



## Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network

Promoting Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Preventing Expulsion

Children's social and emotional development is a cornerstone of school readiness, health, and overall well-being. While challenging behavior is a part of child development, without appropriate training, it may be difficult for early childhood and out-of-school time practitioners to distinguish concerning behavior from those that are developmentally appropriate and may lead to inappropriate responses, labeling, and possibly suspension or expulsion from the program.

Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network (MRTQ PDN) consists of a partnership between the Cutler Institute at the University of Southern Maine, the University of Maine Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies, the Department of Psychology at the University of Maine, and the Maine Afterschool Network. MRTQ PDN offers a variety of evidence-based professional development supports to early childhood and out-of-school time programs and individual practitioners designed to promote SEL and prevent the expulsion of young children.

- **On-site consultation** is a voluntary service offered to all programs. The individualized goals of on-site consultation are aligned with the standards of *Quality for ME*, Maine's quality rating and improvement system and are delivered to provide support and guidance to improve the skills and abilities of the practitioners in the program.
  - On-site consultation is delivered by a team of regionally-based District Early Childhood and Youth Coordinators (DCs). The DC team was purposely created to include professionals with expertise in infant toddler programming, family child care, out-of-school time, working with families, children with disabilities, and early childhood mental health. All DCs have completed, or are enrolled in, a Master's degree program in early childhood education or a related field and receive specialized training in relationship-based consultation.
  - One DC is a licensed mental health consultant and is available to support programs individually or in collaboration with another DC.

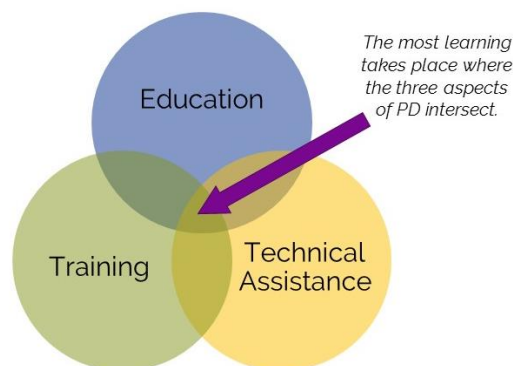
- On-site consultation is provided at no cost to programs; these services are funded by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services, Child Care Development Block Grant.
- **Peer-to-peer support** is provided in the form of Communities of Practice (CoPs) and cohorts. CoPs are organized both regionally and by topic area (e.g. infant toddler care or family child care) and are facilitated by the DCs and trained, subcontracted facilitators. Cohorts support individuals seeking a Maine Credential or programs seeking national accreditation. All facilitators receive specialized training in offering peer-to-peer support.
- **The Warm Line** serves as the first step in providing practical, accurate information to support the successful inclusion of children with special health needs, disabilities, mental health concerns, or challenging behavior. The Warm Line is jointly staffed by professionals with expertise in inclusive practices, disabilities, social and emotional development, behavior, and early childhood mental health.
- **Core Knowledge Training** offers a consistent body of knowledge regarding best practices in early childhood education and out-of-school time programming for both new and experienced practitioners. SEL is woven throughout the over 200 hours of available Core Knowledge Training; in-depth training, such as *Positive Supports and Challenging Behavior* are also available. Core Knowledge Trainings are delivered by instructors with a Master's degree in early childhood education (or a closely related field) who have taken additional training on adult learning principles.
- **The Maine Credentials** are available for practitioners who wish to focus their training, course work, and professional experience on specific age groups or areas of expertise. Currently, MRTQ PDN administers the Infant Toddler Credentials I and II, Youth Development, Director, and Inclusion Credentials. The Maine Inclusion Credential is specifically designed to help practitioners build the skills, knowledge, resources, and attitudes to successfully work with all children, including those with special needs and those experiencing challenging behavior.

## MRTQ PDN's Approach to Professional Development

All services offered by MRTQ PDN are delivered along a continuum of learning and support activities, including education, training, and technical assistance. MRTQ PDN is in a unique position to provide all three types of professional development and *to intentionally align these supports* in order to best support programs and practitioners in implementing SEL.

Providing programs with professional development focused on SEL can give practitioners the tools they need to prevent and address challenging behaviors and avoid expulsions.

MRTQ PDN collects and analyzes evaluation data on all professional development services as part of continuous quality improvement activities.



Source: *Early Childhood Professional Development: Training and Technical Assistance Glossary*, NAEYC and NACCRRRA, 2011