



## **BUILD 2025 National Conference**

Pre-Conference Sessions

Tuesday, December 2, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

### **101. Apprenticeship 101**

Registered Apprenticeship is a respected, tried-and-true approach to training low-income job seekers and placing them on sustainable career pathways, while supplying employers with workers who can meet precise industry workforce needs. Building on the strong apprenticeship tradition, Early Care & Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS) has successfully sponsored state-of-the-art, replicable apprenticeships to address ECE workforce needs by integrating on-the-job training, mentoring, no-cost college coursework, cohort learning, increased compensation, and participant supports and services, resulting in high rates of program completion and low rates of attrition. ECEPTS has also provided technical assistance to apprenticeship initiatives in 18 states. This preconference introduces the Registered Apprenticeship system and shares information on what it takes to develop and sustain successful apprenticeships for early educators and caregivers.

*Presenters: Daryl Bright, Nohemy Catalan, Kisha Hayes, Sandra Moore, and Christine Sarigianis, Early Care and Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS)*

### **102. Better for Whom? The Heart of the Matter when Reassessing QIS in a Shifting Landscape**

Quality Improvement Systems (QIS), designed to elevate program quality, align early childhood initiatives, and support children, families, and the workforce, have become a cornerstone in early care and education systems building As states and communities

navigate increasingly constrained fiscal environments, how will QIS evolve to prioritize the people--program leaders, providers, classroom educators, and coaches--who make quality possible? In this interactive pre-conference session, we'll take a system-wide look at how QIS are centering the well-being and professional growth of the individuals who engage in continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts. Together, we'll explore key questions:

- What does it look like for QIS to actively support the well-being and professional growth of the CCEE workforce?
- What data are essential to guide this work—and how do we use these data to understand how QIS are driving change and impact?
- How are states tracking the effectiveness of QIS in strengthening the who behind quality improvement?

We invite you to bring your successes, challenges, insights, and boldest new ideas. This is a chance to share and learn alongside peers working to shape more responsive, equitable, and sustainable QIS. To deepen this conversation, we will host two video calls in Fall 2025 to connect with session participants and refine the Pre-Conference session content based on shared priorities and questions.

*Presenters: Sarah Daily, Child Trends; Debi Mathias, The BUILD Initiative*

### **103. Beyond the Usual Voices: Reclaiming Maternal Health Through Collective Action**

Conversations about maternal health equity often involve the usual voices—clinicians, advocates, and public health leaders. But real, sustainable change requires us to engage the people, institutions, and sectors who aren't yet part of the dialogue. Join this immersive, action-oriented session designed to help participants reflect on who is missing from current efforts and how to meaningfully bring them in.

The session centers the maternal health experiences of those most impacted by systemic racism, care access barriers, and a persistent lack of voice. Through storytelling, structured dialogue, and real-time networking, participants will unpack how these issues show up in their communities—and explore how to build authentic partnerships beyond traditional stakeholders. Whether it's transportation departments, employers, schools, local businesses, or faith communities, the session will challenge participants to expand their vision of who contributes to maternal well-being.

*Presenters: TBD*

#### **104. Disrupting Whiteness: Towards Anti-Racist Early Learning Systems**

White supremacy culture is deeply embedded in our pedagogy, policies, workforce structures, and assumptions. It often marginalizes Black, Indigenous, Asian, Pacific Islander, Latiné, and other children and families of color, and keeps us from creating an equitable early childhood system. This culture must be named, examined, and disrupted if we want to serve all children and families.

Join us for a critical, action-oriented dialogue about how practitioners, leaders, and agencies can take steps to dismantle this “whiteness” in early childhood systems. Examine case studies and real examples from early childhood education classrooms, teacher preparation programs, and state-level implementation work in Washington and other states that highlight both the barriers and the promising practices already underway.

*Presenters: Jamie Cho, Seattle University; Ninderjit Gill, North Seattle College*

#### **105. The Flip Side of Learning: Elevating “Soft” Skills in Early Childhood Quality Improvement**

Readiness means more than ABCs and 1-2-3s. In the pursuit of academic excellence, early childhood education often emphasizes cognitive milestones and school readiness. However, equally vital are the “soft skills”—social-emotional competencies, executive functions, and relational abilities—that form the foundation for lifelong learning and well-being. This session delves into the significance of these skills and explores strategies to integrate them into quality improvement initiatives.

*Presenters: Cathrine Aasen Floyd, Innovation in Early Education and Jocelyn Tucker, The Foundation for Early Childhood Education Head Start/State Preschool*

#### **106. From Mixed-Delivery Patchwork to Mixed-Delivery System: What Will it Take in Your State or Community?**

A robust early learning system offers a variety of settings and program types: school-based preschool, center-based child care, family child care, and other services. Too often, however, the services provided are driven more by the structure of public funding streams than by children and families’ needs. Using state-funded pre-K as an example,

we'll walk through the obstacles that often stand in the way of implementing a well-coordinated and adequately financed system. Through interactive exercises, we'll illuminate how state and local governance, aligned standards, and—especially—the design of funding mechanisms—all play a critical role. While no state or community has fully built the system we need, state leaders will share how they've solved pieces of this puzzle. Participants will leave with a better understanding of the most important next steps for redesigning the funding of their mixed-delivery system with children and families at the center.

*Presenters: Theresa Hawley and Sessy Nyman, The Center for Early Learning Funding Equity (CELFE); Nasha Patel, Watershed Advisors*

### **107. From Survival to Strategy: Leading with Courage in Unstable Systems**

Designed for systems leaders navigating political and economic pressures, burnout, and organizational instability, this interactive session explores what it means to lead with clarity and courage in chaotic environments. Participants will reflect on their leadership values, identify shared interests across divergent stakeholders, and practice making high-stakes decisions that don't sacrifice integrity. Built on principles of resilience, self-awareness, and systems thinking, this session will help leaders lead from values, not just reaction.

*Presenters: Danielle Davis, Liberated Development*

### **108. It's Your Story; You Should Tell It!**

Every one of us carries a powerful story—and it's time to share yours!

Join this dynamic, hands-on workshop to explore the art of storytelling as a tool for advocacy, connection, and change. Discover how your personal narrative can inspire action, influence decision-makers, and deepen trust with families and colleagues. Learn practical techniques to craft stories that move hearts and shift policies, all while building your confidence and sharpening your listening skills.

Led by LaDon Love, Executive Director of SPACES In Action, this session invites you to step into your voice and power. Through storytelling, SIA uplifts Black, brown, and immigrant families in DC to organize for child care, health, climate, and economic justice. Come ready to connect, reflect, and leave transformed—with the tools to tell your story and spark change in your community.

*Presenters: LaDon Love, SPACEs in Action*

### **109. Show Me the Money: A Taxing Look at Funding Great Ideas**

You've got the perfect policy to support the babies in your community—high impact, research-backed, beloved by families. But then someone says: "This is too expensive!" or the dreaded: "Where's the money going to come from?" Don't panic—get prepared. This deep-dive session will demystify tax policy and revenue generation for early childhood advocates and system builders. Learn how to respond with confidence (and maybe a pie chart), explore strategies to fund what matters, and leave with the tools to turn fiscal frowns upside down. Warning: May cause spontaneous bursts of empowered advocacy.

*Presenters: Olivia Allen, Children's Funding Project; Amber Wallin, State Revenue Project*

### **110. Strengthening Family Connections: Building Social Capital through Whole Family Systems and Policy Change**

Building social capital - the connections families have with each other and their communities - is one of the most effective and affordable strategies for strengthening family well-being and preventing child welfare system involvement. Yet it remains one of the least understood by public systems. Research shows that when families are linked to others with shared experiences, trusted resources, and community-based supports, they are better able to weather stress, advocate for their children, and avoid crises that lead to system involvement. Yet, too often, programs and services operate in silos, unintentionally isolating families or offering limited pathways for authentic relationship-building.

This interactive pre-conference session is designed for leaders ready to move upstream. It invites participants to explore how state systems can enhance family well-being by supporting social connections through peer support, community cohorts, and family-centered policies and practices. Grounded in the Protective Factors Framework, the session explores how state policies and practices can either strengthen or hinder social connection, and what it takes to shift the course.

*Presenters: December Brakefield and Megan Waltz, Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families; Molly Sullivan, MNStory Collective*

### **111. Unlocking the Power of Data: Building Effective Early Childhood Systems in Uncertain Times**

This engaging and interactive discussion will focus on understanding and leveraging data to enhance early childhood systems. Whether you're a data user or a developer of data systems, this session is designed for you. Together, we'll explore how we can work together as a field to meet urgent data needs, safeguard critical information, and build resilient early childhood systems.

We'll examine together:

- How we can use data to advance equity for children, families, and the workforce—especially during times of change
- The data we risk losing, and how we can protect and safely use the information that matters most
- How we can align on shared priorities and collaborate across systems to strengthen the impact of our data efforts
- The strategies, infrastructure, and capacity needed to ensure data is accurate, accessible, and used effectively
- How we can trust the accuracy and availability of the data we rely on in today's dynamic landscape

Join us to collaborate, share insights, and empower our communities to foster positive outcomes for young children and their families.

*Presenters: Carlise King and Dale Richards, Child Trends; Aisha Ray, Michelle Stover Wright, and Kemi Naji, The BUILD Initiative*

### **112. Unsticking the System: Building a Sustainable, Equitable Early Childhood Workforce Through State Infrastructure and Cross-System Innovation**

A strong early childhood system begins with a qualified, stable, and respected workforce—yet most states struggle to create systems that support the recruitment, growth, retention, and compensation of early educators. This interactive session will explore how states can build sustainable, equitable early childhood workforce systems. Highlighting policy infrastructure, career ladders, compensation, higher education pathways, workforce registries, and data systems, the session will feature examples from Kansas, Illinois, New York, and Maine. Participants will reflect on their state context,

identify key barriers and enablers, and engage in team planning to advance aligned, cross-sector workforce strategies that center educator voice, equity, and accountability.

Together we will explore:

- How research can catalyze change – both KCCTO and NY PDI did comprehensive workforce studies that helped to fuel their system building.
- How to align higher education, credentialing, and career lattices
- The role of KCCTO and NY Professional Development Institute in implementing professional development, navigation, individual educator plans, scholarships, and career ladders in Kansas and New York.
- Compensation initiatives, including wage supports and parity pilots
- Transitions and supports for students and professionals entering and advancing in the field.
- The integration of workforce registries and data systems to inform policy and track impact.
- Meaningful provider and educator engagement in the design of workforce systems.

*Presenters: Dona Anderson, New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute; Sherry Cleary; Bronwyn Fees and Patty Peschel, Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities; Sherri Killins Stewart; Tara Williams, Maine Office of Children and Families*

### **113. Using Design Thinking as a Tool for Resilient Communities and Strategies**

State and local leaders are seeking durable solutions to pervasive problems in early childhood systems. New tools can inspire a way forward to better and more resilient answers. [Design Thinking](#) is a methodology that engages those most impacted by the early childhood system to design solutions to improve their daily experiences. This pre-conference session will highlight how Michigan and other states have utilized Design Thinking to address problems in collaboration with communities, focusing on the needs of end-users, including families, children, and healthcare providers. Participants will learn about Design Thinking tools and have the opportunity to practice applying them.

*Presenters: TBD*

### **114. Wading Through the Chaos to Communicate What Really Matters**

The current politicization of the lexicon shared among early childhood leaders over the past decade (e.g., “equity” and “cultural responsiveness”) is challenging our ability to communicate about and maintain support for EC initiatives that address disparities.

In this session, we will explore actionable strategies for navigating this complex landscape, focusing on:

- **Building and Sustaining Support Amidst Political Polarization:** Learn how to advocate for early childhood policies and programs in a way that resonates across the political spectrum, emphasizing shared values and community benefits.
- **Leveraging Language to Empower and Recognize Champions:** Discover how to use inclusive and effective communication to highlight the efforts of early childhood leaders and champions and build a culture of mutual respect and understanding.
- **Upholding Truth and Integrity in the Face of Misinformation:** Develop skills to communicate the realities of early childhood work with honesty and clarity, countering falsehoods and fostering trust within the community.

By the end of this session, participants will be equipped with practical tools to navigate the current political climate, ensuring that the vital work of early childhood professionals continues to thrive and receive the support it deserves.

*Presenters: TBD*