

HOPE

Rhode Island's Harbor of Opportunities for Professional Excellence in Early Care & Education

As part of Starting Right, Rhode Island's innovative early care and education initiative, the Starting Right Implementation Subcommittee on Professional Development, supported by the RI Department of Human Services and CHILDSPAN, Rhode Island's statewide training system, propose HOPE (Harbor of Opportunities for Professional Excellence), a comprehensive blueprint for building a professional development system in Rhode Island.

The Need for HOPE

- ≈ The level of staff competence is a key determinant of quality early care and education programs. Research shows that children in programs where providers are well-trained have better outcomes, including improved language and cognitive development, more advanced social skills, and better preparation for school.
- ≈ Child Care programs have a turnover rate that is four times that for other businesses. The average wage in Rhode Island for child care center staff, including head teachers and administrators, is \$7.28 per hour. The inability to recruit and retain qualified staff is closely linked to low wages and few opportunities for training and professional development.

Goals of HOPE

- ≈ To ensure that practitioners meet professional standards
- ≈ To create a coordinated, high quality, and accessible professional development system that links community-based training programs to higher education
- ≈ To develop standards for all training and trainers in Rhode Island
- ≈ To implement a system for documenting individual practitioners' training and career development
- ≈ To provide financial assistance to practitioners to attend training and take courses
- ≈ To reward increased knowledge and competence with higher compensation
- ≈ To develop community-based and culturally appropriate learning opportunities
- ≈ To gather and maintain data about the Early Care and Education, School Age and Youth Care workforce in RI

Components of HOPE

- ≈ **Standards for professional credentials** and approval of training and courses
- ≈ **Computerized personnel registry** that records each individual practitioner's experience, training, course credits, and/or degrees
- ≈ **Statewide calendar** of approved educational offerings that is accessible to all practitioners
- ≈ **Training and higher education task force** to improve and coordinate educational offerings
- ≈ **Scholarships and innovative practices** that support equitable access to training and education
- ≈ **Compensation program** that rewards better trained staff
- ≈ **Community-based mentoring program** that builds diverse leadership, provides continuing education for mentors, and supports knowledge and skills for proteges