2026 *Early On* Michigan Conference

Be a Gamechanger: Coaching and Teaming for Impact

CLINTON COUNTY RESA
Clinton County Regional Educational Service Agency

MiLEAP
Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential

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Disclaimer

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Agenda at a Glance

Tuesday, November 10, 2026

Preconference Schedule

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Registration and Continental Breakfast
9:00 AM - 11:45 AM	Preconference Morning Sessions
10:15 AM - 10:30 AM	Morning Break
11:45 AM - 12:45 PM	Lunch
1:00 PM - 3:45 PM	Preconference Afternoon Sessions
2:15 PM – 2:30 PM	Afternoon Break

Wednesday, November 11, 2026

Conference Schedule

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM	Registration and Continental Breakfast
7:45 AM	*Early On* Michigan Foundation Silent Auction bidding opens
7:45 AM - 5:00 PM	Vendors and Exhibitors
8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Welcome and Vanessa L. Herrington-Winborne Excellence in Early Intervention Award Christine Callahan, *MA, Director, CCRESA Office of Innovative Projects*
9:00 AM - 10:00 AM	Keynote Session Our Shared Identities as Early Interventionists and Early Childhood Professionals: Who We Are and Why We're Amazing Dana Childress, *PhD, Old Dominion University*
10:00 AM - 10:15 AM	Break

Please note the staggered start time for Conference Session 1

10:15 AM - 11:45 AM	Conference Sessions 1A-1D
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM	Conference Sessions 1E-1I
11:45 AM - 1:15 PM	Lunch
12:15 PM - 1:10 PM	Poster Session
1:15 PM - 2:45 PM	Conference Session 2
2:45 PM - 3:00 PM	Break
3:00 PM - 4:30 PM	Conference Session 3

Thursday, November 12, 2026

Conference Schedule

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM	Registration and Continental Breakfast
7:30 AM - 10:00 AM	*Early On* Michigan Foundation Silent Auction
8:30 AM - 9:45 AM	MiLEAP and Celena Barnes Award Janet Timbs, *EdS, Manager/Birth to Five Early Childhood Special Education, Office of Early Childhood Development and Family Education, Office of Great Start*
9:45 AM - 10:00 AM	Break
10:00 AM	Conclusion of the *Early On* Michigan Foundation Silent Auction
10:00 AM - 11:30 AM	Conference Session 4
11:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Lunch
12:30 PM - 2:00 PM	Conference Session 5

Registration

Registration for the 2026 *Early On* Conference, *Be a Gamechanger: Coaching and Teaming for Impact* is open!
Preconference: https://eotta.ccresa.org/Event.php?id=5176
Conference: https://eotta.ccresa.org/Event.php?id=5186

Poster Session

The 2026 poster session will be located inside the Governor's Hall. Poster presentations relevant to current research and practice in early intervention, parent and family involvement, leadership and other related areas will be featured. Posters are offered from 12:15 to 1:10 p.m., during lunch, on Wednesday only. Join this opportunity to talk to presenters informally about their topics and research!

Vendors and Exhibitors

This year's conference once again offers an opportunity for vendors and exhibitors to share their resources, products and services. Come and enjoy the many offerings. The vendors and exhibitors are located in the Governors' Hall level and will display Wednesday only.

Early On Michigan Foundation Silent Auction

Back by popular demand, *Early On* Training and Technical Assistance is hosting a silent auction to benefit the *Early On* Michigan Foundation! There will be amazing items for your bidding pleasure. Bidding will be open Wednesday at 7:45 AM through 10:00 AM on Thursday. All funds raised will go to the *Early On* Michigan Foundation, which will match funds, up to $10,000. The Foundation will award 100% of proceeds from the Silent Auction - plus matching funds - as mini-grants to the field. We will be using an online platform, 32Auction, for this year's silent auction. 32Auction will allow for online bidding and participants to pay via their credit or debit card.

If you would prefer to make a direct monetary donation instead of—or in addition to—bidding on an auction item, you can easily do so right through the 32 Auction app! You can check out all of the wonderful items and begin bidding at *Early On* Michigan Foundation Silent Auction.

Preconference AM | November 10 | 9:00-11:45 AM

P1A

Early Intervention Leadership Through an Adult Learning Lens

Dana Childress, *PhD*, *Old Dominion University*

As an early intervention leader, you engage adult learners every day. Whether your staff are new or more seasoned, there is always something to learn so it can be helpful to consider how you cultivate a culture of learning, effective communication and relationships, and shared responsibility. This session will examine Early Intervention leadership through an adult learning theory lens. We will discuss the 5 competency sets for effective Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education leadership then connect them to adult learning principles. Through engaging discussion, we will share lots of strategies for developing your leadership because you are an adult learner too.

Instructional level: Advanced

P1B Advancing Parent-Child Interaction Observation in Early Intervention

Mary Mackrain, *PhD, MDHHS*

What does quality parent-child interaction really look like, and how do early intervention providers observe it with skill, cultural humility, and reflective awareness? This preconference session builds on Michigan's Parent-Child Interaction Observation Guide, combining hands-on practice, video analysis, peer feedback, and case scenarios to strengthen service providers' confidence and competency in observing, interpreting, and applying interaction data to support families.

Instructional level: Introductory

P1C Promoting Children's Literacy and Healthy Digital Media Habits *Early On*

Nicole Hamp, *MD, Autism Alliance of Michigan*
Tiffany Munzer, *MD, Michigan Medicine*

During this session, presenters will discuss the evidence base and approaches for promoting early childhood literacy. Additionally, presenters will review what the research supports on digital media use and how to balance opportunities for early childhood literacy in the context of a wired world.

Instructional level: Introductory

P1D Behavior as Communication: Rethinking Our Role and Response

Kelsey Brewer, *MA, Alt + Shift*
Megan Hojnacki, MA, CCC-CLP, *Alt + Shift*

When a toddler "acts out," what are they really telling us? Explore behavior as a primary communication form for infants and toddlers with complex needs. Shift from seeking compliance to supporting communication. Participants will examine adult bias, use the Communicative Behavior Inventory to attribute meaning to actions, and explore using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) to support autonomy and connection within natural daily routines.

Instructional level: Intermediate

P1E When Motor Milestones Don't Follow the Expected Path: Guidance for Early Interventionists and Parents

Sandra Newitt, *PT, MSPT, Livonia Public Schools/Wayne RESA*
Lisa Perugi *EdS, IMH-E®, Wayne RESA*

Modern caregiving practices often limit movement opportunities, contributing to delayed and atypical motor development. This session explores how to recognize concerning movement patterns, identify foundational movement challenges and compensatory strategies, and implement practical, play-based interventions. Participants will leave with frameworks for movement analysis, functional outcome planning, and intervention within everyday routines.

Instructional level: Intermediate

Preconference PM | November 10 | 1:00-3:45 PM

P2A Early Intervention Leadership Through an Adult Learning Lens

Dana Childress, *PhD, Old Dominion University*

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Instructional level: Advanced

P2B Advancing Parent-Child Interaction Observation in Early Intervention

Mary Mackrain, *PhD, MDHHS*

What does quality parent-child interaction really look like, and how do early intervention providers observe it with skill, cultural humility, and reflective awareness? This preconference session builds on Michigan's Parent-Child Interaction Observation Guide, combining hands-on practice, video analysis, peer feedback, and case scenarios to strengthen service providers' confidence and competency in observing, interpreting, and applying interaction data to support families.

Instructional level: Introductory

P2C ISD-Level *Early On* Coordinators and Administrators: Learn, Collaborate, and Elevate

Sophia D'Agostino, *PhD, Utah State University*
Jennifer Champagne, *PhD, Clinton County RESA Office of Innovative Projects*

This preconference session is for ISD-level *Early On* Coordinators and Administrators and is replacing the *Early On* Coordinator breakfast. All ISD-level *Early On* Coordinators and Administrators are encouraged to attend. The focus will be on Practice-Based Coaching for early interventionists. The session will feature highlights from the *Early On* Workforce Coaching Project and an in-depth discussion of Practice-Based Coaching. Dr. Sophia D'Agostino will be presenting content, sharing resources, and facilitating discussion to extend our learning.

Instructional level: Intermediate

P2D Before the Behavior: A Four-Pillar Framework for Reflective Birth to 3 Coaching

Jana Curtis, *MA, Weaving Legacy*

Before the Behavior introduces the Four Pillars Framework as a reflective coaching lens for Birth to 3 professionals. Participants will explore how readiness, relationship, resilience, and resourcefulness shape regulation and engagement before challenges escalate. This session strengthens coaching practice by shifting the focus from managing behavior to designing supportive conditions for infants, toddlers, families, and providers.

Instructional level: Intermediate

P2E Nurturing the Nurturer: Caring for Yourself While You Care for Families

Audrey Farrugia, *PhD, CCC-SLP, Eastern Michigan University*
Stacey Konarske, *MA, Wayne RESA*
Angela Colaluca, *MA, Wayne RESA*

Working in *Early On* is as rewarding as it is demanding. Navigating the complexities of early intervention can lead professionals toward exhaustion. This session is designed to move beyond the clichés of self-care and dive into evidence-based strategies to protect your energy. Participants will identify the signs of compassion fatigue and build a toolkit to stay engaged in the profession.

Instructional level: Introductory

Keynote Session | November 11 | 9:00-10:00 AM

Keynote Our Shared Identities as Early Interventionists and Early Childhood Professionals: Who We Are and Why We're Amazing

Dana Childress, *PhD, Old Dominion University*

We love the work we do, even on the hard days and always on the days we can't wait to tell others about. On either day, this work comes with unique challenges too - think pink eye and "behavior" or pets on home visits and travel time. Balancing the joys and challenges of work in early intervention and early childhood is not always easy, so let's take some time to consider what evidence suggests we have in common, what we need as professionals, and how our shared identity guides us. This session will give us space to smile about our success stories, embrace our challenges, sprinkle in a little humor, and perhaps remind ourselves of just how amazing we really are (yes, I mean YOU)!

Instructional level: Introductory

Conference Session 1A-1D | November 11 | 10:15-11:45 AM

1A Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health: Understanding the Psychological Worlds of Very Young Children

Carolyn Dayton, *PhD, LP, LMSW, IMH-E®, Wayne State University*

Discover how early attachment shapes a child's psychological world from birth to three. We will explore how babies rely on adult relationships to thrive physically, emotionally, and socially. We will examine early relational challenges and provide actionable strategies for *Early On* providers to support families and young children when mental health and relationship issues emerge.

Instructional level: Introductory

1B Connecting Families to More: The Partnership Between *Early On* and Help Me Grow

Courtney Gupta, *MA, Clinton County RESA Office of Innovative Projects*

Early On providers play a critical role in supporting children and families, but developmental support extends beyond intervention services. Help Me Grow is a family-centered care coordination program that connects families with community resources, including developmental screenings, basic needs supports, child care, home visiting, health resources, and other local services that promote healthy development. This session will introduce the Help Me Grow model and explore how it complements *Early O*n by providing coordinated support before, during, and after *Early On* services. Participants will learn when and how to make referrals, strategies for collaborating with Care Coordinators, and how partnerships between *Early On* and Help Me Grow can improve family experiences and strengthen local early childhood systems.

Instructional level: Introductory

1C Low-Level Lead Exposure and the Developing Brain: What EI Providers Need to Know

Nicole Hamp, *MD, MPA, FAAP, Autism Alliance of Michigan*

Despite the known neurotoxic effects, lead exposure remains a persistent and often under-recognized environmental health threat, particularly for infants and young children during critical periods of brain development. Even low levels of lead exposure—previously considered "safe"—are now known to have measurable and lasting effects on neurodevelopment, behavior, and learning. For Early Intervention (EI) professionals, understanding the implications of lead exposure is essential to identifying risk, supporting affected children, and partnering effectively with families.

Instructional level: Introductory

1D Encouraging Communication and Routine Participation in Children with Significant Disabilities, Including Visual Impairment and Deafblindness

Jessicia Klenk, *TCVI, COMS, Washtenaw ISD*

This presentation shares a book project for children who have significant disabilities, providing ways for professionals and family members to learn how to read their cues, find ways to motivate communication, and to engage with their environment. All done in a positive way, focusing on what the child can do and what more is possible.

Instructional level: Intermediate

Conference Session 1E-1I | November 11 | 10:30 AM-12:00 PM

1E Writing Meaningful IFSP Outcomes: A How-To Guide

Dana Childress, *PhD, Old Dominion University*

In this session, we will review key ideas about what well-written outcomes are and are not and ground ourselves in a simple formula for writing outcomes (who, what, where, how). We will also use seven fundamentals of writing individualized, functional, and meaningful IFSP outcomes to guide our thinking as we consider real-life stories, share ideas, critique examples, and practice writing outcomes that are meaningful to all team members, especially families.

Instructional level: Intermediate

1F From First Bites to First Words: A Collaborative Bridge from Feeding to Communication (0–3 Years)

Cristian LaBar, *MOT, OTR/L, C/NDT, CLC, Livingston ESA*
Kristen Mizak, *MA, CCC-SLP, CLC, Livingston ESA*

This session explores the critical connection between oral motor development, feeding skills, and early speech and language outcomes in children from birth to three years. Designed for professionals serving families through *Early On* Michigan, this presentation provides a practical, developmentally informed approach to understanding how early oral motor patterns influence both feeding success and later communication skills.

Instructional level: Intermediate

1G Building Together: Our Journey to an Effective Early Childhood Workforce Through the Pyramid Model

Megan Decker, *MA, Ottawa Area ISD*
Maureen Schmidt, *MEd, IMH-E®, Ottawa Area ISD*

This session shares a collaborative journey to build an early childhood workforce using the Pyramid Model across programs. Learn how modules, tiered thinking, an implementation team, and Practice-Based Coaching supported staff buy-in and application. Designed for leaders, participants will gain practical strategies to align programs, strengthen workforce capacity, and move from training to consistent practice.

Instructional level: Introductory

1H Growing Together: How *Early On* and Home Visiting Strengthen Family Support

Rita Trinklein, *MA, MDHHS, Home Visiting Section*
Heather Richards, *LLMSW, MDHHS, Home Visiting Section*

Early On and Michigan's Home Visiting programs each bring unique strengths to supporting infants, toddlers, and their families. When these systems work together, families experience smoother referrals, coordinated developmental supports, and stronger connections to community resources. This session will highlight how *Early On* and Home Visiting partners can build shared processes that improve outcomes and reduce duplication for families. Through pair and share activities and group discussion, participants will explore real examples of effective collaboration, reflect on their own local practices, and identify actionable steps to enhance partnerships in their communities.

Instructional level: Introductory

1I Teaming During Transition: Supporting Families from *Early On* to Preschool Special Education

Kelly S. Kiss, *MAT, Saginaw Valley State University*
Nicole Rethman, *MA, Saginaw ISD*

Transitioning from *Early On* to preschool special education can feel overwhelming for families and challenging for providers coordinating services across systems. This interactive session explores practical coaching and teaming strategies that strengthen collaboration, reduce family anxiety, and support smooth transitions from the IFSP to the IEP process. Participants will leave with tools, communication strategies, and planning resources to help prevent service gaps and improve outcomes for young children and families.

Instructional level: Intermediate

Conference Session 2 | November 11 | 1:15-2:45 PM

2A Post Election: Complex Times Call for Clarity, Focus, and Voice

Maddie Elliott, *BA, Michigan's Children*
Christine Callahan, *MA, Clinton County RESA Office of Innovative Projects*

Changes in state leadership and federal events have created uncertainty regarding funding for early childhood programs. This session clarifies budget processes and their impacts on early childhood system building and services like *Early On* and Head Start. Participants will learn about the *Early On* Coalition and strategies for communicating effectively on behalf of early intervention.

Instructional level: Introductory

2B Potty Training, a Flexible Data-driven Recipe for Toilet Training Success

Catherine Schuh, *OTR/L, Washtenaw ISD*

Research indicates that the most successful toilet training programs include individualized scheduled sit times, positive reinforcement, playful teaching including visual supports, child readiness, and strong parent-teacher collaboration; this program includes all of these layers of support. Presented by an occupational therapist who has supported potty training for 20 years, this is a practical session for all team members (it takes a team to get it done!), including parents and administrators. At the end of this session you will walk away with the knowledge and ambition, the visuals, and data sheets to toilet train all children before they leave preschool.

Instructional level: Intermediate

2C Foundations of Practice-Based Coaching for Early Intervention Providers

Sophia D'Agostino, *PhD, Utah State University*

Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) is an evidence-based approach for supporting early intervention providers in implementing effective caregiver coaching practices with greater confidence and fidelity. This introductory session provides an overview of the PBC framework, including collaborative partnerships, shared goals, focused observation, and reflection with feedback. Participants will explore how coaching promotes reflective practice, strengthens provider capacity, and supports improved outcomes for young children and families.

Instructional level: Introductory

2D Tiny Humans, Big Emotions: Helping Infants and Toddlers Regulate Through Sensory Support

Angela Tucker, *OTR/L, St. Clair County RESA*
Stacy Thomas, *MA, St. Clair County RESA*

Do the children you care for appear more dysregulated than ever? Do you wonder what causes this dysregulation, and more importantly, how can you help your families help their children feel settled in their bodies? In this session, we will dig deeper into the body and the understanding of brain science and dysregulation. You will also be provided with many strategies to add to your toolbox to help calm the chaos that is occurring in your children's bodies and in the care you provide.

Instructional level: Intermediate

2E Bridging the Gap: Strengthening Communication Between Primary Care and *Early On*

Catherine Asher, *PhD, Youth Policy Lab, University of Michigan*
Nikki Hamp, *MD, MPA, FAAP, Autism Alliance of Michigan*

Centering children and families in early intervention requires physicians and *Early On* providers to work together more collaboratively. This session will review results from a pilot study in which primary care pediatricians adopted an eFax system to submit referrals to 1-800-EarlyOn. We will discuss lessons learned, the structural changes that have resulted, and additional opportunities to strengthen communication and collaboration.

Instructional level: Introductory

2F Awareness to Action: Early Identification of Vision Needs in Infants and Toddlers

Johanna Brutvan, *MA, Michigan Department of Education, Resource for Blind/Low Vision and Deaf/Hard of Hearing*

Early identification of vision needs is a game changer for infant and toddler development. This session moves participants from awareness to action by building skills in recognizing early signs, embedding observation into routines, and using coaching strategies with families. Participants will strengthen teaming practices to support timely referrals, ensuring children access the sensory experiences critical for learning and development.

Instructional level: Introductory

2G Beyond the Label: Neuro-Affirming Supports and Gestalt Language Processing in Early Intervention (Birth to 3)

Jennifer Beaudette, *MEd, Copper Country ISD*
Sarah Bodine, *MA, CCC-SLP, Copper Country ISD*

Is your Early Intervention practice truly neuro-affirming? Join us for an evidence-informed session that bridges the gap between traditional developmental milestones and the authentic autistic experience in children aged 0–3. We will dismantle ableist intervention goals and replace them with strategies that support Gestalt Language Processors, sensory regulation, and self-advocacy from the earliest age. Attendees will leave with a toolkit for coaching families on how to validate scripts (echolalia) as meaningful communication and how to build inclusive IFSPs that celebrate neurodiversity.

Instructional level: Intermediate

2H The Championship Mindset: Navigating Procedural Safeguards with Confidence

Gina Birnbaum, *MEd, Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential*
Janet Timbs, *EdS, Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential*

This presentation examines procedural safeguards and dispute resolution within *Early On* Michigan under IDEA Part C. It outlines family rights, including consent, notice, confidentiality, and IFSP participation, including informal resolution, mediation, state complaints, and due process hearings. Emphasis is placed on proactive communication, documentation, and family-centered practices to promote compliance, reduce conflict, and strengthen equitable early intervention services.

Instructional level: Introductory

2I Meeting the Challenge in Childcare Settings 2.0 - How to tailor a partnership

Marceline Moline, *MS, CCC-SLP, Ionia County ISD*
Amanda Callahan, *MS, CCC-SLP, Ionia County ISD*

Childcare is the natural environment for many infants and toddlers with disabilities, however, supporting children in this setting can be challenging. This session will provide a modifiable framework, step by step how to establish the necessary relationships, and ways to educate daycare providers to feel confident in the "when" and "how" to make a referral to *Early On* if necessary.

Instructional level: Intermediate

2J Game Plan for Success: Early Intervention and Parent Partnerships for D/HH

Michelle Garcia, *AuD, MDHHS, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention*
Tori McIntosh, *PhD, Michigan Hands and Voices*
Kate Woodburne, *AuD, Kent ISD*

This session explores factors influencing early intervention enrollment, the impact of parent and audiology support, and strategies to improve outcomes for children with hearing loss. Providers working with birth-to-three populations will learn practical tools to enhance clinical practice, promote timely identification, and strengthen family-to-family support through Michigan Hands & Voices.

Instructional level: Introductory

Conference Session 3 | November 11 | 3:00-4:30 PM

3A Through The Lens: Integrating Video Across the Scope of Early Intervention

Cheryl Granzo, *MA, CCC-SLP, Ionia ISD*

Ready to revolutionize your early intervention practice? Discover how one service area leverages TORSH to transform video into a powerful catalyst for growth. Learn actionable strategies to elevate caregiver reflection, sharpen provider skills, streamline staff evaluations, and boost data collection. Turn standard video into a dynamic tool that strengthens teaming and drives meaningful, real-world outcomes.

Instructional level: Intermediate

3B The Digital Diet: Conversations that Support Healthy Screen Use

Amy Vallad, *Early On Supervisor, Bay Arenac ISD*
Alyssa Hugo, *Early On Coordinator, Bay Arenac ISD*

Young children's screen exposure is widespread, yet families and family-facing professionals often lack a simple, non-judgmental approach for building sustainable screen habits that protect development and family routines. This session introduces the Digital Diet, a practical framework grounded in four pillars, Type, Amount, Balance, and Timing, to support intentional screen use in early childhood contexts. Participants will learn how to move beyond time-only guidance to identify patterns, reduce conflict around transitions, protect sleep and play, and strengthen caregiver-child connection. The session emphasizes feasible, strengths-based strategies that educators and caregivers can use together, including shared language for "guided" versus "screen-free" moments and routines that prioritize high-value interactions such as conversation, movement, and hands-on exploration. Attendees will leave with an approachable framework and actionable steps to support families in making small changes that add up to healthier digital habits for young children.

Instructional level: Intermediate

3C Stronger Together: Building and Sustaining Collaborative PSP Teams

Michelle Pogliano, *EdS, Washtenaw ISD*

Strong teams don't happen by chance—they are built with intention. In this engaging session designed for *Early On* providers, participants will learn how to create sustainable teaming structures within the Primary Service Provider (PSP) model. Discover practical tools for establishing team norms, clarifying expectations, and implementing structured problem-solving protocols that promote trust, shared accountability, and family-centered practice. Participants will walk away with ready-to-use templates and strategies to strengthen collaboration across disciplines and improve outcomes for infants, toddlers, and families.

Instructional level: Intermediate

3D Strengths-Based and Neurodiversity-Affirming Assessment and Evaluation

Jamila Beulle, *MA, CCC-SLP, Van Buren ISD*
Carrie McCarter, *MA, CCC-SLP, Van Buren ISD*

Early On evaluators are often the first professionals communicating information to families about their child's disabilities. This session focuses on incorporating strengths-based evaluation/assessment methods and neurodiversity-affirming language into reports and eligibility conversations. Participants will critically analyze their current practices and identify strategies to implement neurodiversity-friendly evaluations and report writing as well as sharing and creating strengths-based assessment materials.

Instructional level: Intermediate

3E From Screening to Support: Addressing Inequities for Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Kelly Dunham, *BA, Michigan Department of Education, Resource for Blind/Low Vision and Deaf/Hard of Hearing*
Amy M. Lowrie, *MS, CCC-SLP, Eaton RESA*

Early screening is just the beginning. Many children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing still face gaps in specialized supports, local practices, and team knowledge. This session explores these inequities from statewide and local perspectives and shares practical strategies to ensure timely, coordinated, and equitable early intervention for children and their families.

Instructional level: Intermediate

3F It's About Who You Know: Developing Your Social Network to Foster Interprofessional Collaboration

Lauren Duvall, *MA, Michigan State University*

This session introduces a social network approach to understanding interprofessional collaboration. Presenting data from over 200 *Early On* providers, we will visualize current teaming patterns and explore how network characteristics, including professional diversity, and interprofessional collaboration attitudes shape practice. This session will teach you how to map, evaluate, and adapt your social network to support your professional and clinical goals.

Instructional level: Intermediate

3G Effective Listening for Understanding, Trust, and Collaboration

Taryn Francis, *MAE, Special Education Mediation Services*

Communication shapes nearly every aspect of our personal and professional lives. According to Stephen Covey, "Communication is the most important skill in life. We spend most of our waking hours communicating." We spend years learning to speak, read and write, but very few of us have received training or education on listening for deep understanding. This learning opportunity will focus on how to be an effective listener and how listening contributes to mutual understanding, trust, and collaboration.

Instructional level: Introductory

3H Game-Changing Coaching: Building Parent Confidence for the Hours Between Visits

Barbara Holmes, *PhD, Muskegon County ISD*
Liz Alexander, *MA, CCC-SLP, Muskegon County ISD*

True early intervention happens in the moments between home visits. To be a "game changer" for families, educators must move beyond providing suggestions and master the art of coaching. This session is designed for intermediate-level professionals who want to deepen their ability to empower parents to be their child's "first best teacher" during life's most challenging behavioral moments.

Drawing on 30 years of experience and the evidence-based frameworks of Sheldon and Rush, Cari Ebert, and Conscious Discipline, this interactive session focuses on shifting parent mindsets from overwhelmed to capable. Through a combination of instructional dialogue and hands-on practice, attendees will learn how to facilitate joint planning and reflective feedback that sticks. You will leave with practical strategies to build caregiver confidence, ensuring that when tough behaviors arise, parents have the tools and the self-assurance to implement solutions successfully on their own.

Instructional level: Intermediate

3I Understanding and Accurately Reporting Early Childhood Transition from *Early On* to Preschool Special Education

Colleen O'Connor, *MA, Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential*
Mark Kuipers, *MA, Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential*

Participants will understand and learn how to accurately document and report early childhood transition data within the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS), with attention to common reporting challenges and sources of error.

Instructional level: Intermediate

3J Playbook to Motor Development: Put Me in Coach!

Sara Roskovensky, *DPT, Washtenaw ISD*
Elizabeth (Libby) Widmer, *MS, OTR/L, Washtenaw ISD*

Motor delays are a common referral reason for *Early On* in Michigan. This session will explore typical motor development including gross motor and fine motor skills. We will then learn and practice strategies to address common motor delays and deviations from typical. We will utilize power points, videos, and hands-on practice to explore these introductory skills. You will leave this session with the confidence to say, "Put me in coach!"

Instructional level: Introductory

Conference Session 4 | November 12 | 10:00-11:30 AM

4A The Big Impact of Little Switches: A Hands-On Workshop

Natalie O'Laughlin, *BSN, RN, Plymouth Canton Community Schools*
Rachel Sloan, *LSLS Cert. AVEd, Plymouth Canton Community Schools*

Adaptive switches empower individuals with disabilities to engage with items they might otherwise find inaccessible. The foundation for success with more advanced technologies, such as assistive augmented communication devices, starts with simple switches. In an article by Marotta and Dumitrescu featured in the August/September 2023 issue of Closing the Gap, they note: "When first developing cause and effect skills, one of the most widely used motivators is switch-adapted toys." These toys offer children the chance to cultivate vital skills, including cause and effect, motor planning, and joint attention. Discover the benefits of switches for early communication, enjoy hands-on play with switches, and create a battery interpreter to take home.

Instructional level: Introductory

4B Connecting through Play: Fostering Strong, Meaningful Connections and Supporting Infant and Toddler Social Emotional Development through Child-Led Play

Amanda Nicolussi, *MOT, OTR/L, Plymouth Canton Community Schools*

This dynamic session will introduce the DIR (Developmental, Individual-Differences and Relationship-based) model. Learn to foster strong, meaningful connections and support infant and toddler social emotional development using child-led play. Participate in hands-on practice, applying strategies learned with peers during breakout activities. We will end by collaborating together to brainstorm strategies to utilize with families and children on current caseloads.

Instructional level: Intermediate

4C Beyond Translation: Connecting Across Language and Culture in Early Intervention

Noel Kelty, *PhD, Oakland University*

Early intervention is most effective when it reflects families' languages, cultures, and everyday experiences. This session highlights evidence-based practices that strengthen partnerships with multilingual and multicultural families through shared understanding and collaboration. Participants will explore practical strategies to embed supports within meaningful routines and build more responsive, relationship-centered approaches to service delivery.

Instructional level: Intermediate

4D Rewind, Reflect, Respond: Using Video Feedback in Early Intervention

Micki Kollman, *MA, CCC-SLP, Washtenaw ISD*

Do you struggle to get caregivers to reflect during their home visit? Video feedback has been proven to help adults improve self-reflection, motivation, and skill acquisition. Join me and learn how to use video feedback during your home visits to help caregivers better facilitate their child's development.

Instructional level: Intermediate

4E Navigating the Determination of Michigan Mandatory Special Education for Infants and Toddlers, Birth to Age Three

Janet Timbs, *EdS, Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential*
Jorri Novak, *MA, CCC-SLP, Clinton County RESA Office of Innovative Projects*
Kelly Dunham, *BA, Michigan Department of Education, Resource for Blind/Low Vision and Deaf/Hard of Hearing*
Johanna Brutvan, *MA, Michigan Department of Education, Resource for Blind/Low Vision and Deaf/Hard of Hearing*

This session is intended to provide an overview of the current Michigan Mandatory Special Education Birth to Three Eligibility Guidance documents developed by the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) with the assistance of stakeholder/field perspectives and input.

Instructional level: Introductory

4F Authentic Storytelling: Empowering the Family Voice in Transition

Jen Sova, *Kalamazoo RESA*

This session reframes early interventionists as guides—not gatekeepers—by strengthening family voice, advocacy, and leadership during the transition to preschool. Participants learn practical strategies and simple storytelling tools families can create to share their child's strengths, needs, and identity, fostering more inclusive, family-driven transition practices.

Instructional level: Intermediate

4G Aligned for Impact: Integrating Medical and Educational Supports for Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Kelly Starr, *MA, CCC-SLP, LSLS Cert. AVT, University of Michigan*

Participants will explore how services delivered in medical settings (including audiology and speech-language therapy) differ from supports provided through *Early On* and educational programs, and why both are essential for long-term success. The presentation will also share strategies for improving communication, aligning goals across settings, and building sustainable partnerships that promote consistent, child-centered support from early identification through school-age services.

Instructional level: Introductory

4H Beyond Referrals: Maximizing MiEarlyChildhood.org for *Early On* Coordination

Emilie Brzak, *OTR/L, Clinton County RESA Office of Innovative Projects*
Emily Brewer, *MA, Ingham ISD*
Rachel Denis, *MA, CCC-SLP; IMH-E®, Eastern Upper Peninsula ISD*
Chris Reynolds, *MPT, Iosco RESA*
Lisa Perugi, *EdS, IMH-E®, Wayne RESA*

The MiEarlyChildhood.org data system serves as the centralized intake and referral platform for *Early On* services across the state of Michigan. While all ISDs currently utilize the system to receive referrals, many districts are not yet leveraging the full range of features and functionality available through recent system enhancements. This presentation will provide an overview of key tools within MiEarlyChildhood.org that support referral management, workflow organization, communication, and multi-user collaboration. Participants will also hear practical examples from local ISDs demonstrating how the system can be used beyond referral intake to improve coordination and streamline processes across teams of varying sizes. Attendees will leave with strategies and ideas for expanding use of the system to maximize efficiency, strengthen collaboration, and enhance data management practices within their own ISDs.

Instructional level: Intermediate

4I From Early Language Delays to Later Outcomes: Connecting Research to Practice in Early Intervention

Dawn Koger, *PhD, Oakland Schools*
Carla Juras, *BS, Oakland Schools*

Early language can't wait! This session highlights research linking early communication delays to later literacy and academic outcomes and the powerful role of early intervention. Participants will understand the "why", learn to translate research into clear talking points, and embed simple, evidence-based strategies into everyday routines with families.

Instructional level: Introductory

Conference Session 5 | November 12 | 12:30-2:00 PM

5A Addressing Compassion Fatigue: Keeping Your Team in the Game

Bonny Dent, *MS, Berrien RESA*

Compassion is a powerful attribute of the *Early On* team in coaching families, though can result in compassion fatigue. Identifying and addressing compassion fatigue within *Early On* teams, including strategies to address it, allows team members to stay in the game of supporting families and each other.

Instructional level: Introductory

5B Beyond the Spoon: Empowering Families around Feeding in Early Intervention

Teri Melchert, *OTR/L, Clinton County RESA Office of Innovative Projects*

Pediatric feeding intervention often defaults to therapist-directed models, hindering sustainable outcomes. This session provides an advanced framework for early intervention providers to transition to a comprehensive, coaching-based approach. We will explore integrating trauma-informed, responsive, and routines-based strategies to address complex feeding difficulties, fostering caregiver capacity and knowledge. Participants will gain actionable tools to empower families daily.

Instructional level: Intermediate

5C Game Changer in Action: Coaching Teams to Support Young Learners with a Traumatic Brain Injury

Melissa Karsten, *MA, Oakland Schools*

This session will equip you with foundational knowledge of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), including causes, symptoms, and developmental impacts. Explore team-based supports, and assessment practices to maximize impact in early childhood classrooms. Attendees will leave with data collection tools, resources for collaboration, forms to assist with recognizing TBI, and materials to boost learning outcomes for young children.

Instructional level: Intermediate

5D From Assessment to Action: Supporting Early Language Outcomes of Children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Sara Sibble, *BA, Michigan Department of Education, Resource for Blind/Low Vision and Deaf/Hard of Hearing*

This session explores how early intervention providers can use a DHH-informed lens to move from language assessment to actionable support for infants and toddlers who are deaf or hard of hearing. Participants will examine LEAD-K Michigan tools, learn strategies for accessible assessment, interpret results beyond scores, and connect findings to functional, family-centered outcomes that strengthen early language development.

Instructional level: Intermediate

5E *Early On* and the Michigan Child Welfare System

Beth Jenkins, *MSW, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services*
Laura Goldthwait, *MEd, Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential*

This session will provide an intro to the child welfare system with an understanding of Child Protective Services (CPS) investigations and how *Early On* can best engage with those families. We will cover topics including Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), IDEA, who is referred to *Early On*, barriers to working with families involved in the child welfare system, and the Uninterrupted Scholars Act.

Instructional level: Introductory

5F The Heart of the Game: Moving from Service Provider to Lifeline

Dr. Jamie McClintic, *OTD, OTR/L, Alpena Montmorency Alcona ESD*

What does it truly mean to change the game for a family? Dr. Jamie McClintic explores the intersection of professional expertise and a mother's heart. Drawing on 24 years as an OT and her daughter's Down syndrome diagnosis, Jamie moves beyond checklists to show how coaching and humanity transform early intervention from a service model into a literal lifeline.

Instructional level: Introductory

5G Upping your Game with Endorsement to Impact your Team and Community

Stephanie Hirchert-Walton, *ACSW, LMSW, IMH-E®, Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsement® Ambassador*

This session explores how IECMH Endorsement® strengthens *Early On* professionals' competence, confidence, and resilience by centering caregiver-child relationships. Participants will learn how Endorsement aligns with daily practice, supports reflective, trauma-informed care, and reduces burnout. The session also demystifies the application process and provides a clear roadmap for using Endorsement as a quality marker in early intervention work.

Instructional level: Introductory

5H Leading Inclusion in Early Childhood Systems: What Helps Leaders Sustain Inclusive Practice

Sara Leggett, *EdD, NCSP, Lake Orion Community Schools*

How do early childhood leaders sustain inclusive practices when systems are not always designed for inclusion? This session shares findings from a grounded theory study exploring how early childhood leaders develop inclusive consciousness, a process through which awareness and action combine to support inclusion for young children with disabilities. Participants will explore common system challenges and reflect on leadership strategies to sustain inclusive practices in early childhood programs.

Instructional level: Intermediate

5I Child Outcomes Summary Data - Making it Count!

Lisa Perugi, *EdS, IMH-E®, Wayne RESA*

Attendees will learn why we must report on the three global child outcomes, when to report them, brief review of how to report them and the four essential components of the Child Outcome Summary (COS) Process. Strategies will be shared to ensure quality, timely data to ensure matched records are achieved for all.

Instructional level: Advanced

Conference Registration Information

Preconference rates:

By October 4:	$195
Student/LICC Parent:	$55
After October 4:	$250
Student/LICC Parent:	$55

Conference rates:

By October 4:	$325
Student/LICC Parent:	$85
After October 4:	$375
Student/LICC Parent:	$85

Conference 1-day attendance rates:

By October 4:	$165
Student/LICC Parent:	$55
After October 4:	$215
Student/LICC Parent:	$55

Applying for Discounted Rates:

Full-time Students who wish to attend and receive the discounted rate must provide documentation on university letterhead indicating their enrollment at the college or university.

Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC) parents who wish to attend and receive the discounted rate must provide documentation on ISD/agency letterhead indicating their current involvement as an LICC parent.

Attendees traveling more than 300 miles, one-way, to attend the preconference and/or conference are eligible for the discounted rate of half off the preconference and/or conference rates.

Please email requests for discounted rates and documentation to eoconference@ccresa.org. Registration Procedures:

Please register online at http://www.eotta.ccresa.org.

Please remit payment online by credit card, check, or purchase order within seven days to:
CCRESA OIP, 240 S. Bridge St., Suite 250, DeWitt, MI 48820.

Please make checks payable to **Clinton County RESA.**

If you would like to request an all-inclusive invoice to cover the costs of multiple team members, please send a request to eoconference@ccresa.org, including a list of participant names attending the preconference and conference.

Please direct registration questions to eoconference@ccresa.org or call (866) 334-5437.

Cancellation Policy

Cancellation requests must be submitted via email to eoconference@ccresa.org on or before November 3, 2026. A $15.00 processing fee is charged for each cancellation. The full conference fee is due for cancellations after November 3, 2026. Substitutions may be made up to the start of the conference.

Accessibility Accommodations

We are committed to making our conference accessible and welcoming to all attendees. If you need accommodations—such as mobility, visual, hearing, or other assistance—to participate effectively in the event, please indicate your needs in your online registration form. You can also contact CCRESA OIP at (866) 334-5437 or eoconference@ccresa.org. Please submit requests at least 4 weeks in advance (by October 13) to ensure we have adequate time to fulfill your accommodation requirements. We will make every reasonable effort to accommodate requests received after this date.

Grand Traverse Resort

100 Grand Traverse Resort Village Blvd, Acme, MI 49610

For conference participants, a block of rooms is reserved at the Grand Traverse Resort at the rate of $98.00 for hotel guest rooms and $169.00 for tower guestrooms, applicable Monday, November 9, through Thursday, November 12. Additional adults in the guest's room are $15.00 per person. An assessment tax of 5% for local lodging applies. A daily resort fee of $20.95 will be added to the guest room charge, which includes high-speed internet access in hotel and tower guest rooms, daily newspaper upon request, and use of safe deposit box, free parking, unlimited use of resort fitness center including cardiovascular and strength training equipment, whirlpools, saunas and indoor pools, and on-property shuttle service to Cherry Capital Airport and Turtle Creek Casino. Rooms are equipped with coffee makers, hair dryers, and irons.

The Grand Traverse Resort is happy to honor the *Early On* discounted group rate for our block of rooms until October 19, 2026, subject to availability. Please remember to bring your tax-exempt ID information with you to supply to hotel staff upon check-in. An individual's deposit is refundable to that individual minus a $25.00 cancellation fee if the GTR receives notice of the cancellation at least 72 hours prior to scheduled arrival.

Registration can be made by either:

- Calling the hotel directly at (800)-968-7352 or (231)-543-6001 and mention group code **ERO1126** and the *Early On* Conference 2026
- Using the online system to book directly, Hotel Link for Reservations.

Additional Lodging Options

Sleep Inn:

5520 US 31 North, Acme, MI 49610
$74.00 Queen or King (reserved by October 12, 2026)

Call Hotel Front Desk: 231-938-7000 and mention the *Early On* Conference or book online.

Pointes North Beachfront Resort Hotel:

2211 US 31 North, Traverse City, MI 49686
$89.00 King Studio (reserved by October 12, 2026)

Call Hotel Front Desk: 231-938-9191 and mention the *Early On* Conference.

Holiday Inn Express & Suites:

3536 Mt Hope Rd. Williamsburg, MI 49690
$99.00 Queen (reserved by October 26, 2026)

Call Hotel Front Desk: 231-938-2600 and mention the *Early On* Conference or book online.

ParkShore Resort:

1401 US 31 North, Traverse City, MI 49686
$159.99-169.99 Queen or King (reserved by September 9, 2026)

Call Hotel Front Desk: 231-947-3800 and mention the *Early On* Conference or book online.

Directions

From Grand Rapids:

Go north on US-131 until you reach M-72 in Kalkaska. Go west on M-72 approximately 15 miles to Acme. Go north (right) on US- 31 about ½ mile. The resort will be on the east (right) side of the road.

From Detroit:

Take I-75 north through Saginaw until you reach exit 254 (M-72/Grayling). Go west on M-72 approximately 35-40 miles through Kalkaska into Acme. Go north (right) on US-31 about ½ mile. The resort will be on the east (right) side of the road.

From Lansing:

Take US-127 north to merge with I-75. After the merge, continue to exit 254 (M-72/Grayling). Go west on M-72 approximately 35-40 miles through Kalkaska into Acme. Go north (right) on US-31 about ½ mile. The resort will be on the east (right) side of the road.

From Mackinaw City:

Take I-75 south until you reach exit 254 (M-72/Grayling). Go west on M-72 approximately 35-40 miles through Kalkaska into Acme. Go north (right) on US-31 about ½ mile. The resort will be on the east (right) side of the road.

Things to do in Traverse City

While you're in Traverse City, take advantage of the area's restaurants, shops, and local attractions. Downtown Traverse City offers a variety of dining, shopping, breweries, wineries, and coffee shops For a complete listing of Traverse City experiences, visit www.traversecity.com.

Conference App

The 2026 *Early On* Conference will use the Whova event app to help you make the most of your conference experience. Through Whova, you can view the conference agenda, build your personal schedule, access session materials and important event information, and receive timely updates about the conference. Download the Whova app or access the event through the web portal using the email address you used to register for the conference. The Whova app will launch in September. Additional instructions for accessing and using Whova will be provided prior to the event.

Continuing Education Credits

CCRESA OIP has submitted applications to award professional learning credit through a variety of professional learning providers and associations. We are pleased to provide these opportunities for our conference participants, pending approval. Click here to view all presenters' disclosure information. This event, including preconference and conference, is 13.5 Contact Hours.

State Continuing Education Clock Hours

An application has been submitted for State Continuing Education Clock Hours (SCECHs). Credit will be offered for all workshop sessions, (excluding the poster session).

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

ASHA Professional Development Hours (PDHs) will be offered for all workshops (excluding poster exhibition).

Social Work Contact Hours

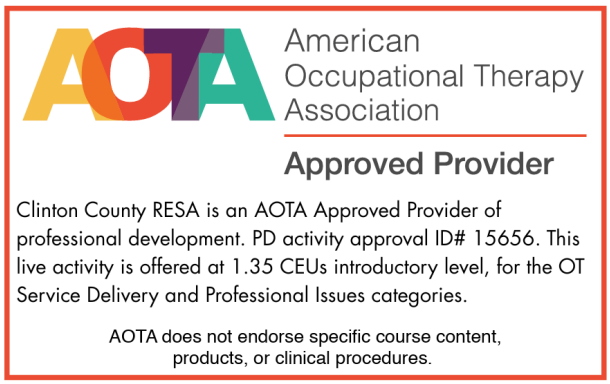
An application has been submitted for Social Work Contact Hours. Credit will be offered for all workshops (excluding the poster session), pending approval. Course approval information will be available at the conference.

Michigan Physical Therapy Association

An application has been submitted to The Michigan Physical Therapy Association for professional development requirement credits. Credit will be offered for all workshops (excluding the poster session). Course approval information will be available at the conference.

American Occupational Therapy Association

An application has been submitted to the American Occupational Therapy Association for professional development requirement credits. Credit will be offered for all workshops (excluding the poster session), up to 1.35 CEUs. Course approval information will be available at the conference.



Target Audience: *Early On* Coordinators, Administrators, and Service Providers, families, and students

Educational Level: Intermediate

Learning Outcomes

After attending the 2026 *Early On* Conference, participants will be able to:

1. Apply evidence-based early intervention practices, including routines-based intervention, caregiver coaching, and family-centered service delivery, to support children's participation in meaningful daily activities and improve child and family outcomes.
2. Integrate current research and emerging evidence related to infant and early childhood development, communication, feeding, trauma, autism, hearing loss, and other developmental needs into occupational therapy and interdisciplinary early intervention practice to enhance service quality and participation-based outcomes.
3. Implement effective collaboration, coaching, and interdisciplinary teaming strategies to strengthen partnerships with families and professionals, promote participation in everyday routines, and improve outcomes for infants, toddlers, and young children with developmental delays or disabilities.