



## Infant/Toddler Professionals: Collaborating within the Profession

Training and professional development can be an exciting way to learn. It can also be a great way to connect with your peers. During trainings, you may enjoy getting to know others who have the same love for infants and toddlers. Another way to stay connected is to get involved with professional organizations in the field of early childhood education. Becoming a member of a professional organization can provide many benefits. For example, joining a professional organization can

- ◆ offer opportunities for your professional development through workshops, conferences, webinars, and resources;
- ◆ help you stay informed about current issues in the field;
- ◆ keep you aware of important research and policy development;
- ◆ connect you with others who share your professional viewpoints and goals;
- ◆ provide materials and resources to help you share information with others, including families;
- ◆ support your advocacy efforts in early childhood education; and
- ◆ give you opportunities to share your experience with others in the field.

The following are just a few of the national professional organizations that are helpful for teachers of infants and toddlers to join. Click on each link to learn more about the goals of the organization, the resources it provides, and ways to become involved in its work. Each website also includes information about how to become a member.

### Zero To Three

[www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

Founded in 1977, Zero To Three, is a professional organization dedicated to the well-being of infants and toddlers. Its mission is “to ensure that all babies and toddlers have a strong start in life” (Zero To Three, 2017, para. 1). This website has many resources for caregivers and families, including those about high-quality, relationship-based care specifically for infants and toddlers. The organization is also highly active in advocacy and policy efforts with the goal of making sure that all infants and toddlers have the chance to succeed.

### National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

[www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)

With a membership of more than 60,000 people, NAEYC is the largest early childhood organization in the world. According to its website, “NAEYC promotes high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age 8, by connecting practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children” (NAEYC, n.d., para. 1). There are different membership levels to select, and you can choose to receive a subscription to one of NAEYC’s high-quality publications—*Young Children* or *Teaching Young Children*.



## National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)

[www.nafcc.org](http://www.nafcc.org)

This organization is dedicated to promoting high-quality early childhood experiences within family child care programs. According to its website, “NAFCC is working to prioritize the role of family child care and promote access, affordability and quality of early care and education” (NAFCC, n.d., “NAFCC Policy Priorities, para. 1). NAFCC manages a family child care accreditation program and sponsors an annual conference specifically for those who work in the field of family child care.

## Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

[www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org)

According to its website, “the Council for Exceptional Children is a professional association of educators dedicated to advancing the success of children with exceptionalities. We accomplish our mission through advocacy, standards, and professional development” (CEC, n.d., para. 1). Members can join one of CEC’s many special interest divisions, including the Division for Early Childhood (DEC), which supports professionals who work with children who have special needs, birth through age 8, and their families.

## Child Care Aware of America

<http://usa.childcareaware.org/members-providers/membership/>

According to its website, Child Care Aware of America “is a national membership-based nonprofit organization working to advance a high-quality, affordable child care system that supports children’s growth, development, and early education” (Child Care Aware of America, 2017, para. 1). Members of Child Care Aware of America have access to professional development opportunities, networking opportunities, member-only discounts, and research and best practices.

## World Association for Infant Mental Health (WAIMH)

<https://www.waimh.org>

This organization’s “central aim is to promote the mental well-being and healthy development of infants throughout the world, taking into account cultural, regional, and environmental variations, and to generate and disseminate scientific knowledge” (WAIMH, 2017, para. 1). WAIMH membership connects you with infant mental health specialists and provides access to membership publications.

These professional organizations operate on a national or international level. There are also many state-level organizations that offer helpful resources. For example, many states have state-level chapters of NAEYC. Also, different states and territories have other early childhood organizations you can join. For example, South Carolina has the South Carolina Early Childhood Association, Minnesota has the Minnesota Child Care Association, and Washington is home to the Early Childhood Development Association of Washington. Take the time to find out what is available locally and get involved.

## References

Child Care Aware of America. (2017). Membership overview [Web page]. Retrieved March 13, 2018, from <http://usa.childcareaware.org/members-providers/membership/>

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