

CAMBRIDGE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD NEWSLETTER

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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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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.

The Cambridge Preschool Program Website Is New & Improved!



The new Cambridge Preschool Program (CPP) webpages are designed to be a comprehensive, user-friendly hub for families, providers, and community members seeking information about CPP.

The updated site now includes dedicated sections tailored to the needs of different audiences:

- **“What Is CPP?”** provides an overview of the Cambridge Preschool Program, including program information, policies, FAQs, and other helpful resources to better understand how CPP works.
- **“CPP Families”** serves as a resource center for families interested in or currently participating in CPP. Families can find information about eligibility requirements, how and where to apply, participating providers, and other important enrollment resources.
- **“CPP Providers”** offers support and guidance for participating preschool providers, including information related to program quality, educator development, operations, and administrative requirements.

Together, these new webpages create a centralized, easy-to-navigate space for all things CPP, making it easier for families and providers to access the information and resources they need.

From The Field

PROMOTING FAMILY RESILIENCE + SOCIAL CONNECTION

May marks the start of Mental Health Awareness Month, a timely opportunity to reflect on the factors that foster family resilience and social connection. Children's Mental Health Week (May 3–9, 2026) further highlights the importance of supporting the mental health and well-being of young children and their families. For early childhood providers, this is a reminder that strong relationships, responsive environments, and connected communities all play a vital role in helping children thrive.

The Cambridge Office of Early Childhood (OEC) remains committed to advancing the well-being of children, families, and communities through its use of the Strengthening Partnerships Framework, which guides family engagement from prenatal stages through young adulthood across Massachusetts. A key component of this framework—Promoting Family Well-Being—emphasizes that families need access to essential supports, including educational and economic opportunities, physical and mental health services, and stable housing and food resources. These foundational elements are critical to building the stability children need for lifelong learning and development.

For preschool providers, supporting family well-being means recognizing how these factors directly impact children's readiness and success. Programs can strengthen outcomes by building meaningful relationships with families and connecting them to community-based resources. Effective strategies include sharing information in culturally and linguistically responsive ways, maintaining current resource lists, and following up to ensure families can



access and benefit from services. Just as important, providers should create regular opportunities to listen to families, identify barriers such as language or transportation, and co-develop solutions that reflect families' strengths and needs.

As we recognize Mental Health Awareness Month, we encourage programs to reflect on how they promote family well-being and community connection in their daily practice. The linked sections of the Strengthening Partnerships Framework below offer actionable strategies to help families access resources that foster resilience and belonging. By prioritizing these efforts, early childhood providers play a critical role in building stronger families, healthier communities, and brighter futures for children.

[Strengthening Partnerships - Promoting Family Well-Being.pdf](#)

From The Field

DRESS THE DUCKLINGS - CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK EVENT

The Cambridge Office of Early Childhood (OEC) supports the work of the Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL) and recently attended their “Dress the Ducklings Event” on May 7th in recognition of Children’s Mental Health Week.

The famous Make Way for Ducklings sculpture, created by Nancy Schön and located at the Boston Public Garden, recreates the duck family in Robert McCloskey's children's classic Make Way for Ducklings. The ducks were all dressed up in green, a color chosen internationally for mental health awareness, as it relates to the springtime – symbolizing hope, renewal, and growth. We support the mental health of all children and families and share the mission of reducing stigma, promoting awareness, and encouraging seeking support.



Pictured: OEC's Behavioral Health Specialist, Jesus Armenta, posing with a duckling statue at the Boston Common Dressing The Ducklings event.



11 WAYS TO HELP YOUNG CHILDREN DEVELOP A STRONG SENSE OF MATTERING

11 Ways To Help Young Children Develop a Strong Sense of Mattering

The science of mattering can inform practical, actionable strategies that we all can use to build a strong ecosystem of mattering for young children, whether we are caregivers, providers, policymakers, or community members. By building the foundation for mattering in the earliest years, we can help our children thrive both in childhood and across their lifetimes. Below are suggestions for specific strategies for how to bring mattering into a child's developmental environment.

1. **Practice serve and return daily.** Responding warmly and promptly to a child's cues, whether it's a smile, a cry, or a question, shows them they are worthy of a caregiver's time and attention.
2. **Model repair.** When an adult intentionally reconnects after a conflict, it tells the child that the relationship is worth repairing because they are worth it, reinforcing that they matter and are valued even when things are hard.
3. **Know the child.** Notice what excites them, ask questions, and listen. It shows they're seen and valued for who they are.
4. **Watch for anti-mattering.** Be alert to messages that make children feel invisible or unwanted, especially those from marginalized groups. Every child should hear and see that they matter.
5. **Encourage them to contribute.** Help children build a mattering mindset in small, age-appropriate ways, like handing out spoons or putting away toys.
6. **Call them a "helper".** The language we use helps children see their contributions as part of who they are.
7. **Support excluded or isolated children.** Connect isolated children with counseling, mentors, or group activities to help rebuild trust, foster a sense of belonging, and feel valued.
8. **Value caregivers.** Parents, teachers, caseworkers, and other caregivers need to feel appreciated and supported so they can give their best to the children in their care.
9. **For nonprofit leaders.** In family programs, treat each person as an individual. Use names, listen fully, and respond with care to show they matter beyond their case file.
10. **For business leaders.** Reinforce to employees that they matter by involving them in decisions that affect their jobs, keeping workloads reasonable, and recognizing their impact. When employees feel they matter at work, they have more bandwidth to care for their families.
11. **For policymakers.** Invest in supports for children and caregivers, such as home visiting and paid leave, so that families feel valued and are able to thrive.

From The Field: Resources

HOW THE GUT AND BRAIN CAN SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH!



May is National Mental Health Awareness Month! The goal is to increase awareness of mental health needs, minimize stigma, and bring support to those with mental health conditions. Recent research has shown that the gut and the brain talk to each other and can influence each other. This is called the “gut-brain axis!” For example, if the brain tells the gut that it’s not feeling well during a mental health episode, that can lead to some symptoms in the gut, like a stomach ache, and even reduce the nutrients absorbed from food. To understand more about how to strengthen this connection between the gut and the brain, let’s first understand two key players in gut health:

- **Probiotics:** Probiotics are living bacteria that are good for you! They naturally live in the human body, primarily in the gut, giving them the name “the gut microbiome.” Probiotics can help keep our gut healthy and, by extension, help our brain stay healthy! Some foods that are rich in probiotics include **yogurt, kimchi, kefir, miso, and sauerkraut.**
- **Prebiotics:** Prebiotics are the “food” for our friendly bacteria in the gut microbiome. These are found in the fibers of plant-based foods. Eating prebiotics keeps the gut microbiome healthy and strong. So any time you eat **fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts/seeds, or legumes,** just think - you’re feeding yourself and your gut microbiome!

Increasing whole, nutrient-rich foods like fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains can improve overall health, especially how our gut supports our brain health. According to some research, this could look like reduced depressive symptoms and increased mood and energy levels!

While nutrition can play a supportive role in mental health wellbeing, it is important to seek medical attention to treat mental health conditions.

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 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!

**Complete the survey by
May 29, 2026.**

Scan this QR code for the survey,



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



Information Session for Cambridge Providers: Special Education for 3 to 5-Year-Olds

Date: Tuesday, May 26, 2026

Time: 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Please register here: <https://bit.ly/4n3l7Aw>

Join the Special Start Preschool Leadership Team for an informative session on the special education referral process.

During this presentation, we will cover the range of services provided to children ages 3–5, the different types of referral pathways, areas of suspected disability, and the evaluations used to support identification.

We will also discuss possible next steps and share important team contact information. We look forward to having you join us and learning together!

Thank You to Our Presenters:

Kaitlin Barlow, MEd, BCBA, LABA, Early Childhood
Lead Jennifer Turner, Ed.S, School Psychologist
Beverly Seidenberg, PsyD, LMHC, School Psychologist
Bridget Kelley, Ed.S, NCSP, LEP, School Psychologist
Aubrey Rogers, Ed.S., NCSP, School Psychologist

This information session will be recorded and will be available on the Cambridge Office of Early Childhood website the week after the information session.

For any questions or assistance with registering, please contact Jesus Armenta:
jarmenta@partnerof.cpsd.us

News & Notices

CAMBRIDGE
Office of Early Childhood

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

This Summer Camp 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
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- ♥ 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

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.



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.

Our Mission

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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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617-349-1798