

Washington DC is a community of great promise, yet tremendous inequity. More than half of the children in our nation's capital experience an adverse childhood experience such as the sudden absence of a caregiver, abusive behavior within the household or neighborhood, or the deprivation of extreme poverty. These experiences have a severe effect on the development of young children which can persist across the lifespan. Exposure to this "toxic stress" affects the developing brains of young children, and is linked to impairments in social, educational, and mental health functioning. In addition, through complex biological processes, adversity in childhood is associated with higher rates of obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, and premature mortality later in life.

However, there is good news—even when young children and their families face toxic stress, early and effective intervention can prevent or reverse these negative effects. Unfortunately, few communities—including Washington, DC—have comprehensive and coordinated resources to help families buffer the damage. In response, Children's National and Georgetown have come together in a transformative partnership to create the Early Childhood Innovation Network (ECIN). The ECIN is a community-wide catalyst for positive change and building resilience, enabling families and those who support them, such as pediatricians, child care providers, and social service agencies, to intervene early and prevent or decrease the influences of these toxic stresses.

Science tells us that toxic stress can have a permanent, negative impact on the developing brain, disrupting the very foundation of a child's future. It is imperative that we intervene now, to prepare children for a lifetime of optimal health and well-being—creating an environment in which they can thrive, beginning in pregnancy and facilitated with ongoing advocacy efforts, we can help the children of our community reach their full potential in life.





MISSION AND VISION

Mission: To ensure all children in Washington, DC, are able to thrive and reach their fullest potential by taking a science-based and cross-sector approach to strengthening families and the systems which support them, thus decreasing the impact of trauma and toxic stress

Vision:

1. Children in our city will receive the best possible start in life, setting the stage for long-term health and success
2. Providers, such as pediatricians, early childhood educators, and social support workers who interact with young children will work collaboratively, synergistically, and with a minimum of duplication towards the common goal of strengthening families
3. Systemic policies and procedures will ensure children, families, and providers are able to access the high-quality interventions and timely supports they need
4. Evidence and research will rigorously inform program development and guide expansion and replication, serving as a best practice model for the nation

These four core strategies will anchor the ECIN's impact across the city:

 <p>1. Education The ECIN is a platform that educates clinicians, teachers, other child-serving professionals, and the public about how adversity and toxic stress negatively impact child development and how we can promote resilience, academic readiness, and social and emotional well-being in young children.</p>	 <p>2. Action The ECIN is a driving force to test, adapt, and implement upstream solutions aimed at reaching very young children (ages 0-5) and their families. The initiative will utilize "rapid-cycle" quality improvement techniques, incorporating early findings and frequent feedback to maximize the interventions' value to children and families.</p>
 <p>3. Research The ECIN features an investigative team dedicated to designing and conducting longitudinal studies of childhood outcomes among families living in highly stressed neighborhoods of Washington, DC. The team will partner with community stakeholders to study the long-term consequences of interventions delivered in early childhood. Rigorous evaluation throughout the duration of the ECIN's work will ensure high-quality programming, attract continuation funding, and facilitate dissemination of the ECIN's findings on a national level.</p>	 <p>4. Advocacy The ECIN is a vehicle to catalyze local policy changes that support optimal educational, health, and social outcomes. These policy targets will have local focus and national significance, with the potential to advance systems' capacities to prioritize policies that advance childhood outcomes.</p>

For More Information

- <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/Early-Traumatic-Experiences-Tied-to-Learning-and-Behavioral-Difficulties-in-Children.aspx>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/index.html>
- http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/30/protecting-children-from-toxic-stress/?_r=0
- <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>
- <http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/resources/video/how-brains-are-built-core-story-brain-development>