress, providing children and adults with responsive relationships, and strengthening the core life skills we all need to adapt and thrive, **we can prevent and counteract lasting harm.**

Center on the Developing Child  HARVARD UNIVERSITY
Learn more about ACEs from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/ncjrs/ce4a/aces/index.html).
For more information: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/ACEs>



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