



2026 Social Work Conference

Family Engagement: Strengthening Practice, Building Connections, Driving Results

March 10-12, 2026

Columbus Marriott Northwest 5605 Paul G. Blazer Memorial Parkway, Dublin, Ohio 43017

Head Start families are significantly impacted by increasingly complex systems, issues and structures. Staff must possess an understanding of human and professional dynamics and apply expert skills in engaging and partnering with families and community partners. Highly qualified presenters from diverse areas of academia and social service will help participants understand the unique issues faced by the families we serve, the provision of services within Head Start's Performance Standards framework, and engage participants in strategies to improve their professional practice by strengthening relationships and building skills.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES:

- Participants will increase understanding of cultural and societal issues that impact families and individuals.
- Participants will explore components of effective parent engagement and apply principles to their individual practice.
- Participants will practice skills that will increase their effectiveness in working with families

WHO SHOULD ATTEND:

Individuals who work closely with families such as Family Services Staff, Supervisors and Home Visitors, and especially those who are responsible for assisting families in setting and achieving goals.

Conference has been submitted to the Ohio Counselor, Social Worker and Marriage & Family Therapist Board for 15 CPEs for **Social Workers and Counselors**.

<i>Tuesday, March 10</i>	<i>Wednesday, March 11</i>	<i>Thursday, March 12</i>
8:30 am to 10:00 am Registration	8:45 am to 10:15 am Concurrent Sessions	8:45 am to 10:15 am Concurrent Sessions
10:00 am to 12:00 pm General Session	10:15 am to 10:30 am Break	10:15 am to 10:30 am Break
12:00 pm to 1:00 pm Luncheon	10:30 am to 12:00 pm Concurrent Sessions cont.	10:30 am to 12:00 pm Concurrent Sessions cont.
1:00 pm to 2:30 pm Concurrent Sessions	12:00 pm to 1:15 pm Lunch on your own	12:00 pm to 1:00 pm Luncheon
2:30 pm to 2:45 pm Break	1:15 pm to 2:45 pm Concurrent Sessions	1:00 pm to 2:00 pm Keynote Address
2:45 pm to 4:15 pm Concurrent Sessions cont.	2:45 pm to 3:00 pm Break	
	3:00 pm to 4:30 pm Concurrent Sessions cont.	
TOTAL HOURS: 5	TOTAL HOURS: 6	TOTAL HOURS: 4

Tuesday, March 10

10:00 am to 12:00 pm

General Session

Engaging Conversations that Support Reflection, Growth, and Change

2 CPEs/*0.2 CEUs/OA for 2 hrs

Colleen Wallace, M.S., ECMH-C and Kristen Bortle, M.A., LSW; Nationwide Children's Hospital

This professional development session equips early childhood professionals with the principles and techniques of Motivational Interviewing (MI) to foster collaboration, strengthen family partnerships, and support positive change in children's learning and behavior. Participants will learn how to use MI's core skills—Open-ended questions, Affirmations, Reflective listening, and Summarizing (OARS)—to engage parents and colleagues in respectful, goal-oriented conversations. Through case studies, role-play, and reflective practice, attendees will apply MI strategies to real-world early learning situations, including family engagement, behavior support, and developmental goal setting. The training emphasizes MI's adaptability across diverse settings such as classrooms, home visiting, early intervention, and administrative leadership.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify and describe the four core communication skills of Motivational Interviewing (OARS) and explain their role in promoting collaborative problem-solving with families and colleagues
2. Apply MI strategies to a variety of early childhood scenarios to support behavior change, goal-setting, and problem-solving with parents and team members



12:00 pm to 1:00 pm

Luncheon (provided)

1:00 pm to 4:15 pm

Breakout Sessions

Creating Teamwork and Motivating Staff

Colleen Wallace, M.S., ECMH-C and Katy Carpenter, MSW, LISW-S, ECMH-C; Nationwide Children's Hospital

3 CPEs/*0.3 CEUs/Submitted for 2.5 OA hrs

Through lectures, discussion, role plays, and small group activities, participants will become familiar with the concept of teamwork, strategies to create a cohesive staff, strategies to work through conflict, and strategies employing incentives to bring out the best in staff and as a result, improve practice and promote positive outcomes in family services.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Articulate one positive about working in teams and one negative about working in teams, as well as one way they can become a better team player
2. Develop a mission statement suitable to their organization as well as recognize their own needs
3. Analyze the structure of their organization and classify the organization in terms of the 5 stages of developing teams

Supporting Foster and Kinship Families

Dr. Christine Cross

3 CPEs/*0.3 CEUs

This training is designed to assist Head Start professionals with practical skills and strategies for supporting foster and kinship families. It covers an overview of the child welfare system, the impact of stress and disruption on young children, effective methods for partnering with caregivers and child welfare professionals.

Participants will strengthen communication skills, apply developmentally appropriate strategies, and identify resources and policies to promote stability and continuity for children and families.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Define foster care and kinship care and explain how they intersect with early childhood education settings
2. Identify common stress responses and developmental impacts experienced by children in foster and kinship care
3. Apply research-informed and responsive strategies in classroom and program settings
4. Identify ways to strengthen communication and collaboration with foster and kinship caregivers
5. Identify resources and policies that support stability, inclusion, and well-being for children and families

The Dynamics of the Abusive Partner-Parent in Intimate Partner Violence

Sonia Ferencik, LISW-S, Ohio Domestic Violence Network

3 CPEs/*0.3 CEUs

This session explores the multifaceted impact of domestic violence or intimate partner violence (IPV), focusing on the perpetrator's role as a partner and their use of coercive control as a means of harm and abuse. Central to this discussion is how an abusive partner utilizes the roles of parenting to undermine the victimized caregiver's authority, emotional availability, and stability. Partners who harm engage in manipulation, intimidation, and fear-based tactics that not only isolate the victimized partner/parent but also create an emotionally unpredictable environment for children.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify patterns of harm and coercive control, including emotional abuse, physical violence, intimidation, financial abuse, sexual harm, technology-facilitated abuse, and threats to personal safety
2. Describe three tactics an abusive person utilizes to undermine a victimized caregiver's authority and emotional well-being and examine the impact of these behaviors on children's emotional safety, toxic stress, and developmental outcomes
3. Identify three constructive strategies to support and ally with the victimized parent, including connection to resources and collaborative safety planning

Wednesday, March 11

8:45 am to 12:00 pm Concurrent Sessions

Control, Connection and Meaning: Why A Trauma Competent Approach

THIS SESSION WILL REPEAT ON WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

Kim Kehl, M.Ed, and Tara Shook, LSW, Ohio Department of Children and Youth

3 CPEs/*0.3 CEUs

A trauma-competent approach is essential for several reasons: Understanding Trauma: It provides a deeper understanding of the physical and emotional impact of traumatic experiences. It helps in Creating a Safe Environment for healing, which is crucial for individuals who have experienced trauma. Trauma-competent care empowers individuals to embody safety and healing through activities designed to teach and help them live it out. A trauma competent approach helps in Preventing Re-traumatization by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, trauma-informed care actively resists re-traumatization, promoting recovery and strength. These principles are integral to providing effective and respectful care for the people we serve and ourselves, ensuring that all receive the support they need to heal and thrive.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify how trauma impacts a child or youth's ability to participate in life, cooperate with others and maintain meaningful and safe connections
2. Identify the Ten Essential Elements of Dignity and how those elements can promote healing and resiliency in youths with trauma histories
3. Articulate how listening to accounts of trauma impacts how helping professionals think about themselves, their work and their world

The Foundations of Family Engagement - PFCE Framework 101

THIS SESSION WILL REPEAT ON THURSDAY MORNING

Tammy Riley, MS, STG International

3 CPEs/*0.3 CEUs/OA for 3 hours

The Office of Head Start (OHS) has prioritized Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) as an essential piece of our work to promote optimal health and learning in all children. The PFCE Framework is a road map for progress in achieving the kinds of outcomes that lead to positive and enduring change for children and families. It is a research-based approach to program change that shows how an agency can work together as a whole — across systems and service areas — to promote parent and family engagement and children's learning development. In this session, we will explore ways that programs can use this content to assess and enhance their high-quality services to children and families.

Learning Outcomes;

1. Deepening understanding of the OHS PFCE Framework
2. Exploring family involvement and family engagement
3. Explore cross-cutting strategies to implement the PFCE Framework in your program

Reflective Supervision

Erin Finley, LISW-S, ECMH-C, OIMHP-III, Hopewell Health Centers

3 CPEs/*0.3 CEUs

Historically, leaders in the field began to discuss the need for this style of reflective supervision(RS) when programs for infants, toddlers, and their families began to emerge in the 1990s. Since then, RS and practices have been written into Ohio's state competencies for individuals working with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. At the conclusion of the workshop, participants will have a working definition of RS, understand the essential skills and knowledge needed to practice RS as well as the various roles a RS holds, skills to address supervisory dilemmas that may occur, and how RS aligns with Head Start and NASW best practices.

This workshop is designed to meet the State of Ohio Counselor and Social Worker and Marriage and Family Therapist Board requirement for 3 CPE's for Supervision.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Define Reflective Supervision
2. Identify skills and knowledge needed to practice Reflective Supervision
3. Apply Reflective Supervision to supervisory and Head Start family service scenarios

Ethical Practice & Professional Boundaries

THIS SESSION WILL REPEAT ON WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

David Zidar, LISW-S

3 CPEs/*0.3 CEUs

This workshop provides family serving staff the skills to improve communication with families, colleagues and other stakeholders. It provides professionals with an understanding of the limits that they must put upon themselves in their helping relationships. This training provides actual case examples and process of ethical relationship situations. Both the new and more mature staff can benefit from this core skill of all professional "helpers."

This workshop is designed to meet the State of Ohio Counselor and Social Worker and Marriage and Family Therapist Board requirement for 3 CPE's for ethics.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify the role of setting limits on themselves and others in preventing boundary violations
2. Identify key components of the NASW Code of Ethics
3. Identify common boundary violations
4. Demonstrate strategies manage common "awkward" situations

12:00 pm to 1:15 pm

Lunch (on your own)

1:15 pm to 4:30 pm

Concurrent Sessions

Growing your Well-being Garden:

Exploring Resilience and Reflection with Family Service Professionals

Tammy Riley, MS, STG International

3 CPEs/*0.3 CEUs

Join us to discuss fostering connection, a sense of well-being, and building collective resilience by providing support to families and staff. In this session, the tools and strategies to embrace staff with open hearts while connecting to foundational parent, family, and community engagement (PFCE) content will be highlighted. PFCE resources will be integrated in the discussion of wellness to support the day-to-day work of family services managers and staff as they develop successful partnerships with families.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Explore foundational concepts related to trauma and their impact on adult relationships and Family Services staff's well-being
2. Outline seven strategies to inspire reflection, healing, and workforce well-being
3. Create a staff wellness action plan

Holding the Center: Trauma-Informed Leadership Practices for Times of Uncertainty

Patrick McKelvey, MSCP, LPCC, NCC and Pitty Jennings, LSW, ECMHC, OIFP-II, QBHS

3 CPEs/*0.3 CEUs/OA for 3 hours

Periods of change (organizational, relational, or systemic) place significant cognitive and emotional demands on early learning leaders. This in-depth session examines how leadership styles, stages of change, and adult stress responses interact to influence staff morale, decision-making, and implementation fidelity in early childhood settings.

Participants will explore trauma-informed leadership principles through the lens of adult development and resiliency science, with attention to how stress, uncertainty, and cumulative strain impact leadership behavior. Practical tools for self-regulation, relational repair, and adaptive leadership will be introduced, alongside structured opportunities for reflection and peer dialogue. The session culminates in guided personal planning time, during which participants create a measurable, values-aligned action plan to support themselves and their teams through change - grounded in realistic capacity, compassion, and sustainability.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Analyze how 1-2 leadership styles and stages of change influence staff regulation, engagement, and responsiveness during periods of transition
2. Apply 2-3 trauma-informed and resiliency-based strategies to support adult regulation, relational trust, and psychological safety within their teams
3. Design a personalized, measurable action plan that integrates trauma-informed leadership principles into daily supervisory and organizational practices

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Thursday, March 12

8:45 am to 12:00 pm **Breakout Sessions**

Strengthening Parent-Professional Relationships: A Brain Smart Approach

Amy Armstrong, LISW

3 CPEs/*0.3 CEUs

Families often resist change and stay stuck in self-defeating patterns, even when everyone wants things to improve. They begin to change when they feel understood, capable, and safe enough to try something new. This breakout session helps Head Start professionals understand why family stress, conflict roles, and emotional overload keep families stuck, and how to recognize these patterns without taking them on. Participants will learn practical, brain-informed tools and simple “what” and “how” questions that reduce pressure, increase engagement, and support lasting family partnerships while protecting their own energy.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify 3–5 common family roles that contribute to conflict and resistance to change.
2. Describe 2–4 key brain heuristics that shape how families respond to stress and support.
3. List 5–7 “what” and “how” coaching questions that reduce defensiveness and increase family engagement.
4. Identify 1 immediate, practical action step participants can apply to strengthen family partnerships while maintaining healthy professional boundaries.

Building Resilience Through Self-Care

Karen S. Vadino, MSW, LPCC

3 CPEs/*0.3 CEUs

Self-care is taking actions that will improve our overall health. This session examines self-care as an essential component of competent social work and family services practice; it is about managing our health in order to better cope with daily stressors and care for those we live, work and socialize with. Practical, evidence-informed strategies will be presented to support ongoing effectiveness across multiple domains of health.

Self-care may be difficult to maintain but will be well worth our efforts.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Define self-care in relation to professional competence
2. Name at least 4 of the domains of health
3. Name at least 3 benefits of self-care related to professional effectiveness
4. Recognize the connection between self-care and wellness
5. Identify resources and apply practical self-care strategies relevant to social work and family services roles

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Learning Outcomes

1. Deepening understanding of the OHS PFCE Framework
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3. Explore cross-cutting strategies to implement the PFCE Framework in your program

12:00 pm to 1:00 pm **Luncheon (provided)**

1:00 pm to 2:00 pm

Keynote Address



Amy Armstrong

Amy Armstrong is a conflict-resolution expert and coach educator based in Columbus, Ohio. She holds degrees from Miami University and The Ohio State University, with advanced training from Harvard Law School's Program on Negotiation and George Mason University's Leadership Coaching Program. As founder of the Center for Family Resolution and the Center for Coach Development, she has spent fifteen years helping families, courts, and professionals transform high conflict into honest, effective interactions with clarity and compassion. Her work has been featured in The New York Times, USA Today, Parents Magazine, and major broadcast networks. After overcoming her own experiences with chronic conflict, Amy discovered that healthy boundaries grounded in emotional regulation and self-leadership create lasting connection and personal authority. She now teaches this transformative framework to parents, leaders, and organizations worldwide.

The Courage to Keep Showing Up

Amy Armstrong, LISW

1 CPEs/*0.1 CEUs

Head Start professionals are asked to do extraordinary work inside deeply imperfect systems. This keynote names the emotional weight of that responsibility—and challenges a common myth: that change comes from fixing families. Instead, Amy Armstrong reframes leadership as the ability to stay grounded, clear, and human under pressure. Drawing from neuroscience, habit formation, and field-tested experience, she invites participants to see where their real power lies: not in control or compliance, but in presence, influence, and consistency.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Name a personal purpose and professional identity within the realities of Head Start work and system-level constraints.
2. Identify 3–5 practical strategies to influence family change without over-functioning or burning out.
3. Describe 3 internal shifts in mindset and behavior that create impact with families and systems.
4. Practice 2–3 grounding strategies to stay steady, connected, and effective under pressure.

OHSAl Professional Development

For more information about CEUs and OHSAl's Professional Development policies and practices, visit www.ohsai.org/professional-development-information/

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These sessions are approved for IACET CEUs.
IACET CEUs may count toward Ohio Approved credit.



Sessions submitted or approved for Ohio Approved hours
will require participants OPIN # to be requested and your participation will be recorded in the Ohio Professional Registry after the session is completed.