

An evaluation report submitted to the McKnight Foundation

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# **The Pathways to Quality Project by the Center for Inclusive Child Care: An evaluation report**

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January, 2010

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## **The Pathways to Quality Project by the Center for Inclusive Child Care: An evaluation report**

October, 2009

### Executive Summary

The Center for Inclusive Child Care was funded by the McKnight Foundation to increase access to high quality information and trainings on best practices in the inclusion of children with disabilities. Right now in Minnesota, this need is especially great in the more remote areas of the state, with families and child care professionals who have a linguistic barrier that prevents them from accessing the necessary training and services, and with school age populations. Already posed to provide high quality trainings through a Train the Trainer model, the Center for Inclusive Child Care (CICC) focused on improving the delivery system for their services and developing innovative techniques for reaching these audiences.

The four primary strategies in the Pathways to Quality Project that were used to increase access to high quality information and trainings were to: 1. Increase both the opportunities to get professional development and the number of trainers that were available to train other child care professionals and parents on best practices, with a particular focus on trainers from a number of non-English speaking communities such as Somali, Hmong, and Spanish; 2. Update and add high quality content on inclusion and resources regarding inclusion in multiple languages, with special attention paid to providers serving school age children, to their website, an easily accessible source of training and information; 3. Create a dynamic online community to provide ongoing support and resources for those accessing the courses and content on the website; and 4. Improve and create intentional partnerships with organizations also working towards similar goals.

Over the course of the two year project, the CICC was very successful in meeting its goals. Ninety-seven additional trainers took Train the Trainer courses, including 16 non-English speaking trainers. Over twice as many professionals and parents accessed trainings offered through the CICC in 2008 and 2009 (n = 5100) as did in the year prior to the start of the project. A specialized inclusion training cadre was developed to target geographically isolated areas of the state, and participated in ongoing training and support to reach those child care professionals who most need the information. Furthermore, the effort to reach non-English speaking populations, especially Somali, Hmong and Spanish speaking providers, parents and organizations, was especially successful. The CICC increased the number of non-English speaking trainers, increased the numbers of non-English speaking professionals and parents accessing trainings and information, and created new partnerships with organization that serve non-English speaking child care professionals and parents. In addition, several resources were added and updated on the website, including the development of chat rooms and discussion boards for courses, the technology to support podcasts, and the creation of podcasts that went live on the site in fall of 2009. The focus on serving professionals serving school age children was also successful, reaching over 800 school age child care professionals, and updating and creating new content appropriate for school age providers. Finally,

the CICC also demonstrated success in creating partnerships within the existing system in Minnesota at local, state and national levels, including with key organizations serving school age children and their child care providers.

## Project Description and Background

According to a recent research study by Chase and colleagues (Chase, Arnold, Schauben, & Shardlow, 2005) for the Minnesota Department of Health, more than 1 in 6 children in Minnesota age 12 and younger has a special need that affects their child care according to their parents, and the rates are even higher among children age 6 through 12 versus the youngest children (22% versus 14%). In Minnesota, that is more than 17,000 young children with assessed disabilities who may need some type of community care. Many more young children may have behavior challenges that have not yet been assessed and that impact child care placement. In addition, 39% of parents who have a child with special needs report that they ‘had to take whatever child care arrangement they could get,’ compared with 27% of parents whose children have no special needs (Chase et al., 2005). The same research study found that parents of children with special needs had fewer child care options than parents of children without special needs. And further, the providers of children were more likely to report difficulty meeting the needs of the children with disabilities in their care. In another study based on data from 40 states, pre-school children were expelled more often than elementary and high school children (Gilliam, 2005). According to similar data by the Foundation for Child Development Study (Mailman Foundation 2006), children expelled from preschool are at high risk for later school failure. Furthermore, in spite of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 10 percent of licensed family child care providers, one percent of centers, and 24 percent of preschools in Minnesota say they are not willing to care for children with special needs through the Child Care Assistance Program “‘now or ever” (Chase, Moore, Pierce, & Arnold, 2007). And even when early care and education settings are willing to take children with disabilities, teachers do not have the training or education to care for them (Maxwell, Lim & Early, 2006). With respect to school age children, Chase and colleagues (2007), report that 72% of programs report serving children with disabilities, none of them reported being unwilling to care for children with disabilities, and in focus groups with these providers, the most frequently identified need was further training on identifying “red flags” for children in their care. And all of these problems are even greater when access to training and education is limited because of geographic or linguistic limitations. Thus, the need for training and support to child care professionals by highly qualified inclusion/special needs trainers who can do the training and provide continued support in an on-going way is great in order for children to be identified for special education services, and included in natural settings and least restrictive environments.

The Center for Inclusive Child Care (CICC) is uniquely posed to meet the above identified needs, through providing training and support to child care and school age care providers and parents around the identification and inclusion of children with special needs. The CICC is a statewide network for promoting and supporting inclusive early childhood and school age programs and providers in Minnesota. This network provides leadership, administrative support, training and consultation to child care providers, parents and the professionals who support providers and parents of children with special needs. In order to effectively refer families, early childhood and school age practitioners need to have typical and atypical child development knowledge as well as local early intervention resource information, and tools for successfully

sharing developmental concerns with families. CICC has been providing training and support to child care providers and parents since 1996 using the curriculum *Project EXCEPTIONAL: A Guide to Training and Recruiting Child Care Providers to Serve Young Children with Disabilities*. Besides the original Project EXCEPTIONAL (PE) curriculum, there are several other CICC training curricula which have been written by CICC staff to meet expressed needs from the child care community including *Sensory Processing, Children and Challenging Behavior*, *The First Signs: Red Flags and Referral*, and *The Nurtured Heart Approach*. We use *Project EXCEPTIONAL training* to denote all CICC training.

The CICC trains child care providers through its cadre of state-wide inclusion trainers who offer training through the MN Child Care Resource and Referral (MN CCRR) system in each region of the state as well as at state, regional, and county/community level conferences. The CICC also works with the MN CCRR Eager to Learn online program to deliver Project EXCEPTIONAL training online to hundreds more child care providers and parents which ensures access by skilled CICC trainers to those who may not have face-to-face training opportunities in all geographic regions of the state. In addition, the CICC website contains up-to-date, tiered- training opportunities for child care providers in its *Learning Center* with more than thirty Info Modules and Self Study Courses, as well as 6 Train the Trainer Courses. Continuing to support trainers is a necessary component of offering quality training to child care providers. Through the website, the CICC supports trainers and child care providers by providing access to research and best-practice, up-to-date resources, a lending library, registration of their certifications, and the ability to find many handouts and deliverables. Finally, in response to needs expressed by child care providers, the CICC expanded training to child care professionals by offering an annual one day Inclusion conference at Concordia University beginning in 2005. The conference meets the need for some child care providers to receive quality training in one day and receive the 6 inservice hours needed for child care licensing.

The current McKnight project, the Pathways to Quality Project, was intended to expand and increase the services provided by the CICC, with the intention of reaching an increased number of school age child care professionals, in particular targeting under-served geographic areas of the state and professionals serving immigrant communities. As of 2007, more than 4,000 child care providers were trained face-to-face each year by the CICC trainers, and more than 3,300 people accessed the Info Modules at the CICC website. However, in Minnesota there are over 36,500 child care providers serving children in licensed family child care homes and child care centers who may need some type of special needs training (Chase, Moore, Pierce, & Arnold, 2007), thus more work is needed to increase opportunities for this type of training throughout the state. In addition, while the CICC offers training face-to-face across the state, there is a need to ensure that training is accessible to all child care providers in MN, particularly in immigrant communities where a language barrier may prevent providers and parents from being able to access the typical trainings offered. Beginning in January of 2008, the Pathways to Quality Project set out to achieve the following four goals over two years:

1. Increase child care professionals' knowledge and skills in order to increase opportunities for successful inclusion in least restrictive and natural settings and referrals to early intervention for young children birth to school age.

2. Ensure that inclusion trainers/consultants have access to quality, updated information and the skills to support early care educators and providers.
3. Involve trainers and CICC constituents in a dynamic interactive online community that supports inclusive pathways for children.
4. Identify and create intentional partnerships in all areas to support child care and families.

## Evaluation Design

The evaluation was designed to be a formative evaluation, using both qualitative and quantitative data. Information was gathered via the website, online surveys, and pre-post surveys used during trainings, as well as program data gathered on the number of participants in the face-to-face trainings and conferences, web statistics on the use of the website, and basic information on the number and types of trainings and supports offered. All information collected was anonymous and the number of participants in the various evaluation activities varies widely depending on the activity; therefore, information on the number of participants for each activity is included under the evaluation findings for each goal.

## Evaluation Results

### **Evaluation Question 1**

*Did the Pathways to Quality project increase child care professionals' knowledge and skills in order to increase opportunities for successful inclusion in least restrictive and natural settings and referrals to early intervention for young children birth to school age?*

In order to increase child care professionals' knowledge and skills, the Pathways to Quality Project worked to first increase access to training and professional development. The primary mechanisms through which the project worked to increase access, especially in underserved areas of the state and with underserved, linguistically diverse populations across the state, are described below, as is information about how successful these mechanisms were in reaching the intended populations.

1. The one-day Inclusion Institute for child care providers, parents of children with special needs, and early childhood special education that offers a variety of topics and language tracks that support provider knowledge of early intervention and referral resources for young children birth to school age.

- In 2008, 126 people attended the conference, including 12 parents of children with special needs who received scholarships to attend from MN Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities, and 30 Somali providers attended the Somali language track taught by 2 Somali trainers.
- All participants in the conference were asked to complete an anonymous evaluation form:
  - 41 people completed the evaluation form and results indicated that the conference was useful/helpful
  - The average rating score was 8.5 out of possible 10
- In 2009, 115 people attended the conference including FFN, FCC, center, ECSE, higher education faculty, ECFE, 30 parents, and 30 Somali child care providers.
- All participants in the conference were asked to complete the same anonymous evaluation form :
  - 44 people complete the evaluation forms and results indicated that the conference was useful/helpful
  - The average rating score was 8.6 out of possible 10

*Comments made by participants of the one-day Inclusion Institute:*

*“A wealth of helpful information to take back and use in my place of work.”*

*“Lots of strategies and ideas to bring back to work with our children.”*

*“Wonderful information in all classes—several ideas to use at my site.”*

2. The development and support of a small cadre of highly skilled and experienced CICC trainers to provide PE training to underserved areas of the state through the provision of greater support and mentoring to those trainers by CICC staff.
  - In May and June of 2008, the Specialized Inclusion Trainer Project was launched with 16 Statewide Trainers chosen. The CICC worked with this cadre to develop and launch a training series, called the Inclusion Series. In October, the CICC launched the Inclusion Series, which includes eight two-hour trainings for a total of 16 hours of training to be provided by this cadre of 16 trainers. The series will be delivered through the MN Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) system and will include incentives for participation as well as requirements for assignments for ‘progressive learning’ within the CCRR framework.
  - The training cadre continued to meet online with the CICC staff monthly.
  - Of the 16 Statewide Trainers chosen for the Specialized Inclusion Trainer Project, 12 completed both the pre and post survey (See Table 1 below).
  - As can be seen in Table 1, only 25% of the trainers from this specialized cadre rated their knowledge of early intervention services in the community as either very good or good before the Inclusion Series, while 83% rated their knowledge as very good or good after the completing the Inclusion Series.
  - Prior to completing the Inclusion Series, 50% of the trainers rated their comfort in caring for children with disabilities as either high or good, whereas nearly all

(11 out of 12) reported their comfort level as either high or good after completing the series.

- Finally, 75% of the trainers rated said there was a high or good likelihood that they would have enrolled a child with disabilities in their program prior to the training and all 100% of the participants said the likelihood that they would enroll a child with disabilities was either high or good.

Table 1. Results from the pre/post survey on the Specialized Inclusion Series

Please rate your...	Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey Responses
Knowledge of early intervention services in community	Very good: 17% (N=2) Good: 8% (N=1) Fair: 58% (N=7) None: 17% (N=2)	Very good: 58% (N=7) Good: 25% (N=3) Fair: 17% (N=2) None: 0% (N=0)
Comfort in caring for children with disabilities	High: 8% (N=1) Good: 42% (N=5) Fair: 33% (N=4) Uncomfortable: 17% (N=2)	High: 42% (N=5) Good: 50% (N=6) Fair: 8% (N=1) Uncomfortable: 0% (N=0)
Likelihood that you would enroll a child with a disability	High: 58% (N=7) Good: 17% (N=2) Maybe: 25% (N=3) Not likely: 0% (N=0)	High: 83% (N=10) Good: 17% (N=2) Maybe: 0% (N=0) Not likely: 0% (N=0)

3. The continued provision of a wide array of Project EXCEPTIONAL training across the state for parents and providers in face-to-face workshops and conferences, and through the website in the Learning Center Info Modules and Self Study courses and online in Podcasts.
  - In addition to the Specialized Inclusion Training Cadre, a total of 81 English-speaking trainers completed the Train the Trainer courses in 2008-2009.
  - The CICC also focused on recruiting linguistically diverse populations to complete the Train the Trainer course:
    - In Fall of 2009, CICC provided a Train the Trainer Course in partnership with Resources for Child Care, St. Paul, on *Project EXCEPTIONAL: A Guide to Training and Recruiting Child Care Providers to Serve Young Children with Disabilities* to 5 new Hmong language trainers with continuation of training to be completed in January, 2010.
    - Two Spanish language Trainers completed the Train the Trainer Courses on *The Six Keys: Strategies for Promoting Children’s Mental Health in Early Childhood Programs*.
    - 9 Somali early care and education professionals completed part 1 of the Train the Trainer course and 3 completed both parts to date
  - In the year prior to the project (2007), 1342 early care and education professionals were trained by CICC trainers
  - From 2008 through October, 2009, 5,100 child care providers were trained in the grant period, approximately a 100% increase in the number of recorded participants in each of the years over 2007 levels

- Participants trained through the CCRR regions of state include:
  - Northwest: 927
  - Northeast: 258
  - Metro: 2023
  - Southern: 669
  - Midwest: 628
- Trainings offered for linguistically diverse providers over the course of the grant:
  - 80 Hmong providers trained in CICC workshops
  - Two training workshops were held for 50 East African French speaking parents on “Special Needs Resources” by CICC staff
  - the CICC sponsored a Spanish language 16 hour progressive training on CICC curriculum to 40 Spanish language child care providers in Carver County in coordination with the Child Care Resource and Referral
  - 1,450 providers were trained in the Somali community by CICC Somali trainers
- In addition to the increased participation rates in face-to-face workshops and conferences mentioned above, the statistics for the use of the website which includes the Learning Center Info Modules, Self Study courses, online Podcasts and many other resources around inclusion for child care professionals, are summarized in Table 2 below (2007 levels are provided for a comparison)

Table 2. Comparison of web statistics for website usage in 2007, 2008, and 2009

	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Page Views
<b>2007 rates</b>	6917	11116	48121
<b>2008 rates</b>	28500	140000	327500
<b>2009 rates</b>	27200	139900	267000

- As can be seen in Table 2, the usage of the website to access the Learning Center Info Modules, Self Study courses, and other resources for inclusion by child care professionals increased dramatically during the course of the Pathways to Quality Project
- Furthermore, of the 23 participants who completed the online survey after completing a Self Study course,
  - 96 % felt the course met or exceeded their expectations
  - 97.5 % felt the exam adequately tested their knowledge of the course content

*Comments made by participants of Self Study courses:*

*"I found the course content to be very thorough. Being presented in both audio and visual format makes learning accessible to both types of learners – visual for me. I did encounter a glitch in one of the quizzes but received prompt feedback to my inquiry."*

*"I am a service coordinator with the Babies Can't Wait program, serving children with developmental delays birth to age 3. Many of these children have sensory processing disorders and therapists often recommend a sensory program. I will suggest this site to parents as it is easy to understand and gives a basic understanding of sensory issues and children."*

4. The continued provision of technical assistance and development and delivery of products to assist parents and providers with successful inclusion of children with special needs in natural and least restrictive environments, including the CICC Developmental Brochures, web-based resources, phone and email technical assistance, and other special needs resources
  - 943 resources including documents and websites are in the CICC Resource Directory Database
  - Over 23,000 Developmental Brochures were distributed over the course of the two years
  - Web usage to the consultation and resources pages substantially increased from 2007 levels in 2008 and 2009 (see Table 3)

Table 3. Comparison of web statistics for usage of the consultation and resources page on the CICC website in 2007, 2008, 2009

	<b>Consultation page</b>	<b>Resources page</b>
<b>2007 rates</b>	398	2280
<b>2008 rates</b>	2992	5450
<b>2009 rates</b>	2767	6100

5. The provision of a bi-monthly electronic newsletter that contains research-based, up-to-date information on disability news and information on inclusion of children in natural and least restrictive environments useful to child care, ECSE, parents, and trainers; each newsletter will also posted on the website and archived
  - Newsletter produced bi-monthly
  - There are 864 subscribers to the bi-monthly CICC online newsletter
  - The CICC website homepage now has a "sign up here" feature for easy-access for new subscribers

- Each CEU certificate for Self Study courses has an option for participants to subscribe to the electronic newsletter as well as all trainers who complete Train the Trainer coursework

## Summary of findings for Evaluation Question 1

*Throughout the two years of the Pathways to Quality Project, the CICC demonstrated often dramatic increases in professional and parents' access to trainings, professional development and resources about best practices in inclusion in child care, especially with respect to the use of their website. The website is a mechanism for receiving training and professional development that is especially useful for the more remote areas of the state. Additionally, the project was successful in creating a small cadre of specialized inclusion trainers, and developed the specialized inclusion series training. Participants of this series reported better knowledge of available early intervention services, increased comfort in caring for children with disabilities, and an increased likelihood that they would enroll a child with disabilities in their child care program. In addition, CICC successfully recruited and trained a small number of trainers in who speak the following languages: Hmong, Somali, and Spanish. These trainers were then able to provide the Project EXCEPTIONAL trainings and professional development opportunities to child care providers who speak those languages in their own language, meeting a growing need to serve the increasingly linguistically diverse communities across the state.*

## Evaluation Question 2

*Did the Pathways to Quality project ensure that inclusion trainers/consultants have access to quality, updated information and the skills to support child care educators and providers?*

The Pathways to Quality Project worked to ensure that trainers and consultants had access to quality, updated information and skills to support child care providers through updating and increasing provision of existing resources and information offered in a variety of modalities, and through the development of new resources intended to ease access especially to those child care providers that are frequently underserved, either because of a language barrier or a geographic barrier. The six strategies used in the Pathways to Quality Project to achieve this goal, as well as information about how successful the strategies were are described below.

1. Continue to deliver Train the Trainer (TOT) Courses online and face-to-face in CICC core content areas for Project EXCEPTIONAL trainers and deliver new content areas as needed.
  - A TOT calendar was posted on the website with regular offerings
  - How many courses updated and offered: 38 Train the Trainer courses were offered online and face-to-face, updating the 6 core content areas

- Numbers of new course offerings: 2 new Train the Trainer courses added in 2009, including Autism Spectrum and Disorder: Overview and Basic Strategies for Inclusion in Community Settings
- A total of 81 English-speaking new trainers completed the Train the Trainer courses in 2008-2009.
- A total of 16 non-English speaking new trainers at least began the Train the Trainer courses in 2008-2009 and are expected to complete it in the beginning of 2010.
- 23 participants in the Train the Trainer courses completed an online survey regarding the effectiveness of the courses:
  - How would you rate the effectiveness of the Train the Trainer course in equipping you as a trainer?
    - 83% (19 out of 23) gave a rating of “excellent”
  - 96% of participants would recommend this TOT to others (22 out of 23)

*Comments made by participants of online Train the Trainer courses:*

*“I greatly appreciate the delivery of TOT opportunities on-line for the convenience and access. Being from a rural area, the on-line delivery allowed me to participate. I also find that publicizing the CICC year long TOT schedule allows me to plan my own professional growth in advance.”*

*“I work with Head Start and it is helpful to have specific tools for teachers when working with challenges. Teachers are more willing to listen when there are specific ideas shared relevant to their environment.”*

*“This course offered a lot of good suggestions for group interaction. I used some and modified some from the information given. Receiving feedback was beneficial during chat sessions and I appreciated the resources we were given, allowing me to continue long after I have finished with this course.”*

*“The course is set out very well and easy to follow. It is flexible in that I can present content specific to the request of the organization asking for my training. The book was very well written and I understood all of the material. My goal was to be able to reach a broad audience and the materials will help me do that easily.”*

2. Expand the Somali Training Program into greater Minnesota. Given the relatively high incidence of Autism in the Somali community in Minnesota (MDE report in 2008), early care and education professionals who serve this community were identified as having a particularly high need for increased access to quality information on inclusive practices. Therefore, the Inclusion in Child Project focused on supporting the existing/experienced Somali trainers with ongoing professional development opportunities and also enlisting these trainers as mentors to newly recruited trainers in other areas of the state. Experienced Somali trainers will co-train with newly trained Somali trainers as part of their mentorship. Experienced Somali trainers will

continue to be mentored by the CICC Somali Program Coordinator in their continued growth in English language acquisition and training skill development.

- In July, 2008, nine Somali language trainers attended a Train the Trainer presented by the CICC on *The Art of Training: Delivery Skills* taught by CICC staff and sponsored by CICC and the ECSATA organization.
  - Huda Farah, CICC Somali Program Coordinator, recruited Somali language trainers from outside the metro area to attend new Train the Trainer sessions on *Project EXCEPTIONAL: A Guide to Training and Recruiting Child Care Providers to Serve Young Children with Disabilities* in 2009. Nine new trainers were trained in session one in July, 2009 and three attended part two in November, 2009. Three Somali language trainers were certified as CICC trainers as a result of completion of training.
  - Huda Farah and CICC Director spoke at Strong Foundations Conferences on Somali project and HIIL NAAFO: A Call to Inclusion DVD.
  - Conducted a Somali community forum on inclusion and early intervention services in partnership with Seward Montessori School in Minneapolis and showed HIIL NAAFO: A Call to Inclusion DVD, 30 Somali parents in attendance.
  - Disseminated Somali translated resources on Language and Early Literacy to Somali Trainers.
  - Provide ongoing technical assistance to twenty Somali language trainers
  - Thousands reached through mass media to raise awareness for early intervention including MinPost articles on autism and WCCO interviews on the Somali community and incidence of Autism.
  - Training Workshops completed by Somali Program Coordinator to support inclusion in Somali community child care settings:
    - Willmar, MN, with Pact 4 on *Children with S/N in the Somali Cultural Context*.
    - Metro Refugee Task Force for MN Department of Health
    - Office Refugee resettlement Conference Washington DC
    - St Cloud Somali parents and FFN providers
    - Minnesota Commission for Humanities presentation
    - Seward Montessori school Minneapolis for Somali parents presentation
    - Presented to statewide Head Start Special Needs Coordinators Meeting on English Language Learner need specific to inclusion.
  - The CICC Inclusion conference had a Somali track for 20 participants in 2008 and 2009
  - 1,450 providers were trained in the Somali community by CICC Somali trainers
3. Develop web-based “Training Tool Kits” that align with existing Info Modules on website *Learning Center* as another method of training on inclusion topics that is accessible online and can be used face-to-face. Training Tool Kits will cover topics from “Data Privacy” to “What is Autism?”

- The web infrastructure was put into place for Tool Kits and Ecommerce site built. All 15 of the Training Tool Kits proposed in the grant are available for public access.
  - Training Tool Kits are professional development opportunities for early childhood, school-age, and youth providers which detail a quality one to two hour training complete with trainer script, handouts, certificates and other trainer resources and are available on the website.
  - These online Training Tool Kits are designed to ease access to early care and education providers, as well as school-age and youth providers who may not be located near other resources that can provide training on inclusion.
4. Provide technical assistance and mentorship to CICC trainers in a variety of modalities, including electronic newsletter, chat room support facilitated by CICC staff, face-to-face meetings convened at statewide conference events, email listserv distributions of current news and events, and updated revisions to training curricula as needed.
- The CICC provides resources and technical assistance to professionals and families across Minnesota in a variety of modalities and services through ongoing activities and as-needed as well
    - The CICC online Newsletter is bi-monthly with updates on current research on pertinent topics to inclusion trainers and practitioners.
    - Emails sent to CICC trainers are bi-weekly with research information or information about training opportunities.
    - Each Train the Trainer course includes its own post-course discussion board that is ongoing for continued mentoring, resource-sharing, and q/a from CICC staff.
    - The CICC was contacted to set up customized special needs training across the state in seven locations.
    - The CICC sent informational links for speech development charts to Carver County Follow Along Program.
    - Sent 75 Development brochures and *Supporting Sensory Preferences* books to Roseau Child Care Association to put in their conference packets for upcoming child care conference.
    - Helped MN Licensed Family Child Care Association with updates of their *Essential Elements* curriculum on red flags for development concerns resources.
    - Continue to staff and coordinate monthly School-Age Special Needs Coordinator Meetings
    - Developed new Train the Trainer course on Autism and presented it to 12 Trainers in face-to-face and online format. Participant training on Autism subsequently scheduled with MnSACA/MnAEYC in three regions of Minnesota in October of 2009
    - Consultation support and development of resources for consultants, including beginning reflective supervision process for existing consultants and recruitment of new consultants across state.

5. Provide and maintain an online Lending Library for CICC trainers to access that includes curricula, videos, and other training tools.
  - The CICC online Lending Library was updated in 2009 and made accessible by the Specialized Trainer Group who are conducting the *Inclusion Series* training across the state.
  - Nearly twice as many members of the Specialized Trainer Group are accessing the library as was the goal of the grant (n=18).
  
6. Maintain an online Trainer Registry which records trainer content expertise with searchable capabilities for people looking for trainers and also allows recording of training information by trainers for CICC record-keeping.
  - 243 trainers are listed in the CICC online Trainer Registry with a trainer record, more than twice as many as was the goal.

## Summary of findings for Evaluation Question 2

*Through the Pathways to Quality Project, the CICC was able to continue offering important and needed professional development opportunities, resources, information, and technical assistance. The CICC were also able to update old resources with the newest research on inclusive practices, and create new resources for professionals and parents to use to access needed training and information. A few highlights from the work they did include:*

- *training 81 English speaking trainers and 16 non-English speaking trainers through the Train the Trainer courses*
  - *22 out of 23 participants who completed the survey from Train the Trainer courses said they would recommend the course to others*
- *updating and offering 38 existing courses and creation of 2 new courses for child care professionals*
- *creation of a online Trainer Registry with more than twice as many trainers listed than anticipated to allow child care professionals looking for trainers to easily find who and what they need*
- *development of 15 web-based training tool kits that make it easier for trainers to provide the needed trainings to child care professionals, two short of the goal for the Project*
- *and finally, translation and delivery of resources to non-English speaking trainers, with a special emphasis on reaching Somali-speaking child care professionals*

*All of these activities worked to enhance inclusion trainers' access to quality, updated information to support child care professionals.*

### Evaluation Question 3

*Did the Pathways to Quality project involve trainers and CICC constituents in a dynamic interactive online community that supports inclusive pathways for children?*

The CICC has used their website to offer courses, resources, technical assistance and support around inclusion to reach professionals and families as one way of reaching those who may have difficulty accessing these things in other ways either due to a geographic barrier or a linguistic barrier. Several strategies were employed in the Pathways to Quality Project to involve trainers and CICC constituents in a dynamic interactive online community including the self study courses and Information Modules, online discussion boards for each course, and podcasts that present important information about best practices in inclusion in child care. More information about the success of each of these strategies is presented below.

1. Design, develop, and deliver new disability content to trainers, providers, and parents in Info Modules and Self Study courses online at [www.inclusivechildcare.org](http://www.inclusivechildcare.org) to support the 30 courses currently available, including a course based on the CICC Developmental Brochure: When to Be Concerned.
  - All 11 existing Self Study Courses were reviewed by specialists and updated with current research information and new resources page in 2008 and 2009 as well as some photos changed to reflect age of children.
  - Seventeen new Self Study Courses have been completed in 2008-2009.
  - All 28 existing Info Modules were reviewed by specialists and updated with current research information and new resources page in 2008 and 2009.
  - Seventeen new Info Modules were added to the website in 2008 and 2009.
  
2. Podcasts will be created on the CICC website on current disability news and/or inclusion questions and answer formats. Podcasts will be accessible from the CICC podcast webpage and downloadable to MP3 players for portability to meet diverse learning and access needs. Podcasts will be archived online as resources in topic areas.
  - Infrastructure for podcasting was developed on website in Spring of 2009 including downloading capability to MP3 players and subscription capabilities to iTunes, RSS, and Podcast Alley.
  - The podcast page went 'live' with 4 podcasts by October, 2009 and over 2000 hits in first month podcasting.
    - The podcast is entitled "Inclusion Matters" and covers topics that early childhood practitioners might see in a typical program including behavior challenges, play problems, and strategies for successful inclusion.

- New podcasts are available monthly at the website tab ‘podcast’ and announced through CICC e-announcements.
  - In online surveys, 8 out of 9 respondents gave the podcast a rating of “excellent.”
3. The Inclusion Consultation page on the website will offer interactive opportunities for accessing information on inclusion including referral and early intervention sources through an animated Artificial Intelligence character (IBot) in an inclusion question/answer format which is both auditory, downloadable, or readable online, as well as a glossary of special education terminology, and an email featured ‘box’ where an inclusion question goes directly to a designated CICC Inclusion Consultant for a reply. This feature is available to parents, providers, trainers, or consultants.
- Interactive opportunities for accessing information were created on the consultation page of the CICC website, including the creation of the IBot, the glossary, and the email featured ‘box’.
  - As can be seen Table 3 on p. 10, web hits on the consultation page increased dramatically over the course of the grant (there were just over 6 times as many hits in 2008 and 2009 as there were in 2007, the year prior to the grant).
4. Provide mentoring opportunities to new CICC trainers through CICC *Training Center* discussion board platform for trainers in each TOT classroom to continue their community of learning by sharing questions and training ideas facilitated by the CICC Director.
- Each CICC Train the Trainer course has a designated discussion board for ongoing support to trainers with CICC staff.
  - Additionally, TOT Center chat rooms have been used for trainer meetings and gatherings that support mentoring opportunities.
  - 23 participants completed an online survey regarding the effectiveness of the online supports in the TOT Center
    - How would you rate the effectiveness of chat-rooms?
      - 83% (19 out of 23) gave a rating of one (excellent) or two
    - How would you rate the effectiveness of message boards?
      - 78% (18 out of 23) gave a rating of one (excellent) or two
    - How would you rate the technology support?
      - 87% (20 out of 23) gave a rating of one (excellent) or two

*Comments made by participants regarding the online community created:*

*“I can truly say that I have enjoyed this class much more than any other online class I have ever taken and it was because of the feedback from the other students and instructors.”*

*“The ideas shared via the message board and chats were so valuable. Feedback from peers and the instructor challenged my thinking and learning. I think that this information is vital for all providers to know and I will become very creative in finding ways to deliver the training, with or without a grant.”*

## Summary of findings for Evaluation Question 3

*Through the Pathways to Quality Project, the CICC was successful in creating a dynamic online community that increase trainers and CICC constituent involvement. The three activities that accomplished this goal were:*

- *updating and creation of many new self-study courses and information modules that are accessible on the website*
- *creation of discussion boards and for each course and chat rooms that are available for trainers that are facilitated by the CICC Director*
  - *Over three quarters of the participants who completed the online survey felt that the chat rooms, discussion boards and technology support in the courses were effective*
- *developing the ability to create, post, download and archive podcasts on their website*
  - *podcasts have the portability to meet diverse learning and access needs and the one podcast available so far, entitled "Inclusion Matters," received over 2000 web hits and was rated as excellent by 8 out of 9 respondents to the online survey*

### **Evaluation Question 4**

*Did the Pathways to Quality Project identify and create intentional partnerships in all areas to support child care and families?*

The CICC recognizes the importance of working with the existing system of child care in the state of Minnesota in order to maximize its impact on the field; therefore a key component of the Pathways to Quality Project was identifying and creating partnerships within the system of child care. The main strategies employed to create these essential partnerships, as well as information about the success of these strategies are presented below.

1. Continue to work with higher education institutions to ensure PE training offered in various modalities including face-to-face and on-line is available for credit and CEUs to promote professional development.
  - Ten CEUs have been given for face-to-face training of trainer (TOT) workshops including the Somali TOT courses with completed assessment/assignments.
  - 190 CEUS awarded through CICC for Self Study courses at CICC Learning Center for professional development for early childhood and school-age practitioners and teacher licensure.
  - Began a partnership with Concordia University to offer CICC Self Study courses for credit in Continuing Education Department; implementation May, 2010.
  - CICC curriculum is offered for credit at 4-year and 2-year higher education institutions in Minnesota. This includes:

- Dakota County Technical College: *Project EXCEPTIONAL, Including Children with Autism and The Nurtured Heart Approach* offered as elective options in traditional program.
  - Concordia University, *Six Keys and The Nurtured Heart Approach* offered ongoing as elective credits in online program.
  - Concordia University Fall, '09:, guest speaker on Autism for *Young Child with Special Needs* Child Development traditional program course.
  - Summer, 08: Guest lecturers on Autism for University of MN course on *Exceptional Children* online.
  - Ridgewater College: CICC courses offered through Ridgewater continuing education and training department in face-to-face format.
  
- 2. Continue to partner with MN Eager to Learn online training program to develop and deliver existing and new PE training workshops to child care providers and parents in 3, 4, and 5 week formats to ensure greater statewide access to inclusion training, including Children's Development: What to Expect and When to Be Concerned.
  - 226 participants, more than twice the goal of 100 set by the Pathways to Quality Project, were trained through the Eager to Learn online professional development program through the MN Child Care Resource and Referral Program using CICC training courses
  
- 3. Continue to partner with Fraser to bring innovative services and products to CICC constituents like the collaborative Developmental Brochure.
  - Twenty-three thousand, two hundred and six (23,206) Birth to Three Developmental Brochures mailed to constituents. In November 2009, the CICC began distribution of newly developed Three to Five age developmental brochures as well as the Birth to 3 developmental brochures in Somali and Spanish languages.
  
- 4. Work with C.E.E.D. at the U. of M. to promote Bridging Education and Mental Health (BEAM) training through the PE trainers across MN as well partner with C.E.E.D. in development/delivery of new training based on unmet needs.
  - The Bridging Education and Mental Health (BEAM) curriculum from the U. of MN Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) has been formatted into an online CICC Self Study course (2009).
  - The BEAM training is also being designed by CEED and CICC staff as 4 courses for face-to-face delivery to child care practitioners through the CCRR training delivery system by CICC trainers.
  
- 5. Continue to work on statewide professional development initiatives that promote inclusion and quality child care settings in MN.

- Participated in Webinar on Inclusion hosted by National Professional Development Center on Inclusion
- Attended National Inclusion Institute, NC: exhibit table for 200 participants
- Developmental Brochures sent to Autism Speaks for Autism Walk
- Partnered with PACER Center for its 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual National Bullying Prevention Awareness Week, Oct. 5-11, 2008 which will include an expanded effort to reach schools and organizations nationwide. Exciting new activities, information, and contests will engage youth, educators, and parents in creating a safer world for children with and without disabilities.
- Worked with White Earth Indian Reservation to produce development brochure for 4 and 5 year olds as a resource for White Earth families and child care providers.
- Monthly meetings with School Age Care Special Needs Coordinators
- Monthly meetings with DHS/MDE Part C and Child Care Assistance on Special Needs Rate Committee
- Attended the Somali Cultural and Human Service Agency meeting to discuss CICC training and TA for the Midway High Rise.
- Attended the “Strengthening Families” Committee meetings quarterly and Professional Development subcommittee to embed 5 Protective Factors for families into our CICC family trainings in collaboration with many other state agencies and non-profit organizations
- CICC Trainer offered workshop on Special Needs Resources for French speaking West African community through partnership with CCRR Network (50 FFN providers/parents)
- Presented with panel on trainer recruitment/retention for the MN CCRR Inservice for state staff.
- Fall Article on CICC written for *Impact: Feature Issue on Early Childhood Education for Children with Disabilities*, Fall 2009 Issue.
- November Article in NAEYC “Young Children” magazine on *Sharing Concerns with Families of Infants and Toddlers*.
- Meeting with St. Paul Schools and other community members regarding Positive Behavior Support (PBS), implemented in St. Paul on a larger scale. Attended PBS Leadership Training sponsored by St. Paul Public Schools.
- Partnering with other organizations and MN Department of Education in implementing TACSEI and Pyramid Model in Minnesota.

## **Summary of findings from Evaluation Question 4**

*The CICC, through the Pathways to Quality Project, was very successful in creating partnerships within the existing system of child care in Minnesota at local, state and national levels. The CICC created new or fostered existing partnerships with several organizations to bring their trainings to a wider audience including local universities and colleges, the CCRR network at both state and local levels, the Minnesota Department of Education, and local schools and early care and education settings. The CICC also published or worked with national organizations such as NAEYC, the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion, and the PACER center during the course of the two year grant.*

## Evaluation Question 5

*Did the Pathways to Quality Project increase participation by child care professionals who work with school age children in order to support inclusive practices in youth programming?*

With the growing number of school age children with disabilities and even fewer child care options available to parents, the CICC recognized the need providers of school age children to have access to high quality information about inclusion in their youth programs. The Pathways to Quality Project used many of the same broad strategies used in the rest of the project to engage, educate and support child care providers who work with school age children using the CICC website. First they expanded current course offerings and other resources, adapting old ones and designing new ones to be appropriate for providers who serve older children. Second, the CICC reached out to school age providers, providing training and consultation to many providers. Finally, the CICC worked to create intentional partnerships with organizations with strong connections to youth programs in Minnesota. Key results are presented below, organized into these three strategies.

1. Continue to offer and increase the number of courses, trainings, and resources dedicated to providers who serve school age children.
  - CICC *Inclusion in School-Age Care: Guidelines for SAC Providers in Caring for Children with Special Needs* was updated with feedback from the youth and school-age communities.
  - The CICC *Inclusion in School-Age Care: Guidelines for SAC Providers in Caring for Children with Special Needs* manual was posted on the Minnesota School Age Child Care Alliance (MnSACA) website
  - Coordination of monthly meetings with two groups of school-age special needs coordinators with an average of eleven people at each meeting, for a total yearly attendance of 222
  - Number of Self Studies/Info Modules designed for School-Age:
    - The CICC website “Learning Center” has 19 Info Modules with content for school-age and youth audiences and professionals including *Data Privacy and Confidentiality, Childhood Overweight and Obesity, and Sensory Processing.*
    - The CICC website “Learning Center” has 6 Self-Study courses with content for school-age and youth professionals including the newest: *Adaptations to Youth Programming and Activities.*
  - Resources on School-Age and Youth added monthly to CICC website resources area.
  - Youth and School-age constituencies added to CICC listserv to receive bi-monthly e-newsletter and resource updates

- New Youth resources sent via Youth Community Connections listserv
2. Provide increasing training and consultation to providers of school age children.
- 818 participants were trained in by CICC staff in school-age and youth development programs, on topics including Quirky Kids, ADHD, Autism, Child Development, Environment, and Inclusion programs
  - Consultation:
    - 345 hours of on-site face to face consultation
      - a. School Age Consultation Hours – 115.5
      - b. Early Childhood Consultation Hours – 229.5
    - 30 programs/ providers were included in the consultation
    - 90- 92% Retention rate for sites receiving on-site consultation after six months
    - 60 children were served by these providers (20 of the children were on Child Care Assistance)
    - 9 current consultations, 7 more consultations pending parent consent

*Comments made by participants regarding the consultation:*

*“I was giving a lot of thought to discontinuing this child’s car before the consultation by CICC, but now I have decided to continue caring for the child.”*

*“The consultant was helpful and encouraging. She did not degrade us, she gave us tools to help!”*

3. Create intentional partnerships with organizations that serve and provide youth programming
- CICC attended Youth Engagement Symposium at University of Minnesota.
  - In March, 2009, CICC staff held meetings with MnSACA, the Center for 4-H Youth Development, and the Youth Community Connections to discuss the CICC *Inclusion in School-Age Care: Guidelines for SAC Providers in Caring for Children with Special Needs* manual, needed resources and training needs in the school-age community, and Accreditation.
  - Ongoing partnership with MnSACA as a training partner. Worked with MnSACA to train school-age trainers in new Autism curriculum; school-age trainers then presented the workshops across the state to over 80 providers.
  - CICC provided the School Age Forum list with examples of social stories, visuals, and other resources to assist with working with children who might be impacted with sensory issues/autism/other behavioral disabilities (50 people received it).
  - Resources on healthy sexual development and appropriate responses were provided to the school age special needs consultants.
  - CICC staff continued monitoring/training/advocacy/and support related to the Special Needs Levy funding for school-age staff.

## Summary of findings from Evaluation Question 5

*Through the grant provided by the McKnight Foundation to focus on school age children in their Pathways to Quality Project, the CICC successfully expanded offerings for school age providers, while creating important partnerships with organizations that work with school age programs to reach more child care providers. Key highlights include:*

- *The provision of over 100 hours of consultation to school age providers*
- *Over 800 providers served through trainings on a range of topics relevant to school age children*
- *Updating courses and offering 19 Info Modules and 6 Self Study courses relevant to school age child care professionals*
- *The creation or enhancement of key partnerships with organizations such as the Minnesota School Age Child Care Alliance, an organization identified in the Child Care Work Force Study (Chase et al., 2007) as serving the most number of school age child care providers in the state*

## Evaluation Summary

The Center for Inclusive Child Care outlined four goals intended to improve access, knowledge, and skills around inclusive practice in child care in the Pathways to Quality Project:

1. Increase child care professionals' knowledge and skills in order to increase opportunities for successful inclusion in least restrictive and natural settings and referrals to early intervention for young children birth to school age.
2. Ensure that inclusion trainers/consultants have access to quality, updated information and the skills to support early care educators and providers.
3. Involve trainers and CICC constituents in a dynamic interactive online community that supports inclusive pathways for children.
4. Identify and create intentional partnerships in all areas to support child care and families.

The Pathways to Quality Project had demonstrated success in achieving each of these goals. The Project was particularly successful in demonstrating improved access to training, resources, information and support to all members of the child care community, and in particular to those in the community who typically have limited access due to geographic or linguistic barriers. Due to the increasing numbers of Somali children participating in special education in the Minneapolis public schools, special emphasis was placed on serving providers and parents in the Somali population. This goal was clearly met with both parents and providers from the Somali community attending the annual Inclusion Conference, 9 Somali trainers at least beginning the Train-the-Trainer courses, and a number of connections made with programs or organizations already serving the Somali community. Special emphasis was also placed on serving school age child care professionals and ensuring that content on the website was added or modified to be appropriate for school age children, also a more recent addition to the CICC's expertise. Again, this part of the Pathways to Quality Project was quite successful, serving over 800 providers in trainings over the two years, creating and/or updating 19 Info Modules and 6 Self Study Courses appropriate for use with school age child care professionals, and building on a partnership with the organization that is most used by school age professionals, the Minnesota School Age Care Alliance. Additionally, there is evidence, both anecdotal and from the online surveys, that the services provided by the CICC are not only meeting the needs identified by the community, but are of high quality and are highlighting the importance of inclusion of children with special needs in child care settings. And there is limited evidence of improved knowledge of best practices in inclusion. However, the scope of this evaluation was not able to actually demonstrate improvements in skills and behaviors of child care professionals, nor whether this knowledge is translating to an increased likelihood that children with special needs are more readily identified for early intervention services or are more likely to be included in least restrictive settings when possible.

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