



**Center on the Social  
and Emotional Foundations  
for Early Learning**



**THE PYRAMID MODEL FOR SUPPORTING SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE:  
A MARYLAND COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE**

Social skills in young children are more closely associated with school readiness and success in kindergarten and first grade than cognitive and academic skills (Raver & Knitzer, 2002; Smith, 2004). Nationally, early care and education providers report that challenging behavior and social skill problems are their greatest challenges and programs report expelling preschoolers at a rate three times that for school age children (Gilliam, 2005; Hemmeter et. al, 2007).

Maryland has a strong history of excellence in early childhood education and a commitment to infant/early childhood mental health. The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) Pyramid Model promotes effective practices to enhance young children’s social and emotional competence and prevent challenging behavior. Similar to Maryland’s Model for School Readiness (MMSR), the CSEFEL Pyramid Model provides a comprehensive approach to professional development that sustains the use of effective practices at the community level – in childcare centers, classrooms, homes, and programs.

The Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence is a conceptual framework of evidence-based practices developed by two national, federally-funded research and training centers: CSEFEL and the Center for Evidence-Based Practices: Young Children with Challenging Behavior (CEBP). These centers’ faculty, including faculty at the Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development (GUCCHD), represent nationally recognized researchers and program developers in the areas of social skills and challenging behavior. Based on evaluation data over the last five years, the Pyramid Model appears to be a sound framework for early care and education systems, and extensive training materials, videos, and print resources to help states, communities and programs implement the model have been developed (see [www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/)).

State Partnership

CSEFEL is partnering with 2-3 states per year to build the capacity of the state to increase the social and behavioral competence of young children. **The broad goal of the intensive training and technical assistance (T/TA) initiative is to foster the professional development of the early care and education workforce.** Maryland is partnering with CSEFEL to begin the initiative this year. CSEFEL will provide T/TA to Maryland for 3 years in decreasing intensity.

The major components of this effort include:

- Working with an interagency, collaborative planning team to guide the process, strengthen policies and systems to sustain evidence-based practices such as the Pyramid Model at the community level;
- Providing the first CSEFEL Pyramid train-the-trainers event in the winter of 2008, followed by additional training as needed and available;
- Identifying and supporting a cadre of local coaches to help programs in their locale adopt the Pyramid Model;
- Working with 4 demonstration programs (a classroom, center, or program) who will adopt, evaluate, and model the Pyramid; and
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the initiative.

The Maryland state planning team will be announcing the winter training, determining the audience for the training, providing applications for coaches, and selecting the demonstration sites in the near future. Demonstration sites will be high quality programs, located in diverse communities, have a strong and ongoing relationship with someone with experience in early childhood mental health who will serve as a coach, and represent different stakeholders (i.e., Head Start, Child Care, Early Intervention, Pre-school, etc.). CSEFEL staff will be providing the initial T/TA, materials, and will co-facilitate the planning process. Over time, the state planning team will likely develop policies, systems and other infrastructure necessary to sustain and expand the CSEFEL initiative.

Members of the state planning team include:

**Kay Connors**, Baltimore Center for Infant Study, University of Maryland

**Rena Dubin**, Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health

**Mary LaCasse**, Center for Maternal and Child Health, Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

**Deborah Metzger**, Infants and Toddlers Program and Preschool Special Education Services, Division of Special Education and Early Intervention Services, Maryland State Department of Education

**Joyce Pollard**, Child and Adolescent Services, Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

**Dona Jo Ponn**, Training and Technical Assistance, Maryland Committee for Children, Inc.

**Steve Rohde**, Training and Technical Assistance, Maryland Committee for Children, Inc.

**Jessica Steele**, Abilities Network

**Audrey Smith**, Program Development, Maryland State Department of Education

**Nancy Vorobey**, Infants and Toddlers Program and Preschool Special Education Services, Division of Special Education and Early Intervention Services, Maryland State Department of Education

**Dana Yates**, Baltimore Mental Health Systems

**Al Zachik**, Child and Adolescent Services, Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

**Linda Zang**, Head Start Collaboration, Maryland State Department of Education

The CSEFEL team includes:

Mary Louise Hemmeter, Department of Special Education, Vanderbilt University, CSEFEL Principal Investigator

Roxane Kaufmann, National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health, Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development

Lan Le, National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health, Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development

**Projected outcomes include:** Early care and education providers competent in promoting young children's social skills and preventing and addressing challenging behavior, a cadre of trainers and coaches, demonstration sites that can show what evidence-based practices look like on a daily basis, improved child social skills and school readiness, and state infrastructure to sustain the effort and outcomes.

We are interested in your ideas about assuring the success of the initiative in Maryland and happy to answer any questions you might have. For more information, please contact: Roxane Kaufmann at (202) 687-5072 or [kaufmanr@georgetown.edu](mailto:kaufmanr@georgetown.edu)