Infant Early Childhood Mental Health is Everyone's Work:
The Development of a Statewide Framework

Kelly Etter, Ph.D., Vice President Early Childhood Equity Initiatives
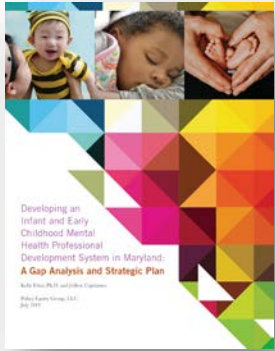
POLICY EQUITY GROUP
Advancing the Potential of Early Childhood

Context for the Framework

IECMH Framework Context

2019

Gap Analysis and Strategic Plan

FINDINGS

Current IECMH system is:
- fragmented
- disconnected
- under-resourced

WORKGROUP

Cross-sector committee
- Meeting monthly

RECOMMENDATIONS

Building cross-sector IECMH systems-level foundations

RECOGNITION

Maryland House Bill 776

FRAMEWORK

Phase 1: Framework
Phase 2: Action Guides
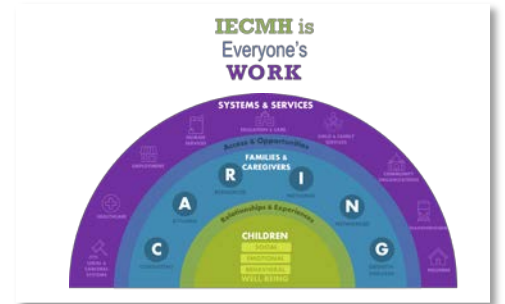
2022

IECMH Framework Context

The field of IECMH has distinguished itself by emphasizing **context** and **prevention**.

Maryland has always been a **leader** in IECMH

The *Maryland IECMH Framework and Action Guide* aims to lead IECMH into its **next phase** of evolution.

IECMH Framework Goals

1. Present a **comprehensive yet accessible definition** of IECMH that increases shared understanding and reduces stigma.

2. Promote the **coordination and quality** of child- and family-facing IECMH services.

3. Acknowledge the **role of current and historic racial, social, and economic oppression** as upstream determinants of IECMH.

4. Deliver a call to action that **IECMH is everyone's work**, including all who work with and on behalf of children as well as more "non-traditional" partners.

5. Provide **action guides** with upstream and downstream goals that invite all Marylanders to "see themselves in" and engage in the transformation of IECMH.

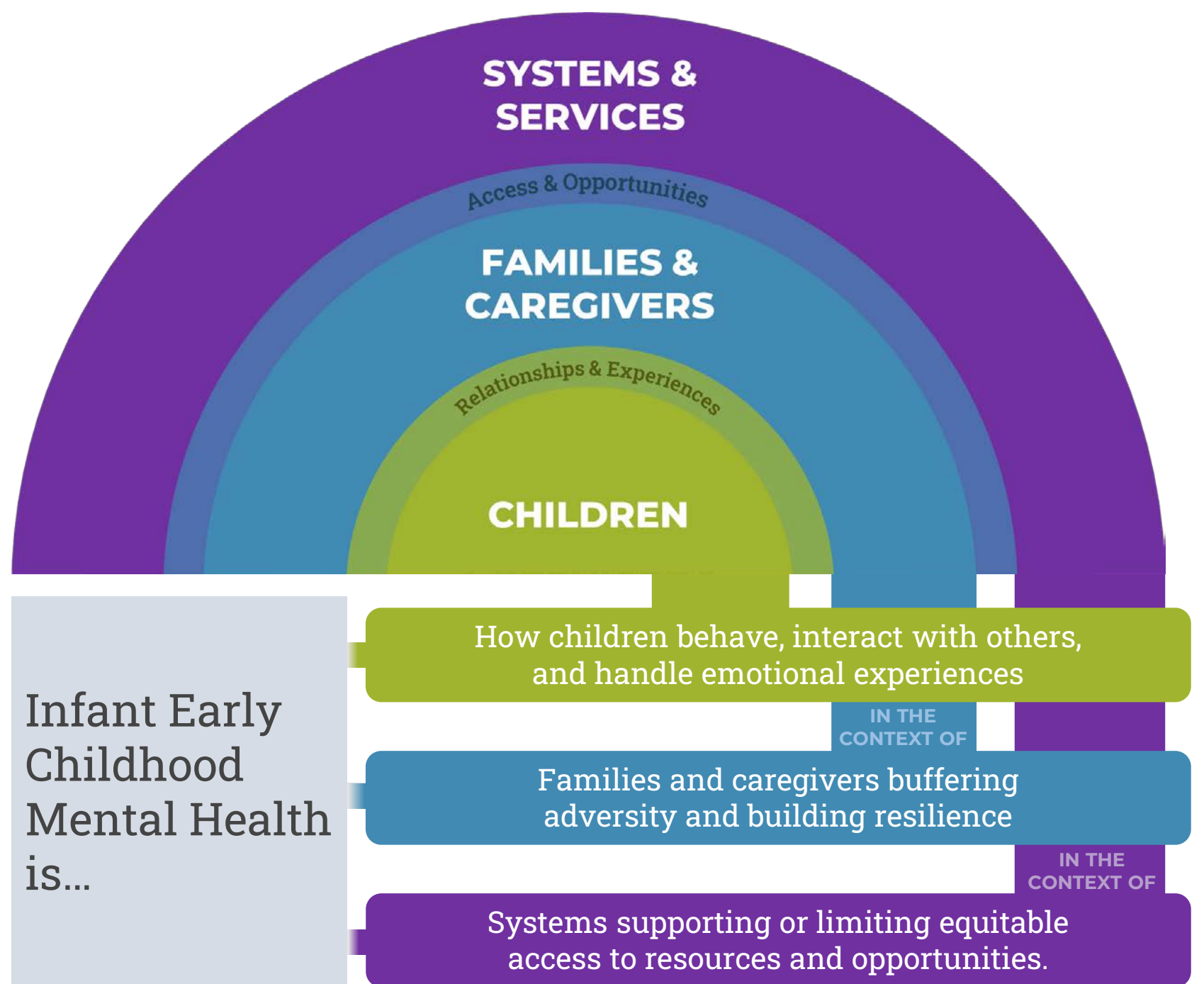# Defining Infant Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH)

Defining IECMH

Please share in the chat

What comes to mind when you hear **"Infant Early Childhood Mental Health"**? How would you define the term?

Defining IECMH

SYSTEMS & SERVICES

Access & Opportunities

FAMILIES & CAREGIVERS

Relationships & Experiences

CHILDREN

Infant Early Childhood Mental Health is…

How children behave, interact with others, and handle emotional experiences

IN THE CONTEXT OF

Families and caregivers buffering adversity and building resilience

IN THE CONTEXT OF

Systems supporting or limiting equitable access to resources and opportunities.

IECMH in Context

Affects 90,000 children in Maryland

Black children more than 2x likely to have incarcerated parent

Over-policing of communities of color, harsher sentencing, inequitable access to legal resources

Parental incarceration

Caregiver separation, family instability

Traumatic effects equivalent to abuse or domestic violence

Pattern of challenging behaviors in ECE setting

SYSTEMS & SERVICES

Access & Opportunities

FAMILIES & CAREGIVERS

Relationships & Experiences

CHILDREN

IECMH in Context

SYSTEMS & SERVICES

Access & Opportunities

FAMILIES & CAREGIVERS

Relationships & Experiences

CHILDREN

Advocating for:
Divesting from mass incarceration, investing in education and mental health services

IECMH represented in community safety models

Restorative and transformative justice models

Trauma-informed, family-centered IECMH services

Social–emotional and behavioral supports

IECMH is Everyone's WORK

An Upstream | Downstream Approach

WHO KEEPS CHUCKING THESE KIDS IN THE RIVER?

Credit: Salud America

Maryland's Landscape

Downstream Supports

- ECMH Consultation
- Pyramid Model
- Home Visiting
- Therapeutic Nurseries
- IMH Association
- Mom Power
- Strengthening Families
- Circle of Security
- Judy Centers
- Family Resource Centers
- Incredible Years
- Parent-Child Therapy (PCIT, ABC, CPP)

"Try telling a child in poverty to breathe through racism. That is insulting."
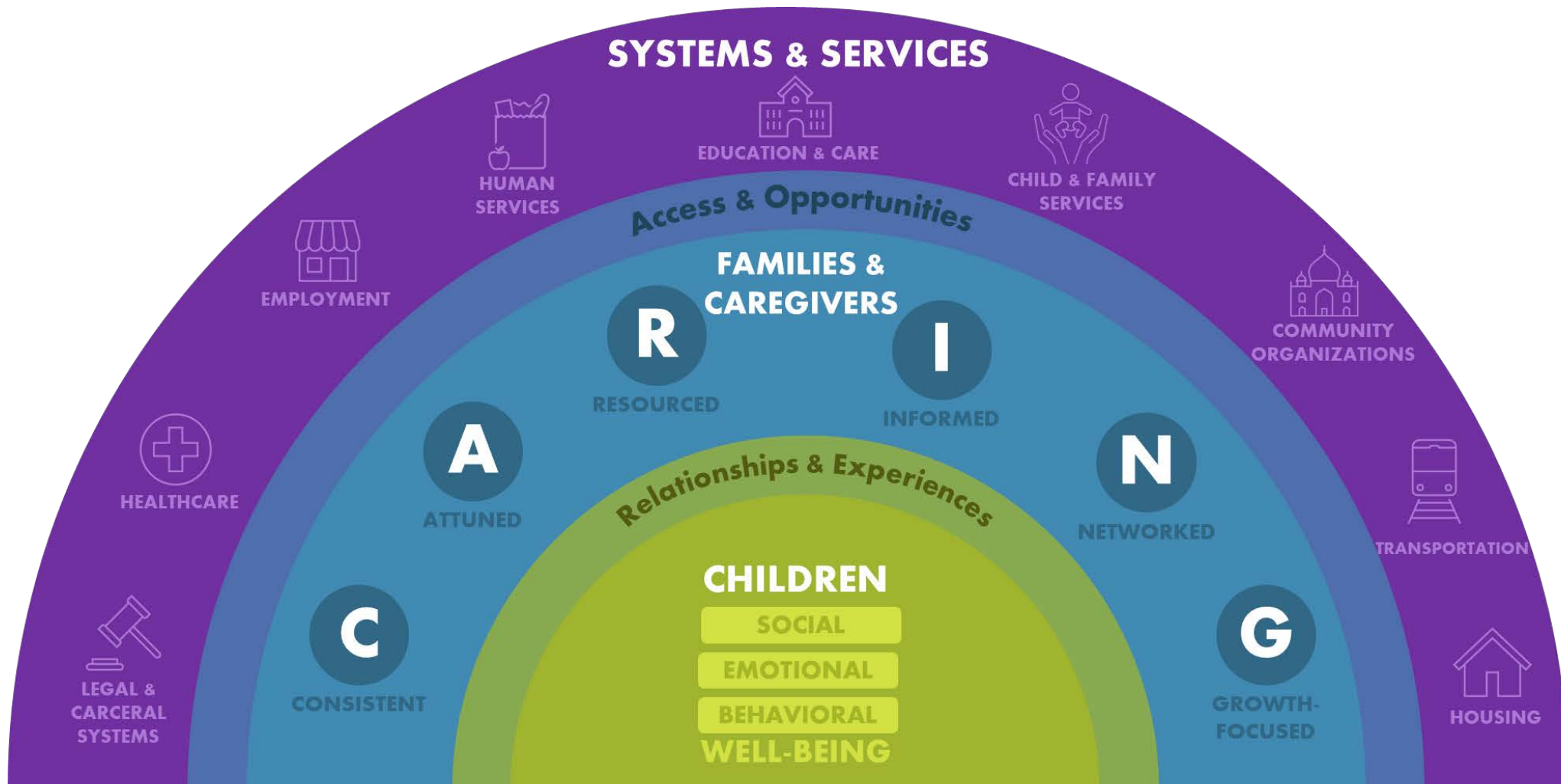
– Dena Simmons

It's Both/And...

- **While downstream approaches are extremely necessary, they alone are not sufficient.**

- **An effective IECMH system also needs to work upstream**

- **We can work together to:**
  - Transform the underlying conditions that are at the root of harm
  - Dismantle inequities caused by our country's legacy of racial, social, and economic oppression.

Framework Components

IECMH is Everyone's WORK

SYSTEMS & SERVICES

HUMAN SERVICES

EDUCATION & CARE

CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES

Access & Opportunities

FAMILIES & CAREGIVERS

EMPLOYMENT

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

R — RESOURCED

I — INFORMED

A — ATTUNED

N — NETWORKED

HEALTHCARE

TRANSPORTATION

Relationships & Experiences

CHILDREN

SOCIAL

EMOTIONAL

BEHAVIORAL

WELL-BEING

C — CONSISTENT

G — GROWTH-FOCUSED

LEGAL & CARCERAL SYSTEMS

HOUSING

All who care for children in Maryland have the resources and supports they need to be:

C CONSISTENT

A ATTUNED

R RESOURCED

I INFORMED

N NETWORKED

G GROWTH-FOCUSED

The six pillars of the IECMH Framework

Upstream changes that disrupt systemic oppression, increase caregiver well-being, and reduce barriers that interrupt their ability to effectively meet children's needs.

C CONSISTENT

A ATTUNED

R RESOURCED

I INFORMED

N NETWORKED

G GROWTH-FOCUSED

Downstream supports that strengthen caregivers' capacity to engage in sensitive, responsive patterns of interactions with children.

Upstream Goals

Continuity in caregivers

Early, comprehensive screening & evaluation

Basic needs & material resources

Public awareness of IECMH & decreasing stigma

Access to comprehensive services

Economic, employment, & educational mobility

Downstream Goals

C CONSISTENT

Stable environments & healthy transitions

A ATTUNED

Emotional attunement, serve-and-return, & trauma-informed care

R RESOURCED

Strategies to cope with the demand of caregiving

I INFORMED

Knowledge of child development & social–emotional learning

N NETWORKED

Connection to social supports & other caregivers

G GROWTH-FOCUSED

Two-generation & whole-family service models

CONSISTENT
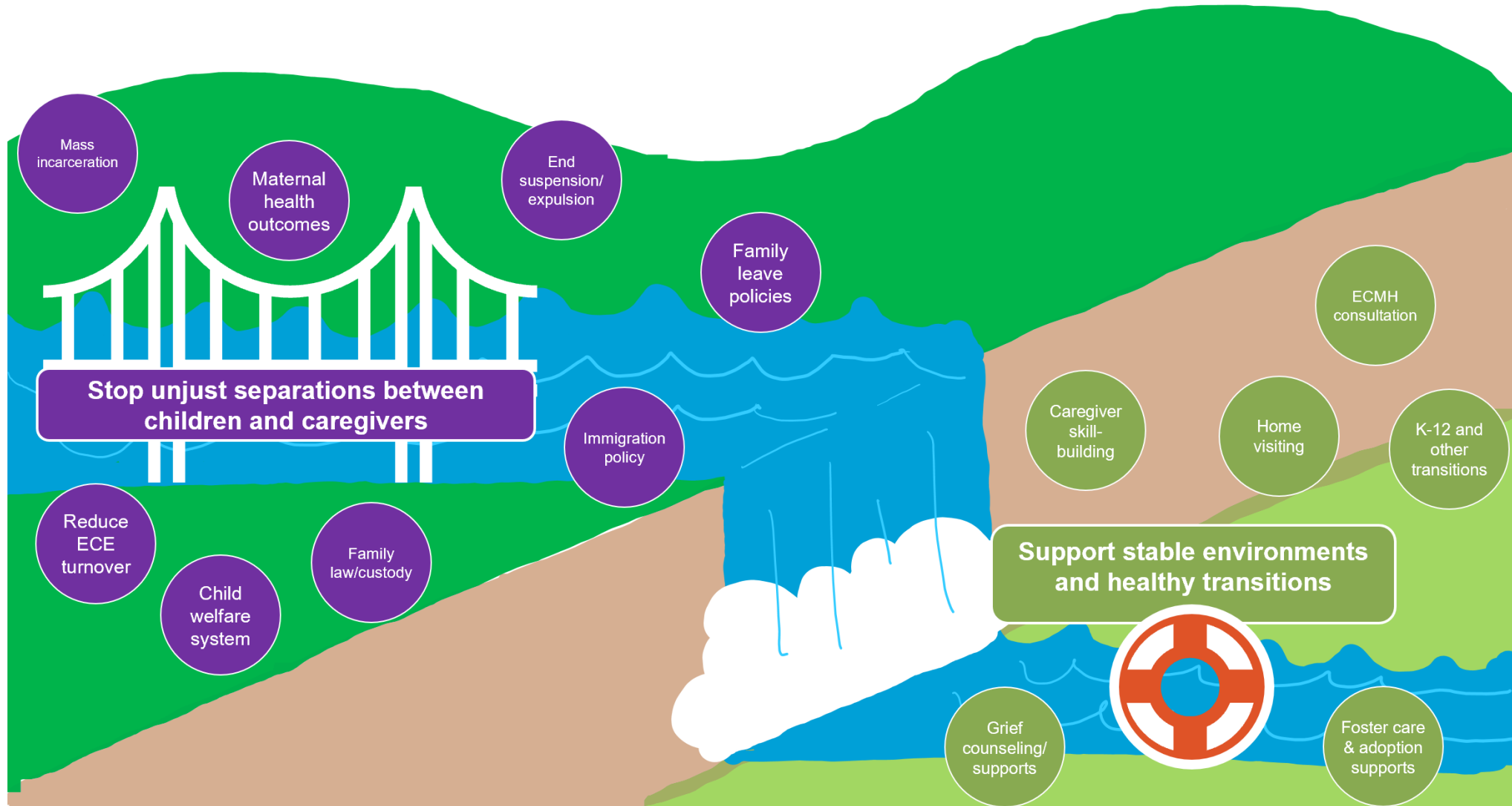
UPSTREAM GOAL
Stop unjust separations between children and caregivers

Out-of-home foster care placements
⬇ Children entering and re-entering out-of-home foster care placements, especially among BIPOC children.

Maternal health and birth equity
⬇ Maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity, especially among Black birthing people.

Caregiver incarceration
⬇ Children who have an incarcerated parent, especially for Black families.

Paid family leave
⬇ Caregivers who lack access to paid family leave.

Turnover among early childhood professionals
⬇ Educators who leave their position.

Suspension and expulsion
⬇ Children suspended or expelled (including "soft" expulsions), especially Black children.

DOWNSTREAM GOAL
Support stable environments and healthy transitions

Foster care and adoption supports
⬆ Adoptive and resource families receiving preparation and ongoing supports.

Reunification supports
⬆ Families receiving reunification supports after separation (e.g., incarceration, deportation, military deployment).

Healthy transitions between caregivers and settings
⬆ Transition-focused institutional, family, and educator supports.

Knowledge and skill-building for caregivers
⬆ Caregivers participating in programs that strengthen consistent and positive caregiving practices and routines.

Supports for children who have experienced loss
⬆ Children receiving therapeutic and other supports following the loss of a loved one, particularly a caregiver.

IECMH Action Guides

"**Changing everything** might sound daunting, but it also means there are many places to start, infinite opportunities to collaborate, and endless imaginative interventions and experiments to create."

– Mariame Kaba

IECMH Action Guides

Inviting all Marylanders to "see themselves in" and engage in the transformation of IECMH

Sector-/role-specific customizable action plans

My Practice	Changes in daily practice
My Partnerships	Increases in coordination and collaboration
My Policies	Cross-sector collective action and advocacy

CONSISTENT

Action Guide for ECE Professionals

My Practice

Providing predictable routines & experiences

Responding consistently to behavior

Preparing children for transitions

Supporting children through change and loss

My Partnerships

Collaborating with families to support consistency

Partnering with ECMH consultants

Working with K-12 partners around transitions

Connecting families undergoing changes to supports

My Policies

Increasing compensation for ECE professionals

Divesting from mass incarceration

Securing paid leave for families

Supporting equitable maternal health outcomes

CONSISTENT

Action Guide for ECE Professionals

My Practice

Providing predictable routines & experiences

Responding consistently to behavior

Preparing children for transitions

Supporting children through change and loss

My Partnerships

Collaborating with families to support consistency

Partnering with ECMH consultants

Working with K-12 partners around transitions

Connecting families undergoing changes to supports

My Policies

Increasing compensation for ECE professionals

Divesting from mass incarceration

Securing paid leave for families

Supporting equitable maternal health outcomes

I can support consistent care for children by:

My Practice
Providing predictable routines & experiences

- ☐ Reading a 3-page article about "Helping Children Understand Routines and Classroom Schedules"
- ☐ Using picture schedules and "If/Then" boards to support predictable routines.
- ☑ Using scripted stories to support routines and transitions.
- ☐ Taking the Pyramid Model Module 1 online training

My Partnerships
Connecting families undergoing changes to supports

Offering a referral or additional resources to families experiencing:
- ☐ Foster care or adoption transitions
- ☐ Separation or reunification (e.g., military deployment, incarceration)
- ☑ Grief or loss

My Policies
Securing paid leave for families

- ☑ Joining the Maryland Time to Care Coalition to stay informed about and support efforts to secure paid family leave in Maryland.
- ☐ Contacting my legislators to voice my support for the Time to Care Act.
- ☐ Sharing a written or video story about why you care about paid family leave

I **will** support consistent care for children by:

1 Making a scripted story to support a routine or transition in my classroom using this <u>step-by-step guidance</u>.

2 Finding a nearby <u>grief support center</u> and offering to get more information for the family if they are open to it.

3 Joining the <u>Maryland Time to Care Coalition</u> and attending one meeting or event.

Feedback and Questions

Thank you for all you do for children and families!

Kelly Etter, Ph.D.
KellyE@PolicyEquity.com

POLICY EQUITY GROUP
Advancing the Potential of Early Childhood