Birth to Three

4th Annual Conference

April 1 and 2, 2027

9:30 am EST ■ 8:30 am CST ■ 7:30 am MST ■ 6:30 am PST

ERI EDUCATION RESOURCES INC.

life-changing learning for therapists by therapists

LIVE VIRTUAL WEBINAR



Expert-Led Sessions on Today's Most Relevant Birth to Three Topics

Stay current on the critical issues shaping early intervention practice. Through evidence-informed education, actionable clinical strategies, and expert-led discussions, you'll leave feeling empowered and energized. Here's what you can expect:

- **Supporting Regulation in Early Childhood**: break down the components of regulation, problem-solving when **dysregulated**, and key strategies for supporting any child and grownup team.
- **Vestibular Dysfunction** interventions for infants and young children.
- **BABIES® and PreSTEPS® Models** for medically fragile and developmentally complex infants.
- Explore **interoception** and learn how awareness of internal body signals influences decision-making,
- **Neurogenetics** insights from brain development, neurological function, and genetic risk factors.
- **Gestalt Language Processing** supporting the progression from echolalia to self-generated language.
- **Strengths-based documentation** that reflects family-centered, relationship-focused care.
- **Primitive reflex integration** and functional outcomes.
- **Breast/Chestfeeding Medically Complex Infan**ts to support feeding success and family goals.
- **Developmental Neuroscience and Motor Skill Acquisition**: Translating brain science into effective intervention.
- A **Neurorelational** approach to sleep, including sleep safety, expectations, and hygiene.

AUDIENCE:

This intermediate level conference is for PTs, PTAs, OTs, OTAs, SLPs and special educators working with the birth to three population.

Join the ERI community that fosters therapists building connections, sharing ideas and actively learning.

Thursday, April 1, 2027 – All Times Are EST (US)

09:30-10:00 **Zoom Registration/Course Opens**

10:00-10:15 Welcome and Introduction – *Alyson Loria, VP*, *Carolyn Cwalinski*, Conference Chairperson

10:15-11:45 **More Than Following the Child: Weaving Child-Led and Therapist-Led Approaches for Developmental Growth**

Laura Westbrook, OTR/L

This session explores the evidence behind child-led therapy and how intrinsic motivation supports meaningful developmental growth. Clinicians will learn to interpret behavior through a developmental lens, identify foundational capacities for learning, determine when explicit teaching is appropriate, and use therapeutic presence to create individualized, joyful, and responsive intervention experiences.

- Relate how foundational developmental capacities contribute to higher-level skill acquisition in children
- Determine when child-led practice is clinically indicated
- Utilize reflection in real time clinical interactions to modify therapeutic presence based on the child's neurological state

11:45-12:00 Break

12:00-1:30 **FIRST Steps for BABIES: Exploring the Foundations of Development for Medically Fragile Babies and Their Parents**

Joy Brown, PhD, Petora Manetto-Spratt, DPT, and Lori Ganz, OTR/L

This session explores the foundational first steps of development with a focus on the unique needs of medically fragile newborns and young babies. Participants will examine brain organization that contributes to physiologic, behavioral and social emotional aspects of development in the first six months after birth that are impacted by early hospitalization. Special attention will be given to the impact of parents' physical and mental health on the evolving caregiver–infant relationship and the critical role of parent–child interactions in shaping long-term developmental outcomes.

- Determine three significant changes in brain and behavior development during the last trimester and early infancy
- Relate how sensitive periods and biobehavioral synchrony inform interventions for babies and their parents
- Apply how early birth and hospitalization affects both baby's biobehavioral development and parent's mental health and caregiving

1:30-2:30 Lunch Break (Zoom opens at 2:15)

2:30-5:45 Concurrent Workshops 1: Afternoon breaks will be scheduled for each workshop.

A. **They're Not Just Clumsy: Recognizing Vestibular Dysfunction in Young Children**

Megan Drews, DPT

Vestibular development is foundational to motor skills, balance, visual stability, and participation, yet dysfunction is often missed in young children. This session emphasizes purposeful observation of eye movements, visual tracking, postural responses, and balance strategies to identify concerns. Participants will learn evidence-based screening, referral considerations, and practical application of findings through real-world cases and intervention planning.

- Determine populations at increased risk for vestibular dysfunction
- Apply clinical findings that warrant further evaluation/referral for a Vestibular Specialist

- Choose appropriate outcome measures to assess impact of Vestibular Dysfunction on a child's development and participation in home and community activities
- Apply evidence -based intervention strategies to promote vestibular development and facilitate gross motor skill attainment in infants and toddlers

DAY 1 CONTINUED

B. **Applying the BABIES and PreSTEPS Model: Developmental Care Strategies for Medically Fragile Infants**

Joy Brown, PhD, Petora Manetto-Spratt, DPT, and Lori Ganz, OTR/L

This session explores the BABIES and PreSTEPS model of care for medically fragile infants, examining how challenges in physiologic regulation, arousal and sleep, movement, social interaction, feeding, and self-soothing influence early development. Participants will learn practical strategies to support infants and families, including approaches to predictability and continuity, state regulation, timing and pacing, feeding, positioning, handling, and soothing. Grounded in reflective and relationship-based practice, the session incorporates guided infant observation and opportunities to apply principles of informed, reflective decision-making to support optimal developmental outcomes.

- Utilize the six developmental areas of the BABIES model for babies under 6 months
- Relate three areas of support that providers can provide to parents using the PreSTEPS model to improve infant feeding, sleep, and caregiver interaction
- Apply a reflective stance into the care of medically fragile babies and their parents to support optimal developmental progress

C. **Unlocking the Code: Navigating Neurogenetics in Early Intervention (Birth to Three) for Therapists**

Helen Milligan, DPT

Gain a practical understanding of genetic testing, clinical red flags, and evidence-based interventions for infants and young children with neurogenetic diagnoses. Through case studies, participants will explore the therapy implications of Dravet, Rett, Williams, and Down syndromes, with emphasis on early identification, family-centered care, interdisciplinary collaboration, and participation-focused intervention. Learn practical strategies for assessment, intervention planning, mobility programs, referral decision-making, and promoting participation.

- Differentiate the purpose and clinical application of common genetic diagnostic technologies, including Chromosomal Microarray (CMA), targeted gene panels, and Whole Exome Sequencing, in the evaluation of infants and toddlers with suspected neurogenetic conditions
- Identify developmental and clinical red flags that warrant referral to genetics and neurology specialists for further evaluation
- Compare the developmental characteristics, clinical presentations, and developmental trajectories of Down syndrome, Dravet syndrome, Rett syndrome, and Williams syndrome
- Select evidence-informed intervention approaches, equipment considerations, and mobility strategies that support participation and motor development in children with neurogenetic conditions
- Apply the F-Words Framework to develop participation-focused, family-centered goals and intervention plans for infants and toddlers with neurogenetic conditions and other childhood-onset disabilities

D. **Understanding Gestalt Language Processing: From Echolalia to Self-Generated Language**

Kimberly Jenkins, CCC-SLP

Discover how echolalia serves as a meaningful form of communication within gestalt language processing. This session introduces the Natural Language Acquisition framework, reviews the stages of gestalt language development, and provides neurodiversity-affirming strategies to help clinicians recognize, support, and expand authentic communication in everyday practice.

- Classify examples of immediate and delayed echolalia based on their communicative functions
- Differentiate between analytic and gestalt language processing
- Identify the six stages of Natural Language Acquisition
- Recognize examples of language development and communication across the NLA stages
- Identify practical, neurodiversity-affirming strategies for supporting gestalt language processors through meaningful interactions, language modeling, and child-led activities

E. **Writing What Matters: Strengths-Based Documentation for Early Childhood Practitioners**

Laura Westbrook, OTR/L

Transform how you assess, document, and advocate for young children and families. Designed for early childhood practitioners, this engaging 3-hour course explores strengths-based practice and practical, evidence-based strategies for creating empowering, clinically sound documentation. Learn to identify meaningful assets, navigate reimbursement requirements, and reframe documentation through real-world case examples.

- Relate a child's early self-identity formation to the principles of strengths-based practice
- Utilize intentional clinical observations to identify and document a child's unique strengths and assets
- Choose appropriate strengths-focused terminology that complies with insurance guidelines while optimizing reimbursement

Friday, April 2, 2027 – All Times Are EST (US)

09:30-10:00 **Zoom Registration/Course Opens**

10:00-10:15 **Introduction, Scholarship Presentations, Raffles**

10:15-11:45 **Connecting our Bodily Sensations to Our Emotions in Early Childhood**

Jeanette Luedders Jones, PhD

You may have heard the phrase, "follow your gut." In this session, you'll explore interoception, often called the eighth sensory system, and learn how awareness of internal body signals influences decision-making, intuition, emotional regulation, and perspective-taking. Practical resources and strategies will be shared to support assessment, intervention, and everyday practice.

- Determine why interoception underlies the use of language and verbalizations early childhood interventions
- Identify the importance of interoception education with parents and/or caregivers to develop the foundation for self-regulation
- Select an interoceptive strategy to support self-regulation and participation

11:45-12:00 Break

12:00-1:30 **Connection, Coaching, and Counseling for Quality Family-Centered Care**

Tiffany Elliott, CCC-SLP, CNT

Children with developmental delays or medical complexity and their families navigate multiple communication landscapes, increasing care challenges. This session explores how meaningful connection forms the foundation of family-centered care and highlights practical coaching and counseling strategies that promote collaboration, curiosity, shared decision-making, and early relational health across pediatric settings.

- Recognize the communication landscape families and teams need to navigate
- Identify the importance of connection as the foundation for coaching and counseling
- Choose three coaching and counseling strategies to support collaboration, shared decision-making, and family engagement with families of children birth to three

1:30-2:30 Lunch Break (Zoom opens at 2:15)

2:30-5:45 Concurrent Workshops II: Afternoon breaks will be scheduled for each workshop.

A **Building the Spatial Brain: Primitive Reflexes as a Foundation for Development**

Amber Fessler, OTD

Primitive reflexes provide the foundation for early movement, postural control, and functional development. This session reviews the TLR, ATNR, and STNR reflexes, current evidence on developmental timelines and clinical considerations, and practical assessment and intervention strategies that integrate sensory, visual, postural, and environmental supports within family-centered early intervention.

- Recognize the developmental progress and functional roles of the Tonic Labyrinthine, Asymmetrical Tonic Neck, and Symmetrical Tonic Neck reflexes
- Relate clinical observations of primitive reflexes, posture, head-righting, movement patterns and functional performance to spatial processing challenges during play and other functional activities
- Apply clinical reasoning to prioritize intervention approaches based on individual sensory, postural, visual, and functional needs

B. **Beyond the Buzzword: Supporting Regulation in Early Childhood**

Kelsie "Mick" Olds, MOT

"Dysregulation" is a buzzword. Buzzwords are used to sell you things until their meaning has become diluted. What does it actually mean for a human to be regulated or dysregulated? How does it develop? What expectations are appropriate of regulation in the youngest of humans? How can we support and equip that process for caregivers?

This session breaks down the components of regulation, problem-solving when dysregulated, and key strategies for supporting any child and grownup team who are figuring this stuff out together. With a special sensory lens, they'll guide you through understanding regulation in much greater depth than you've ever heard it before, with practical takeaways you can use at work or at home the next day.

- Determine whether a child's dysregulated behavior is demonstrating a sensory, emotional, social, or other need
- Choose safe, appropriate self-regulation strategies to teach children or their caregivers that work to replace dysregulated behaviors
- Apply knowledge of child developmental norms to support caregivers in realistic expectations of their young child's emerging regulation skills during home and community activities

C. **Supporting Breast/Chestfeeding in Medically Complex Infants**

Tiffany Elliott, CCC-SLP, CNT

This session will explore the basics of human milk production and typical progression of infant breastfeeding skills. Common infant breast/chestfeeding issues will be shared to equip feeding therapists with skills in their scope of practice to identify these issues, effectively partner with the care team, and empower the family on their journey. A variety of strategies to optimize the infant's feeding development in the context of the family's goals and the infant's developmental and medical reality will be shared.

- Recognize the basics of human milk production including anatomy, milk stages and supply essentials.
- Determine typical vs problematic infant breast/chestfeeding skill development
- Choose five strategies to use as a feeding therapist to address breast/chestfeeding while supporting the infant's developmental needs and the family's feeding goals

D. **The Building Blocks of Movement: Developmental Neuroscience and Motor Skill Acquisition**

Jessica Silveira, DPT

Gross motor development in early childhood is explored through developmental neuroscience, neuroplasticity, and motor learning. Emphasis is placed on how motor development shapes and is shaped by cognitive, language, and social-emotional growth. Typical and atypical motor patterns are examined through case-based movement analysis to inform collaborative, evidence-based strategies that support participation and functional outcomes.

- Recognize the interconnected nature of motor, cognitive, language, and social-emotional

development

- Identify key building blocks of motor skill development
- Apply principles of motor development, motor learning, and neuroplasticity to develop evidence-informed intervention strategies that support engagement and participation in play and other home & community activities

E. **Sleep, Safety and Connection: A Strengths-Based, Neurorelational Approach to Supporting Sleep for Children and Families**

Kayla Khan, CCC-SLP, Cailey Marsh, OTR/L and Katherine Merisko, CCC-SLP

This session explores the foundations of pediatric sleep, including sleep safety, expectations, and hygiene. Participants will examine medical, sensory, nervous system, environmental, and caregiver factors that influence sleep and apply a strengths-based, evidence-informed framework to support children and families experiencing sleep challenges through practical strategies and case-based learning.

- Recognize sleep basics including sleep safety, sleep expectations, and sleep hygiene
- Identify factors that impact sleep including medical, nervous system, and environment
- Integrate a strength-based sleep approach to support children and families who are experiencing sleep challenges to improve the child's ability to engage in play, learning, self-regulation, and family routines throughout the day

Conference Faculty
At the Forefront of Birth to Three Practice



Joy V. Browne, PhD, PCNS, IMH-E®, is a pediatric psychologist and clinical nurse specialist, founder of WONDERbabies including the BABIES and PreSTEPS program. She is an an expert in neurobehavioral assessment, infant feeding, and family-centered care for high-risk infants. She is a NIDCAP Master Trainer, and a Clinical Professor at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and the University of Illinois, Chicago Neonatal and Perinatal medicine.



Megan Drews, PT, DPT, PCS, specializes in the evaluation and treatment of infants, children, adolescents, with balance and vestibular disorders, including dizziness, motion sensitivity, headaches, and neurologic conditions. Dr. Drews completed the APTA's Vestibular Competency programs (adults & pediatrics). She provides comprehensive evaluations and treatment for children with complex vestibular disorders and dizziness at the Pediatric Vestibular Clinic at Johns Hopkins.



Tiffany Elliott, MS, CCC-SLP, CNT, IBCLC, NTMTC is a Speech-Language Pathologist and Lactation Consultant specializing in pediatric feeding disorders and dysphagia in preterm and medically complex infants. She has 15+ years of experience in clinical care and is a graduate of the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) program and Georgetown University Thrive Center Innovation Fellowship.



Amber Fessler, OTD, MS, OTR/L, is a highly experienced pediatric occupational therapist with two decades of expertise working with diverse pediatric populations. She is a contributing author to Dr. Scheiman's Understanding and Managing Vision Deficits: A Guide for Occupational Therapists (4th Edition) and has published research on occupational therapy and optometry collaboration in pediatric care in the Vision Development and Rehabilitation Journal



Lori Ganz, MS, OTR/L, is an occupational therapist with extensive experience in NICU and early intervention settings, specializing in medically fragile infants, feeding and swallowing disorders, and developmental challenges. Director of Clinical Services for Early Childhood Services in Colorado Springs, she is trained in NIDCAP, APIB, and NDT, and is a published advocate for evidence-based pediatric care.



Kim Jenkins, MS, CCC-SLP, is a neurodiversity-affirming speech therapist passionate about helping neurodivergent children and their families flourish. She believes authentic, meaningful communication grows from honoring a child's strengths, supporting their sensory needs, following their lead, and partnering with families. She takes the time to truly learn each child's interests, joys, strengths, and unique challenges.



Jeanette Luedders Jones, PhD, is an early childhood special education educator with expertise in infant and early childhood development. Her recent work centers on interoceptive awareness, including leading reflective dialogue projects and developing trainings to support interoception in young children. She also teaches child development and provides workshops on interoception, reflective practice, inclusion, and trauma-informed care.



Kayla Khan, MS, CCC-SLP, is a speech-language pathologist with more than 20 years of experience working with children B-3. She is Vice President of the Kids Division at Northwest Center, leading programs across EI, early learning, developmental services, and hospital-to-home transitions. Kayla is also a parent of two children; including one who is a 13-year-old NICU grad with a 504 plan, medical follow-up and Early Supports services.



Pestora Manetto-Spratt, PT, DPT, is a pediatric physical therapist with more than 36 years of experience, including 30 years in early intervention for premature and medically fragile infants. Owner of Precious Steps Pediatric Therapy, she is a BABIES/PreSTEPS trainer, frequent presenter, and co-author focused on integrating infant mental health into early intervention services.



Cailey Marsh, OTR/L, is an occupational therapist with 9 years of experience providing Early Supports services to infants and toddlers from birth to age three. She has pursued additional training in feeding, sleep, sensory processing, neurodiversity, and trauma-informed care. As the parent of an energetic three-year-old, she brings both professional expertise and personal perspective to supporting families.



Katherine (Katie) Merisko, MA, CCC-SLP, is a speech-language pathologist with 15 years of experience in early intervention, specializing in infant feeding and communication development. She currently serves as a Systems Change Specialist at Northwest Center Kids, supporting the Hospital to Home and Early Learning teams. As a parent of three, she is passionate about helping families navigate feeding, sleep, and parenting challenges.



Helen Milligan, PT, DPT, PCS, has more than 30 years of pediatric clinical experience. Her areas of expertise include early intervention, Down syndrome (she is a therapist in the Trisomy 21 Program at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia), neurodevelopmental disabilities, motor development, pediatric pelvic health, and aquatic therapy. Dr. Milligan is a frequent national presenter and advocate for participation-based, family-centered care that supports children and families across the lifespan.



Kelsie “Mick” Olds, MOT, OTR, "The Occuplaytional Therapist" on their online platforms, has worked on an Air Force base in England; in rural Oklahoma, USA; and currently in Geelong, Australia. This gives them a unique perspective on various Western systems of healthcare and education, and the ways those intersect and affect the children they work with every day.



Jessica Silveira, PT, DPT, PhD, PCS, has more than a decade of experience treating infants and children with neurologic and genetic disorders. Drawing on clinical expertise, her scholarship focuses on pediatric and motor development, including the relationships among motor, cognitive, language, and social-emotional development. Her research aims to translate developmental science into evidence-based assessment and intervention strategies that improve outcomes for children and families.



Laura Westbrook, MS, OTR/L, DIR-E, is a pediatric occupational therapist, DIR Floortime training leader, and founder of *The Affective Collective*. Drawing on extensive expertise in relational neuroscience, sensory processing, and motor development, she helps practitioners move beyond transactional therapy toward joyful, connection-driven care. With experience spanning early intervention, outpatient care, schools, and the NICU, Laura translates developmental theory into practical, family-centered strategies that support meaningful participation and growth.

Click here for instructor disclosure information

WEBINAR INSTRUCTIONS

Two weeks prior to the Birth to Three Conference webinar, you will receive detailed log-in instructions and password protected access to a comprehensive handout. Check out Webinar FAQs here.

IMPORTANT! Please be sure to sign in **15 minutes prior to the start time of each Session (AM and PM)** so we can complete the registration process. If you do not sign on early, there may be a delay in admitting you to the course.

CEU INFORMATION

This course meets the criteria for 12 contact hours (1.2 CEUs) for 2 days or 6 contact hours (0.6 CEUs) for 1 day. Intermediate Level.

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ASHA credits are accepted by the **Texas** Department of License and Renewal.

Application has been made to the **Maryland** Board of Physical Therapy Examiners.

Application has been made to the **Minnesota** Board of Physical Therapy.

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Application has been made to the **Ohio** Physical Therapy Association

Approved by the State of **Illinois** Department of Financial and Professional Regulation for Physical Therapy for 14 contact hours for 2 days or 7 contact hours 1 day.

Application has been made to the **Illinois Early Intervention Training Program.**

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One-day early bird discount: $279 until January 15, 2027 using coupon code BT350 at checkout.

Two-day early bird discount: $429 until January 15, 2027 using coupon code BT32027 at checkout.

Cannot be combined with any other discounts. This discount has now expired. Please see the website for group pricing details. See website for group rates.

To receive a refund (minus a non-refundable $75 administrative fee), cancellation must be received by March 12, 2027.

We accept checks and POs (must be received prior to the conference date).

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Workshop Selections

Please write (1) for your first choice and (2) for your second choice of workshops for each day.

Day 1 A _____ **B** _____ **C** _____ **D** _____ **E** _____

Day 2 A _____ **B** _____ **C** _____ **D** _____ **E** _____

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