

EARLY CHILDHOOD

INNOVATION NETWORK PARENT CAFÉ



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**Innovation
Network**

Introduction to the Early Childhood Innovation Network (ECIN)

Launched in 2016, the Early Childhood Innovation Network (ECIN) is a local collaborative of health and education providers, community-based organizations, researchers, parent leaders, and advocates in Washington, DC. Founded by Children's National Hospital, MedStar Georgetown University Hospital and community leaders, ECIN has expanded to include partnerships with Children's Law Center, Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative, The George Washington University, Health Alliance Network, Parent Watch, Total Family Care Coalition, and most recently Georgetown University Thrive Center for Children, Families and Communities. ECIN enhances the health and well-being of children and their families through various initiatives, including HealthySteps and Parent Cafés.

Exploring the Evolution of ECIN and Parent Cafés: A Brief Overview

Be Strong Families Parent Cafés are physically and emotionally safe spaces where parents and caregivers discuss the challenges and triumphs of raising a family. Participants engage in deep self-reflection and peer-to-peer learning, exploring their strengths, learning more about the Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors, and creating strategies from their knowledge and experiences to help strengthen their families.

Upon certification, Parent Café hosts are qualified to utilize the following Protective Factor decks:

- ✓ ECIN Movin' On Up – Parent Café in a Box
- ✓ Parent Cafe in a Box – Updated and Expanded
- ✓ Dads – Parent Cafe in a Box
- ✓ A More Perfect Union – Parent Café in a Box
- ✓ Home Is Where the Heart Is: Conversations to Love and Affirm your LGBTQIA+ Children – Parent Café in a Box
- ✓ Parents of Teens and Emerging Adults – Parent Café in a Box

OUR MISSION



ECIN's mission is to innovate and co-create system transformation in early childhood education and health in the Washington, DC, region, and to catalyze national change.

OUR VISION



ECIN's vision is that all children and families thrive in vibrant and nurturing parent-led communities through authentic and collaborative partnerships.

Benefits of Parent Cafés for Parents and Caregivers

Parent Cafés focus on strategies to strengthen families and prevent adverse childhood experiences. Participants in Parent Cafés learn about protective factors: resilience, relationships, knowledge, support, and communication.

The intended benefits of Parent Cafés include, but are not limited to:



Building Community: Parents can share their experiences and concerns without fear of judgment, discovering they are not alone in their struggles.



Strengthening Relationships: Parents have the opportunity to build connections with others who face similar challenges and experiences.



Developing Skills and Resources: Engaging in structured discussions allows parents to enhance their understanding of local resources that can support their families.



Identifying Strengths and Needs: Parents can recognize their strengths, needs, and challenges, fostering personal growth and resilience.



Learning from Others: Parents can gain valuable insights from peers and guest speakers who share their experiences.

The Power of Parent Cafés: What the Evaluation Shows

As part of its investment in Parent Cafés, ECIN has conducted several evaluation studies:

2019 /

In 2019, ECIN conducted a pilot study of the implementation of virtual Cafés at Children's National, collecting qualitative feedback from 24 participants in a series of four Cafés. These caregivers felt engaged during Parent Café sessions with intentions to both participate and increase their involvement in future Cafés.

2020-2021

In partnership with BSF, our evaluation team analyzed national data from participant surveys collected in 2020-21 and found that parents with more years of experience and whose children have special needs attend more Cafés.

2023

In 2023, we implemented a qualitative community-engaged Photovoice project to better understand how Parent Café participants incorporate the Protective Factors into their daily lives. Images from this project can be seen at <https://www.ecin.org/parent-cafes>.

ECIN Parent Café Trainings

ECIN offers three options for Parent Café trainings:

IN-PERSON PARENT CAFÉ HOST TRAINING (2 Days)

- Trainings are held in person for two consecutive days.
- Participants interested in hosting in-person Parent Cafés utilizing the Be Strong Families Model must be trained and complete all training guidelines in order to be certified as an in-person Parent Café Host.
- Once trained, individuals will be able to host and/or table host in-person Parent Cafés with the Protective Factors decks.

VIRTUAL PARENT CAFÉ HOST TRAINING (3 Days)

- Parent Café Online Host trainings are held virtually for three full consecutive days.
- Participants interested in hosting an online Parent Café utilizing the Be Strong Families Model must be trained and must complete all training guidelines in order to be certified as a Parent Café Online Host.
- Once trained, individuals will be able to host and/or table host online Parent Cafés with the Protective Factors decks.

BREAKOUT ROOM/TABLE HOST TRAINING (2 Hours)

- These in-person trainings allow individuals to support Parent Cafés by managing smaller group discussions as an in-person table host or a virtual breakout room host.

ECIN Parent Café Training schedule: www.ecin.org/innovations/parent-cafes

Disclaimer: ECIN will support training on the Protective Factors and ECIN Economic Mobility decks only. Individuals interested in Vitality decks must go through training with Be Strong Families at their own expense. Parent Cafés are guided by the Be Strong Families (BSF) Model.

After The Training: ECIN Parent Café Community of Practice

Launched in April 2024, the ECIN Parent Café Community of Practice (CoP) is a group of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion related to Parent Cafés. Developed through a collaboration with ECIN-trained Parent Café hosts, this community fosters continuous growth and learning among its members. The CoP convenes quarterly to explore specific topics of interest, such as recruitment, engagement, and sustainability in order to enhance members' knowledge and skills in hosting Parent Cafés effectively.

ECIN Parent Café Deck Movin' on Up: Conversations to Promote Economic Mobility

ECIN is committed to enriching Parent Cafés in the District of Columbia by creating tailored decks that address the unique needs and interests of local families and communities. Our new Movin' on Up deck focuses specifically on economic mobility for communities in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

Interested in becoming a Parent Café Host?

ECIN conducts several Parent Café training sessions throughout the year. For more information, please contact us at ParentCafeTeam@childrensnational.org.



Interested in learning more about ECIN and Parent Cafés?

Visit www.ecin.org or contact us at ParentCafeTeam@childrensnational.org.