



Date: January 18, 2022

DMS Information Memo 2022-01

To: County Birth to 3 Program Coordinators  
County Department of Human Services Directors  
County Department of Social Services Directors  
County Department of Community Programs Directors  
County Department of Public Health Directors  
Area Administrators

From: Deborah Rathermel, Director  
Bureau of Children's Services

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Rathermel".

## Birth to 3 Program Professional Development Reimagine

### Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to announce steps to strengthen the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program's professional development system by providing comprehensive resources, training, and implementation support to local Birth to 3 programs. These activities are aimed at supporting high quality, evidence-based practices and improved outcomes for infants, toddlers, and their families across the state. This initiative will leverage the current RESource Project contract combined with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

### Background: ARPA and IDEA

ARPA provides COVID-19 pandemic relief on many different levels. ARPA includes \$250,000,000 for programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), resulting in \$3,313,493 in supplemental ARPA funds for the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program. These supplemental ARPA funds have been provided to:

- Mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and families.
- Assist children and families who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.
- Support families to emerge from the pandemic stronger.

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) gathered input through stakeholder input sessions, email, and targeted outreach requesting guidance to inform the development of recommendations and strategies for use of the ARPA funds for the Birth to 3 Program. Based on the input received from stakeholders, DHS will utilize the ARPA funds in the following three focus areas:

1. Professional development and workforce sustainability and supports
2. Information systems and data
3. Local child and family focused pandemic recovery supports

All strategies within each focus area will be developed using a health equity lens, with the intention of addressing disparities in early intervention outcomes for children and families in the Birth to 3 Program.

### Professional Development and Workforce Sustainability Support

In response to input from local programs, community partners, and families during the ARPA funding stakeholder input sessions, DHS is investing a portion of the ARPA funding on reimagining the

professional development framework for Birth to 3 Program practitioners. As a part of this project, DHS and REsource are working together to gather information from county Birth to 3 programs to inform professional development activities that will enhance the statewide, comprehensive professional development system and achieve a shared commitment to strengthening Wisconsin's Birth to 3 Program.

REsource activities in the coming months will focus on the priority of gathering input from county programs. In line with this shift, the Annual Review and County Performance Plan will end effective December 31, 2021. DHS will instead focus resources and engage with county programs through the following activities:

- Local program engagement sessions with all county programs in early 2022. During these sessions, REsource and DHS staff will discuss outcomes, practices, and professional development needs with each county program.
- A statewide survey to collect data from each county about current tools and practices.
- Regional input forums to gather additional insight about professional development needs.

Using Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program ARPA funds, the Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) 5, Regional Enhancement Support Team (REsource) recently hired a Research to Practice Project team to support a multiphase, multi-year project to identify, analyze, develop, and initiate a plan for statewide implementation of evidence-based practices in the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program.

Key activities under this contract with this multi-disciplinary team will include:

- Identifying, collecting, and evaluating data and making recommendations of evidence-based practices for implementation in Wisconsin that will result in positive outcomes for infants and toddlers with delays and disabilities, with an emphasis on black, brown, indigenous, and non-English speaking families; this work will be completed by June 2022.
- Developing a plan for professional development and implementation of the identified evidence-based practices, which includes training, resources to support implementation, and long-term strategies for sustainability using the current training and coaching system; this work will be completed by June 2023.
- Identifying, collecting, measuring, and evaluating data to assess implementation, effectiveness, and performance and improving outcomes overall.

Throughout this initiative, the Research to Practice Project team will engage collaboratively with partners and stakeholders, including local programs, early intervention providers, and families of children who are participating or who have participated in the Birth to 3 Program.

### **Next Steps**

These activities will help to inform the restructure of Wisconsin's early intervention professional development system. The result of these efforts will be a reimagined professional development system supporting evidence-based practices through a highly trained and qualified local workforce that results in improved outcomes for children with delays and disabilities.

Over the next several weeks, an outreach plan will be developed to begin the activities detailed in this memo. Further information will be communicated from DHS and REsource to Birth to 3 Program administrators and coordinators.

### **Assistance**

Local Birth to 3 programs should direct questions regarding information in this memo to their [Birth to 3 Program Children and Family Program Specialist](#).