



# Supporting Teachers, Strengthening Families Initiative Adds a **National Leadership Program** for Early Childhood Professionals

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Maril Olson and Marilou Hyson

Be-coming a model of diverse leadership and leadership development that reflects the demographics of NAEYC's communities of interest" is one of NAEYC's priorities in 2004–2005. Part of the Association's overall leadership development effort is a new Supporting Teachers, Strengthening Families National Leadership Program operating within NAEYC's Professional Development Division.

## **Why has NAEYC created this leadership program?**

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The National Leadership Program builds on the work of Supporting Teachers, Strengthening Families, NAEYC's Doris Duke Charitable Foundation-funded initiative begun in 2002. The initiative's goal is to engage the early childhood community in preventing child abuse and neglect, promoting children's healthy social and emotional development, and supporting families. The National Leadership Program is a new component of the initiative. Other activities in the initiative include research focused on early childhood professionals, research with families of young children, resource development, presentations at meetings and conferences, and partnerships with other organizations concerned with child and family well-being.

Bringing the initiative's previous work to a larger audience and sustaining its efforts in preventing child abuse and neglect calls for a committed, visible cadre of early childhood leaders. Participants need to have the potential to influence change in practices and public policies, disseminate resources and information, and contribute to an early childhood workforce that is more informed and better prepared to prevent child abuse and neglect, promote children's healthy social and emotional development, and support families. Through the National Leadership Program, NAEYC contributes further to the growing national movement spearheaded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation to prevent child abuse and neglect through the early care and education system.

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## **How will the National Leadership Program work?**

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Two cohorts of up to 24 participants each will participate in the Supporting Teachers, Strengthening Families National Leadership Program in 2005 and 2006. In a competitive application process NAEYC has identified a committed, diverse group of early childhood educators to participate in the first cohort. An intensive, three-day academy on leadership early this year will kick off the first group's year-long commitment to the project (see "Year 2006 Leadership Program Applications").

## Year 2006 Leadership Program Applications

In mid-2005 NAEYC will announce the application process for the second cohort of participants in 2006. For more information about the National Leadership Program or the work of Supporting Teachers, Strengthening Families, visit NAEYC's Web site at:

<http://www.naeyc.org/ece/supporting.asp>

or contact project coordinator Maril Olson by e-mail at:

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Following each group's academy on leadership, participants will

- **Develop and implement individual action plans** that consider their communities' strengths and challenges. Participants' plans will promote the effective use of their new knowledge and skills and their roles as early childhood leaders in their communities.
- **Receive grants** of \$1,000 each to help fund their action plan activities.
- **Be linked to resources, materials, and support** to help them reach their action plan goals.
- **Be connected** through a new online community, so that all leadership program participants may support and learn from one another.
- **Attend NAEYC's 14th National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development**, June 5–8, 2005, in Miami Beach, Florida. They will network with colleagues, learn from experts, and experience specially designed activities to support the leadership program's child abuse prevention agenda.
- **Participate in reporting and evaluating activities.** An external evaluation team from the University of Vermont and the University of Illinois is working with NAEYC to measure the outcomes and effectiveness of the initiative as a whole and to provide evidence on variables relevant to child abuse and neglect prevention. National Leadership Program participants will be a crucial part of this evaluation.

### Who is eligible?

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The Supporting Teachers, Strengthening Families National Leadership Program is open to all NAEYC members. NAEYC welcomes applications that reflect diverse perspectives, cultures, and experiences. The strongest candidates will demonstrate commitment, authority, and influence in early childhood practice—those already well positioned to receive and disseminate information and resources to the larger population of early childhood educators and to influence change. NAEYC is drawing upon the theory of change that identifies specific professional roles as especially powerful. These roles include

- directors of NAEYC-accredited early childhood education programs;
- NAEYC Affiliate leaders;
- NAEYC Accreditation facilitation project directors;
- faculty in early childhood professional preparation programs at two- or four-year institutions;
- staff at exemplary early childhood programs identified by the Center for the Study of Social Policy ([www.cssp.org](http://www.cssp.org)); and
- members of NAEYC's Interest Forum on Violence in the Lives of Children.

Early childhood professionals whose qualifications may not match these categories but who otherwise demonstrate leadership in and a commitment to child abuse prevention are also eligible.

### How will the National Leadership Program help you?

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The early childhood professionals selected to participate in the National Leadership Program will link with literally thousands of NAEYC members. These leadership efforts will benefit a wide group of educators, preservice teachers, and young children and their families through enhanced training and education; changes in public policy and practice; collaborative partnerships at local, regional, and statewide levels; and more.

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