The N.C. Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE), in partnership with Child Care Services Association, implemented the **Infant Toddler Expansion Program** in the four Transformation Zone counties in northeastern North Carolina (Beaufort, Bertie, Chowan and Hyde) supported by N.C.’s Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant.

The Infant Toddler Expansion Program was designed to support programs to implement high-quality early learning experiences for infants and one-year-olds, resulting in the addition of 125 “new” four- or five-star slots in the Transformation Zone. Initially, child care programs with fewer than four- stars serving infants and toddlers on subsidy in Beaufort, Bertie, Chowan, and Hyde Counties were eligible to apply to receive improvement grants and technical assistance support from the Infant-Toddler Specialist. The goals of improvement grants and technical assistance support were to support programs to achieve a four- or five-star rated license.

Two sites with four stars were eager to participate and were approved by DCDEE to participate with the goal that each would move up to five stars. Participating programs that achieved their goal of a four- or five-star rating were eligible to receive enhanced payments for infants and toddlers on DCDEE subsidy and ongoing technical assistance to support continuous quality improvement.

**Successes**

- The infant toddler specialist built on existing relationships in two counties as a result of prior work as a regional specialist.
- Sites that were “ready” to engage with the specialist worked diligently to increase staff knowledge, and implement new practices to support infant and toddler early learning. For example, with the grant funds...
available to purchase needed material and equipment, one director/owner was able to support her staff to attend one of the Infant Toddler Quality Enhancement Project (ITQEP) CEU modules. On her next visit, the specialist noted the enthusiasm of the teachers as they shared what they’d learned and how they intended to use it in their classrooms.

- Administrators in sites that benefited from increased financial stability as a result of the enhanced subsidy payments were able to focus on engaging with the specialist to support a culture of continuous improvement and reach beyond what had been previously achieved.
- Two participating sites that achieved a higher star rated license as a result of the support received were later approved as North Carolina Babies First (NCB1) sites. This approval led to one of these sites adding an additional infant-toddler classroom with capacity for 10 additional infants and ones (including eight half-day NCB1 slots).

**County outcomes**

Beaufort County: Five centers participated, four increased star rating - For the programs that received stipends for improved slots, 37 were subsidy slots and 79 were other payee slots.

Chowan County: Three participated and one increased star rating - For the program that received the stipend for improved slots, all 15 slots were subsidy slots.

Ultimately, 52 slots received at least one stipend for improved star ratings.

**Program Director Testimonials**

- The assistance provided has been phenomenal. Our infant/toddler program has improved in quality and execution, as well as the physical appearance. We have fully implemented the strategies, techniques and best practices provided by our Infant Toddler Specialist.
- The program has been very beneficial to our center as a whole as well as to my teachers and their perspective as related to their role in children’s lives.
- I see the teachers interacting more with the infants, more books are read, etc. We were able to increase the number and variety of toys in the room. We now use a low table and individual low chairs for young toddlers instead of high chairs.
- We expanded classroom space by removing an unused bathroom, installed mirrors for optimal supervision and improved accessibility of learning materials.

For more information about the Infant Toddler Expansion Program, go to [http://earlylearningchallenge.nc.gov/high-quality-4-5-star-infant-toddler-programs-transformation-zone](http://earlylearningchallenge.nc.gov/high-quality-4-5-star-infant-toddler-programs-transformation-zone)