



## CASE STUDY

### Partnering with Purpose:

#### Strengthening Alignment between Guam's Maternal and Child Health Programs and the Child Care Sector

##### Guam Early Childhood Collaboration (ECC) Team Members:

Guam's ECC team included representatives from the following organizations:

- [Title V Maternal and Child Health](#) (MCH) and [Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting](#) programs (one team member represented both programs)
- [Preschool Development Grant](#) Birth to 5 program
- [Guam's Family Health Information Resource Center](#)
- [Guam Early Learning Council](#)

##### Background:

Guam's Title V MCH; Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV); Guam Preschool Development Grant, Birth-5 (PDG B-5); and the Family Health Information Resource Center (FHIRC) programs are all housed within Guam's Department of Public Health and Social Services. The Guam Early Learning Council (GELC) was established through Guam Public Law 31-62 to provide a coordinated framework involving all child-serving agencies and families representatives to develop a comprehensive system of supports for young children and their families. The Council is comprised of members appointed by the Governor of Guam that represent various government agencies and private organizations. The Council provides recommendations on effective policies supporting young children and has articulated the following jurisdiction-wide vision for early childhood systems:

***All of Guam's young children will have healthy minds, bodies, and spirits as the foundation for lifelong success.***

## Journey to Accelerate Improvements in Early Childhood Outcomes through Enhanced Collaboration

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Guam ECC team completed the entire intensive technical assistance opportunity virtually. To be mindful of online meeting fatigue, the “first stop” was split into a series of three, two-and-a-half hour meetings.

### **Deciding on a shared destination (priority).**

The members of the Guam ECC team embarked on this journey with the advantage of having a history of close collaborative relationships across their respective programs. The team decided to leverage this existing strength and focus on building partnerships with stakeholders outside of their immediate MCH network. They also came to a consensus on their priority: to build MCH program partnerships with Guam’s child care sector.

The team selected this priority because it was closely aligned with Guam’s jurisdiction-wide vision for early childhood systems promoting equitable access to high quality child care across all settings, including geographically remote areas of the island. After selecting this priority, the team strategically chose to focus on strengthening their partnership with Guam’s Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) program. A partnership with CCDF is a logical choice because CCDF priorities are centered on equitable access to high quality child care. Guam’s CCDF is also housed under the Department of Public Health and Social Services, making this shared priority more feasible. The CCDF program is administered by the Office of Child Care (OCC) and provides funding to state, territory, and tribal governments to support children and their families who are juggling work schedules and struggling to find child care programs that fit their needs and prepare their children to succeed in school. For more information on the CCDF program, visit the [OCC’s website](#).

### **Identifying and mapping the early childhood system actors.**

Once the Guam ECC team decided to focus their priority on building a partnership with Guam’s CCDF program, they plotted the network of Guam’s early childhood stakeholders and focused on identifying those that might serve as a bridge to key CCDF program staff. After completing the exercise, the Guam ECC team identified specific allies to engage in their efforts to partner with Guam’s CCDF program.

### **Assessing the internal and external conditions for systems change.**

Moving into the third day of the “first stop” series, the Guam ECC team analyzed the systems conditions impeding their ability to partner with the CCDF program. Two specific conditions rose to the top of their concerns: relationships/connections and resource flows. During the system actor mapping activity, the Guam ECC team recognized that recent leadership and staff transitions within the CCDF program adversely impacted the level of connectivity that MCH programs previously enjoyed with CCDF program staff and agency heads. Regarding the flow of resources, the Guam ECC team recognized that a challenge for the CCDF program is implementing many complex activities with finite resources, including time and funding. The Guam team discussed at length the need to frame the value of a partnership with CCDF by underscoring the potential for MCH programs and their associated resources to contribute to and accelerate the achievement of CCDF program’s priorities.

### Fueling up for Action Planning.

Recognizing the need to understand the overall goals and purpose of CCDF funding, the Guam ECC team requested a “CCDF 101” training session to learn more about how they could frame their MCH work in terms of CCDF program priorities. AMCHP staff collaborated with staff at the [National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance](#) to deliver a webinar for the Guam ECC team on the basics of CCDF programs, including the goals and benchmarks that all CCDF programs must achieve. The National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance priorities include advancing strong health and safety standards and licensing regulations that align with CCDF and Head Start Programs. For more information on CCDF programs, visit the [“Fundamentals of CCDF Administration”](#) website.

### Where the Rubber Meets the Road—Action Planning for Next Steps.

Once the Guam ECC team had a better understanding of CCDF program priorities, they began to build a concrete action plan, affectionately titled “Welcome to the Neighborhood” (as an ode to Mr. Rogers) for initiating a partnership with the CCDF program over the next several months. The action plan includes timelines and person(s) responsible for advancing each activity. A major aim of the draft action plan is to cultivate a relationship with CCDF program staff. The ultimate goal for the ECC team is to provide input and implementation support for Guam’s 2022–2025 CCDF Plan.

#### The major areas of work for the “Welcome to the Neighborhood” action plan include:

- **Creating a blueprint for establishing relationships.** This step includes planning initial outreach to CCDF program staff and finalizing logistical details for a first meeting between the Guam ECC team and CCDF. The Guam ECC team decided that a meet-and-greet style meeting is appropriate for an initial touchpoint. The team also planned to spend time during this phase of the action plan to identify outcome goals for this partnership.
- **Laying the foundation for partnership.** This step includes hosting the meet-and-greet with key CCDF staff. During the meeting, the Guam ECC team envisioned an agenda as follows:
  - Share the reason for convening and the goal of partnership
  - Present short overviews of each program represented at the meet-and-greet
  - Reach a consensus on the next steps for moving the partnership forward in a way that is mutually beneficial and streamlines and creates more efficiency across programs
- **Opening the doors to a BBQ and fiesta.** In Guam, BBQs and fiestas are a common way to gather; they often serve as a space to grow and nurture community. The Guam ECC team believed that the next step in relationship building included focusing on how they could support the CCDF program, their early childhood system “neighbor.”



More specifically, the Guam ECC team chose to focus this next step on analyzing how their respective MCH programs could contribute to Guam's upcoming 2022–2025 CCDF Plan activities. This included planning for and implementing a follow-up to the meet-and-greet. Initial thoughts for an agenda for the follow-up meeting included:

- A deep dive into the Guam CCDF's program initial thoughts for their 2022–2025 CCDF Plan to uncover opportunities for alignment with MCH programs moving forward.
- Learning the unique needs of the Guam CCDF program and areas MCH programs might be able to support.
  - For example, the CCDF program has requirements for family partnership, and MCH programs in Guam have established strong family partnerships that the CCDF program could leverage.
- **Looking to other opportunities—the next street over.** Once a partnership has been established, the Guam ECC team plans to welcome and invite the CCDF team to the Guam Early Learning Council (GELC) to connect and align Guam's CCDF program with Guam's broader early childhood vision and state plan. Doing so is a way to continue collaboration not just with MCH, but with all stakeholders represented on the Guam Early Learning Council.

### Maintaining the Collaborative Momentum.

During the action planning meeting, the Guam ECC team agreed on several mechanisms for continued collaboration:

- Leverage the first 30 minutes of an established weekly meeting to review progress on the drafted action plan
- Re-establish a previously set up WhatsApp group chat to allow for real-time communications
- Request time on the quarterly GELC meeting agendas to engage GELC members in this work.

**In the 30 days since drafting the action plan,** the Guam team met with the acting CCDF program coordinator. As a result of this meeting, a “think tank” was formed that includes MCH, Guam's Family Health Information Resource Center, and other early childhood program administrators. The purpose of the think tank is to work collaboratively on Guam's CCDF State Plan for 2022–2025. This think tank meets biweekly and reviews input provided to the draft Guam's 2022-2025 CCDF State Plan.



### STATE PERSPECTIVE:

## The Value of Collaboration.

From the perspective of Guam's MCH programs, focusing on improving collaboration with their CCDF colleagues is essential for striving toward a seamless system of services and supports for Guam's young children, their families, and the providers that care for them.



**In the eighteen months since drafting the action plan,** Guam's Governor signed an executive order that created a new Division of Children's Wellness (DCW) within the Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS). The new DCW houses two Bureaus within Public Health – the Bureau of Social Services Administration (BOSSA) / Child Protective Services (CPS) and the newly created Bureau of Child Care Services (BCCS) / Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Block Grant program, and the Preschool Development Grant, Birth-5 (PDG B-5), an original member of the Guam ECC team. Since the creation of the new DCW, collaborative meetings between the DCW leadership team and the GELC have resulted in the discussion, planning, and decisions on several important issues including professional development, coordinated enrollment and eligibility, data collection, policies and procedures, and more. Notably, it was agreed that coordination of the use of CCDF training and professional development funds for childcare centers would be coordinated by GELC's chairperson with support from the PDG B-5 program. This collaboration is happening now as BCCS and PDG B-5 work together to provide the evidence-based Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum training for the child care centers and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programs of Guam Early Intervention System (GEIS) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). Guam's MCH program also partners to promote increased knowledge of the early childhood service providers and child care center teachers and staff, to identify opportunities for alignment and collaboration, and assists in seeking additional revenue sources to sustain the programs. The Guam ECC team continues to build on their partnership with the CCDF program and enjoys a strong working relationship with consistent communication via WhatsApp, telephone call, messenger apps, and an interagency calendar for all early childhood programs.