

CAMBRIDGE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD NEWSLETTER

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CHECK OUT
THE OEC 2026 WEEK
OF THE YOUNG CHILD
EVENT RECAP!

CAMBRIDGE
Office of Early Childhood

The mission of the Cambridge Office of Early Childhood is to **connect** the city's early childhood ecosystem, **align** early childhood services and information, and **advocate** for and **advance** the needs of all young children, their families, and the early childhood workforce.

The Cambridge Office of Early Childhood is a collaboration supported by the **City of Cambridge** and **Cambridge Public Schools**.



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A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DR. CHERYL OHLSON

Dear Cambridge Early Childhood Community,

I hope this email finds you well!

We are thrilled to have recently wrapped up our annual Week of the Young Child celebration. What a wonderful week! This annual event, sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, is designed to celebrate young children and their families; to focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families; and to honor and celebrate the professionals who serve them.

We began the week at Harvard's Graduate School of Education on Saturday morning with a keynote presentation from Ant Toombs Sr. from the Life is Good Playmaker Project, and he certainly set the tone for a joyful and inspiring celebration! Ant partners with Early Childhood professionals across the country and beyond to help create safer, loving, and joyful environments for kids. In his inspiring talk, Ant got us moving, dancing, and singing. Integrated storytelling and research (and even a little rapping) to help us think about why play is the most powerful tool we have as early childhood professionals, and about how to infuse playfulness into all of our interactions with children, families, and beyond. Ant reminded us that play isn't a break from the work- it *is* the work.

The Saturday event was followed by three equally inspiring in-person workshops and additional virtual workshops throughout the week. Thank you to all members of the Cambridge early childhood community who joined us for these events, and especially to the OEC staff who worked tirelessly to organize and implement such a wonderful week!

As always, our Office is here to support you. Please don't hesitate to reach out!

Warm Regards,

Cheryl Ohlson

Dr. Cheryl Ohlson

From The Field

2026 WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD RECAP

The Cambridge Office of Early Childhood (OEC) kicked off its 6th Annual Week of the Young Child with a conference at the Harvard Graduate School of Education on April 11, 2026, followed by professional development workshops throughout the week.



The conference, “Many Hands, One Community,” featured keynote speaker Ant Toombs from the Life is Good Playmaker Project, who highlighted the importance of play and connection. Ant used storytelling, research, music, and playful games to highlight how play is a powerful tool in building connections with others. Ant inspired participants with true stories of harnessing optimism to overcome adversity, and led participants through the powerful experience of playing and sharing joy!

In the words of one conference participant:

“LOVED ANT TOOMBS!!! HIS SPEECH HIT SO MANY HEARTS AND MINDS.”

The conference keynote address was followed by three workshops: “Childhood: What’s the Rush?”; “Building Our Village: Transforming Family Engagement Together”; and “Healing Centered Practices for Preventing and Tending to Ruptures in the Preschool Classroom.” We were thrilled to offer professional development that brought early childhood professionals together across roles to connect and collaborate on new and familiar ideas.



[VIEW MORE WOYC EVENT PHOTOS HERE](#)

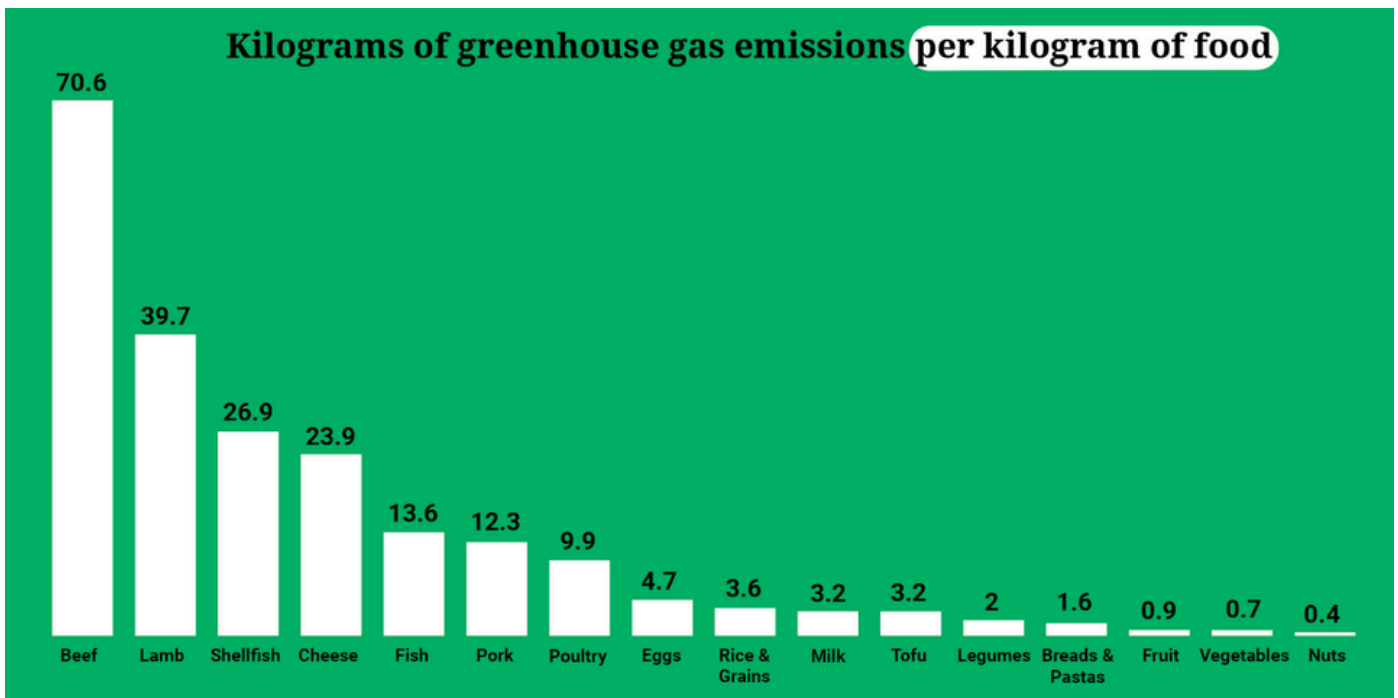
Following the “Many Hands, One Community” conference, OEC hosted seven additional workshops throughout the week, both in person and virtually. Topics included using drama to nurture relationships; mitigating workplace stress; social-emotional education (en español); playing with math; making naptime successful; and reflective leadership. These events focused on the role of play in the lives of young children and all the ways adults can grow and support children’s intrinsic curiosity and love of learning.

From The Field: Resources

SUPPORTING OUR PLANET BY EATING MORE PLANTS

In honor of Earth Day this April, let's talk about plant-based foods! Many steps can be taken individually to make an impact on climate change - one option is to increase plant-based eating and minimize eating animal products.

Greenhouse gas produced from animal-based agriculture is higher than that from plant-based agriculture. This can be associated with factors such as cutting down trees, methane released from digested feed, resource requirements such as water, and fuel requirements.



In the standard Western Diet, meat consumption is high, and fiber-rich foods like plants are low. Incorporating more plant-based foods, such as legumes, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. With any lifestyle change, it's important to remember that making small, attainable, and realistic changes can support long-term habit building. This could look like adding extra vegetables to your meals, incorporating one plant-based meal per week, or reducing the quantity of meat at certain meals throughout the week!

More tips for nutrition and staying active are available on the [resources page](#) at the Cambridge Public Health Department website.

Contact Norah Ismail, Public Health Nutritionist, at nismail@cambridgepublichealth.org with questions or interest in this or other healthy eating, active living projects.

Cambridge Preschool Program Updates

CAMBRIDGE
Preschool Program



The Cambridge Preschool Program

is a publicly-funded program that provides

access to free, high-quality preschool

for all Cambridge 4-year-olds and prioritized 3-year-olds.

Families apply to CPP through a single, centralized online application.

They can choose from preschool programs offered by Cambridge Public Schools (CPS), the Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP), and select community-based preschool and family childcare providers.

CPP covers the cost of the school-day, school-year portion of preschool programs.

Depending on a family's income, there may be additional costs for programs that provide full-day, full-year (including summer) preschool.

SY2026-27 Application & Enrollment Updates

Families who submitted completed CPP applications by April 13 will have their applications included in the spring match.

All applications submitted after April 13 will be considered on an ongoing basis.

Spring 2026 CPP Match Timeline:

- Match results will be sent to families in late April 2026.
- Families will have 2 weeks from the date of notification to accept or decline their placement offer.
- The 2026-2027 school year will begin in September 2026.

For application questions, please contact cpp@cpsd.us.

CAMBRIDGE

Office of Early Childhood

CAMBRIDGE INFANT-TODDLER FAMILY SURVEY

**Are you expecting a child, or do you have a child
the ages of newborn to three?
Do you live in Cambridge?
We want to hear from you!**

Hearing from families raising young children helps us
better advocate for and strengthen services in Cambridge.

Please share this survey with your friends and community!

Questions? Please contact Megan Postal
mpostal@partnerof.cpsd.us or 617-299-6312

By taking this short
survey, you will be
eligible to enter a raffle
for a gift card! Thank you
for your time!

Scan this QR code for the survey,



or follow this link for the survey
<https://bit.ly/CambridgeInfantToddlerSurvey>

News & Notices



Community Celebration

Resource Fair | Free Food | Kids Activities | Giveaways

Everyone Is Welcome! Hosted by the Cambridge Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship, Cambridge Human Rights Commission, and Housed In Cambridge.

Saturday,
May 9, 2026
11:00a.m. - 2:00p.m.

King Open School

850 Cambridge Street, Cambridge

Language Help?

Request an interpreter for this event by emailing accesshelp@cambridgema.gov or calling **617-349-4396** before May 1.

Join Us for a Community Celebration!

Connect with local organizations and City departments offering helpful immigrant resources and housing resources for residents and families.

Learn more about:

- Your Housing Rights
- Affordable Housing
- Financial Assistance
- Eviction Resources
- First Time Homebuyer Programs
- Immigration Legal Services and Resources

Questions? Contact: calmonte@cambridgema.gov or call 617-349-4398.

Seeking Early Childhood Education Leaders for Research Study

The researcher, a **doctoral student at Lesley University**, is seeking **early childhood education leaders** to share their experiences **supporting multicultural newcomer families**.

Contact Irina at idey@lesley.edu for questions.

20-30 minutes

Confidential

Voluntary

**Scan to share
your leadership
story!**



Are you an early childhood educator or school leader partnering with multicultural newcomer families?

I am currently recruiting participants for my doctoral research exploring these vital partnerships. Your involvement would include a short online narrative survey and a follow-up interview, either on Zoom or in person. The goal is to learn from your real experiences and highlight the important work happening in our field. If this resonates with you, I would be honored to include your story in this research.

News & Notices



2026 Cambridge Summer Camps for Young Children 3-6 Years Old

This guide contains information on summer camp opportunities for children aged 3 to 6 years old for Cambridge residents. **This guide will be updated as new information about camps becomes available.**

Please check the Cambridge Office of Early Childhood Page on Find-It Cambridge for the most up-to-date guides.

LIKE & FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK!



Like & follow the Cambridge Office of Early Childhood Facebook page so you can stay up-to-date with early childhood updates, new resources, and helpful content from our office!

Find Us Here!

Or save the url below:
www.facebook.com/cambridgeoec

Thank you for your support!!



Click **HERE** to read the latest CFF Newsletter



Inside you'll find information about a wide variety of resources and programs such as:

- Cambridge Dads
- Parent/Child Activities
- Parent support
- Free resource bags for families
- Resources & supports for families and more!

Visit the CFF Website Here

Introducing **CALM**,

a free support resource for those in the early childhood field, caring for children from infancy through age 5.

Whether you're down on the floor leading circle time, supporting parents caring for little ones or managing the operations of an entire team, each of us plays a crucial role in meeting the needs of thousands of families across Massachusetts every day.

Our work is meaningful and impactful—and it can also be demanding and stressful. The Caregiver Assist Line of Massachusetts (CALM) is a free warmline you can call to talk with a trained, empathetic expert who understands your work.

HOW WE HELP

- ♥ Provide social support during times of stress
- ♥ Offer space to confidentially process anxieties and challenges
- ♥ Give peer-to-peer guidance, reassurance and validation
- ♥ Recommend next steps and appropriate community resources
- ♥ Address gaps in care and improve access to information

If it matters to you, it matters to us.
Contact CALM: Services available in English and Spanish

Call Us: 617-437-8688

Listeners are available Monday through Friday, 8am to 6pm. If you leave a voicemail, our team will return your call as soon as possible.

Text Us: 617-437-8688

Connect with our team via text for support or to setup a time to speak by phone.

Submit an Online Form: thehome.org/cec-calm

Fill out a short intake form to schedule a call from the CALM team.

Email Us: CALM@thehome.org

Contact us via email to connect with a team member who will assist you in scheduling a call.

Program made possible by



You're There for Everyone Else. Let Us Be There for You.

Individuals working in early childhood give so much of themselves every day—and can carry considerable stress. The Home for Little Wanderers' Caregiver Assist Line of Massachusetts (CALM) is a non-crisis helpline created specifically to support members of this crucial workforce who are supporting children from infancy through age 5.

Designed with the realities of early childhood work in mind, CALM connects callers with an empathetic and knowledgeable listener who possesses experience and expertise in the field. Our team offers support before, during and after workplace concerns arise, offering professionals a compassionate space to pause, connect and talk through work-related challenges and associated personal issues.

In addition to active listening, CALM provides useful tools and resources, reducing professional stress—because caring for yourself is an essential part of caring for others.



HOW WE HELP

- ♥ Provide social support during times of stress
- ♥ Offer space to confidentially process anxieties and challenges
- ♥ Give peer-to-peer guidance, reassurance and validation
- ♥ Recommend next steps and appropriate community resources
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About The Center for Early Childhood

The Center for Early Childhood (CEC) at The Home for Little Wanderers provides comprehensive, relationship-based services that support young children and the adults who care for them. Through direct care and prevention-focused consultation, the Center works with children, families and professionals to build strong social-emotional foundations for happy, healthy childhoods. Services are age-appropriate, culturally responsive, and offered by master's-level clinicians and experienced consultants in a variety of settings— including a child-friendly clinic, homes, early education programs, shelters and community spaces—meeting families where they are.

OFFERING CONFIDENTIAL PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT FROM PEOPLE WHO UNDERSTAND THE WORK

Whether you're processing a difficult interaction, feeling the weight of burnout or looking for guidance on next steps, we can connect you to experienced listeners and relevant community resources. By offering early support and connection, CALM aims to prevent burnout and reduce the risk of crises—supporting a healthier, more sustainable workforce for the children and families who depend on us.

ABOUT OUR STAFF



Master's level
clinicians



Mental health consultants
who are experienced early educators



Clinically trained
and supported

Contact CALM: Services available in English and Spanish

Call Us: 617-437-8688

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Text Us: 617-437-8688

Connect with our team via text for support or to setup a time to speak by phone.

Submit an Online Form: thehome.org/cec-calm

Fill out a short intake form to schedule a call from the CALM team.

Email Us: CALM@thehome.org

Contact us via email to connect with a team member who will assist you in scheduling a call.



About The Home for Little Wanderers

For over 225 years, The Home for Little Wanderers has helped build stable lives and hopeful tomorrows for children and their families. Our 30+ community-based and residential programs serve thousands of youth, from birth to age 26, who are in at-risk circumstances. Many of these children have experienced abuse, neglect, trauma or a disrupted family life. As the oldest child welfare agency in America, we provide them with safe surroundings, permanent loving relationships and a secure path toward a better, brighter future.

The Caregiver Assist Line of Massachusetts is made possible by



Cambridge Office of Early Childhood

OEC WEBSITE

Visit the Cambridge Office of Early Childhood website!

www.earlychildhoodcambridge.org



Our Mission

The mission of the Cambridge Office of Early Childhood is to connect the city's early childhood ecosystem, align early childhood services and information, and advocate for and advance the needs of all young children, their families, and the early childhood workforce.

Our Vision

Every child and family in Cambridge has access to high quality early care and education experiences. As a result, all children enter school ready to thrive academically, physically, socially, and emotionally, and continue to do so through third grade and beyond.

[Learn More](#)



What Information Can I Learn From The OEC Website?

www.earlychildhoodcambridge.org is a one-stop shop for the Cambridge community to access information and resources related to early childhood education and programs. The new website culminates a rebranding process for the Office of Early Childhood, formerly known as the Cambridge Birth to 3rd Grade Partnership.

The website includes, but is not limited to:

- About Us & Contacts
- Announcements & Events
- The Cambridge Preschool Program
- Career Pathways
- Child Care Resources
- COEC Contact Information
- Collaborating Organizations
- CPS Programs
- Early Learning & School Readiness
- Educator Resources
- Paying For Childcare
- Preschool Scholarships
- Professional Development
- Program Quality Improvement
- Publications
- Research & Evaluation
- Workshops & Trainings

Cambridge Office of Early Childhood



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Cambridge Office of Early Childhood

ABOUT US

The Cambridge Office of Early Childhood (OEC) is a collaborative office whose work and team are shared jointly by the City of Cambridge and Cambridge Public Schools.

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Our Vision

Every child and family in Cambridge has access to high-quality early care and education experiences. As a result, all children enter school ready to thrive academically, physically, socially, and emotionally, and continue to do so through third grade and beyond.

Our Commitment To Equity

All children have the right to equitable early childhood experiences that enable them to achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society. Thus, all early childhood educators and family support staff have a professional obligation to advance equity. They can do this best when they are effectively supported by the settings in which they work and when they and their wider communities embrace diversity and full inclusion as strengths, uphold fundamental principles of fairness and justice, and work to eliminate structural inequities that limit equitable opportunities for children and their families. ([Adapted from NAEYC's Position Statement on Advancing Equity](#))

CAMBRIDGE
Office of Early Childhood

Cambridge Office of Early Childhood

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617-349-6466

CPP Contact Info:

cpp@cpsd.us
617-349-1798