

# Three Circles Of Evidence-Based Decision-Making In Early Childhood

A collective goal in early childhood is focusing on “what works”—finding and using interventions backed by evidence to achieve desired results for children and their families. *Three Circles of Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Early Childhood* is a resource to help you use multiple sources of evidence to determine an intervention’s effectiveness. It presents steps in an evidence-based decision-making process to collect and integrate information from multiple sources, make decisions based on that information, and plan for implementation and evaluation.

## Three Circles of Evidence

Consider information from three primary sources to determine whether specific interventions are evidence-based: best available research evidence, family wisdom and values, and professional wisdom and values.

### The Best Available Research Evidence

research evidence showing if the intervention resulted in positive and meaningful impacts on desired outcomes

### Family Wisdom & Values

the experiences, beliefs, values, priorities, and perspectives of families as these relate to a specific intervention

### Professional Wisdom & Values

the experiences, beliefs, values, priorities, and perspectives of practitioners as these relate to a specific intervention

# Steps Of Evidence-Based Decision-Making

The following steps offer a process for integrating multiple perspectives and sources of evidence.

1

## Define your question

Include the following elements in your question:

- (a) characteristics of children and families,
- (b) type of intervention, and
- (c) desired child or family outcomes

Formulate the question like this: For children and families with X characteristics, will Y intervention be effective in achieving Z outcomes?

2

## Consider the evidence

Gather information from all three circles of evidence (See Resources List).



### Best Available Research Evidence

- Search websites that provide intervention effectiveness summaries to identify potential interventions in early childhood.
- Judge the research evidence for these interventions in terms of impacts on outcomes of interest and relevance for children and families that would participate in this intervention.



### Family Wisdom and Values

- Consider consensus documents such as position statements and practice guides to tap into families' collective wisdom and values.
- Consider the individual values, experiences, and priorities of the families with whom you work who would be participating in this intervention.



### Professional Wisdom and Values

- Consider consensus documents such as position statements, program and professional standards, and practice guides to tap into the field's collective wisdom and values.
- Consider your own values, experiences, and priorities to tap into your professional wisdom and values.

3

## Determine if an intervention meets the FAIR test

The sum of evidence from the Three Circles may point to one or more strong interventions. Examine each candidate intervention to determine if it is **FAIR**, that is **F**easible to implement, **A**ceptable to families/professionals, effective in producing a positive **I**mpact, and **R**elevant for your identified context. If an intervention does not meet all the **FAIR** criteria, you may need to revisit one or more of the Circles to look for new evidence or consider different practices/strategies/programs.

4

## Make an Evidence-Based Decision

Once you have identified one or more interventions that meet the **FAIR** test, combine and consider all the information you have gathered, make a decision, and begin planning for implementation and evaluation.

# Resources

## Best Available Research Evidence Websites

### Sites with Rigorous Review Standards for Evaluating Evidence

---

California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare  
[www.cebc4cw.org](http://www.cebc4cw.org)

Campbell Collaboration Systematic Reviews  
[www.campbellcollaboration.org/library.html](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/library.html)

Cochrane  
[www.cochranelibrary.com/home/topic-and-review-group-list.html](http://www.cochranelibrary.com/home/topic-and-review-group-list.html)

Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness  
[homvee.acf.hhs.gov/models.aspx](http://homvee.acf.hhs.gov/models.aspx)

National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices  
[nrepp.samhsa.gov/AdvancedSearch.aspx](http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/AdvancedSearch.aspx)

Social Programs That Work, Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy  
[evidencebasedprograms.org/policy\\_area/prenatal-earlychildhood/](http://evidencebasedprograms.org/policy_area/prenatal-earlychildhood/)

What Works Clearinghouse  
[ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FWW/Index](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FWW/Index)

### Other Aggregating Sites

---

Child Welfare Information Gateway  
[www.childwelfare.gov/](http://www.childwelfare.gov/)

Compendium of Parenting Interventions  
[eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/compendium-of-parenting.pdf](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/compendium-of-parenting.pdf)

ERIC  
[eric.ed.gov](http://eric.ed.gov)

National Child Traumatic Stress Network on Empirically Supported Treatments and Promising Practices  
[www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/treatments-that-work/promising-practices](http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/treatments-that-work/promising-practices)

Promising Practices Network  
[www.promisingpractices.net/programs\\_evidence.asp](http://www.promisingpractices.net/programs_evidence.asp)

Self-Regulation and Toxic Stress Report 3: A Comprehensive Review of Self-Regulation Interventions from Birth through Young Adulthood.  
[www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/self-regulation-and-toxic-stress-report-3](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/self-regulation-and-toxic-stress-report-3)

Self-Regulation and Toxic Stress Report 4: Implications for Programs and Practice  
[www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/self-regulation-and-toxic-stress-implications-for-programs-and-practice](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/self-regulation-and-toxic-stress-implications-for-programs-and-practice)

### Interventions with Emerging Research Evidence

---

Bridging the Word Gap National Research Network  
[www.bwgresnet.res.ku.edu/](http://www.bwgresnet.res.ku.edu/)

Hanen Programs for Educators  
[www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Research.aspx](http://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Research.aspx)

Igniting Young Children's Communication Skills  
[fpg.unc.edu/news/fpgs-free-guide-igniting-young-childrens-communication-skills-reaches-yet-another-milestone](http://fpg.unc.edu/news/fpgs-free-guide-igniting-young-childrens-communication-skills-reaches-yet-another-milestone)

Make the Connection  
[psychologyfoundation.org/Public/Programs/First\\_Three\\_Years-Make\\_the\\_Connection/Public/Programs/Make\\_the\\_Connection/Make\\_The\\_Connection.aspx](http://psychologyfoundation.org/Public/Programs/First_Three_Years-Make_the_Connection/Public/Programs/Make_the_Connection/Make_The_Connection.aspx)

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports  
[www.pbis.org/community/early-childhood](http://www.pbis.org/community/early-childhood)

Promoting Communication with Infants and Toddlers - Tools for Advancing Language in Kids  
[www.talk.ku.edu/promoting-communication-with-infants-and-toddlers-project/](http://www.talk.ku.edu/promoting-communication-with-infants-and-toddlers-project/)

Recognition and Response  
[randr.fpg.unc.edu/](http://randr.fpg.unc.edu/)

Response to Intervention  
[www.rti4success.org/](http://www.rti4success.org/)

Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children  
[challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/do/resources.htm](http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/do/resources.htm)

# Family Wisdom and Values Websites

Family Voices  
[org2.salsalabs.com/o/6739/t/11331/shop/shop.jsp?storefront\\_KEY=347](http://org2.salsalabs.com/o/6739/t/11331/shop/shop.jsp?storefront_KEY=347)

Hands and Voices  
[www.handsandvoices.org/resources/docs.htm](http://www.handsandvoices.org/resources/docs.htm)

Parent Technical Assistance Centers  
[www.parentcenterhub.org/ptacs/](http://www.parentcenterhub.org/ptacs/)  
[www.parentcenterhub.org/parent-participation-ei/](http://www.parentcenterhub.org/parent-participation-ei/)  
[www.parentcenterhub.org/resourcelibrary/](http://www.parentcenterhub.org/resourcelibrary/)

# Professional Wisdom and Values Websites

American Academy of Pediatrics  
[pediatrics.aappublications.org/collection/council-children-disabilities](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/collection/council-children-disabilities)

American Occupational Therapy Association  
[www.aota.org/Practice/Children-Youth/Evidence-based.aspx](http://www.aota.org/Practice/Children-Youth/Evidence-based.aspx)

American Physical Therapy Association  
[www.apta.org/EvidenceResearch/](http://www.apta.org/EvidenceResearch/)

American Psychological Association  
[www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/evidence-based-statement.aspx](http://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/evidence-based-statement.aspx)

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association  
[www.asha.org/Research/EBP/](http://www.asha.org/Research/EBP/)

Division for Early Childhood (DEC)  
[www.dec-sped.org/](http://www.dec-sped.org/)  
[divisionearlychildhood.egnyte.com/dl/tgv6GUXhVo](http://divisionearlychildhood.egnyte.com/dl/tgv6GUXhVo)

Head Start Early Childhood Learning Center (ECLKC)  
[eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/)

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)  
[www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements](http://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements)

National Association of Social Workers  
[www.socialworkers.org/News/Research-Data/Social-Work-Policy-Research/Evidence-Based-Practice](http://www.socialworkers.org/News/Research-Data/Social-Work-Policy-Research/Evidence-Based-Practice)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
[www.cdc.gov/DiseasesConditions/](http://www.cdc.gov/DiseasesConditions/)

National Head Start Association (NHSA)  
[www.nhsa.org/center/effective-practice](http://www.nhsa.org/center/effective-practice)

Zero to Three (ZTT)  
[www.zerotothree.org/resources](http://www.zerotothree.org/resources)

# Reference Documents

Buyse, V. & Wesley, P. W. (2006). Evidence-based practice: How did it emerge and what does it really mean for the early childhood field? In V. Buyse & P. Wesley (Eds.), *Evidence-based practice in the early childhood field* (pp. 1-34). Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE.

Buyse, V., Winton, P. J., Rous, B., Epstein, D. J., & Lim, C-I. (2012). Evidence-based practice: Foundation for the CONNECT 5-Step Learning Cycle in professional development. *Zero to Three Journal*, 32(4), 25-29.

Division for Early Childhood (DEC) (2014). *DEC recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education 2014*. Retrieved from [www.dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices](http://www.dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices).

DEC (2017). Position Statement on Challenging Behavior and Young Children. Arlington, VA: Author. Retrieved 8/23/17 from [www.dec-sped.org/position-statements](http://www.dec-sped.org/position-statements).

Rock, L. & Crow, S. (2017). *Too Small to Fail: Not just "Soft Skills": How young children's learning & health benefit from strong social-emotional development*. New York, NY and Berkeley, CA: Clinton Foundation and Opportunity Institute. Available from [toosmall.org/resources/TSTF-SED-Whitepaper.pdf](http://toosmall.org/resources/TSTF-SED-Whitepaper.pdf). Retrieved 8/23/17.

Sackett, D. L., Rosenberg, W. M. C., Gray, J. A. M., Haynes, R. B., & Richardson, W. S. (1996). Evidence-based medicine: What it is and what it isn't. *British Medical Journal*, 312, 71-72.

Suggested Citation: National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI) (2018). *Three Circles of Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Early Childhood*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

## About This Resource

© 2018 by WestEd—National Center for Systemic Improvement. All rights reserved. This resource was developed by the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI), a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, #H326R14006, including Monica Mathur-Kalluri (WestEd), Taletha Derrington (American Institutes for Research), Angela McGuire (WestEd), and Virginia Buyse (American Institutes for Research). The contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government. Project Officers: Perry Williams and Shedah Hajhgassem (November 2014).