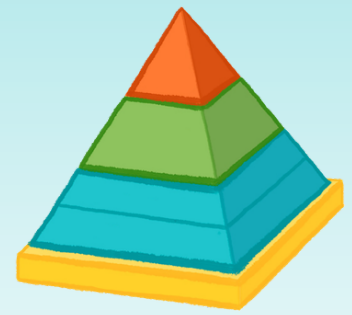




2025
**IMPACT
REPORT**
Wisconsin Pyramid Model

ABOUT US

Wisconsin leverages one of the nation's most widely established, evidence-based frameworks—the Pyramid Model—to build a comprehensive statewide system for high-quality support of children's social and emotional development in early care and education (ECE) settings (Hemmeter et al., 2021). **Early social and emotional development is synonymous with infant and early childhood mental health** (Zero to Three, 2019). More than a classroom approach, the Pyramid Model is a tiered framework that provides the structure, professional development pathways, and accountability tools that allow the state and ECE programs to track implementation quality, monitor progress, and document implementation over time. This statewide approach supports consistent, sustainable, and scalable implementation across diverse ECE settings by creating systems that support professionals and caregivers to strengthen young children's development and well-being. Primary drivers of the changes that PM relies on are **data-informed decision-making, continuous improvement, consistent use of practices, and collaborative networking within communities.**



Our Vision

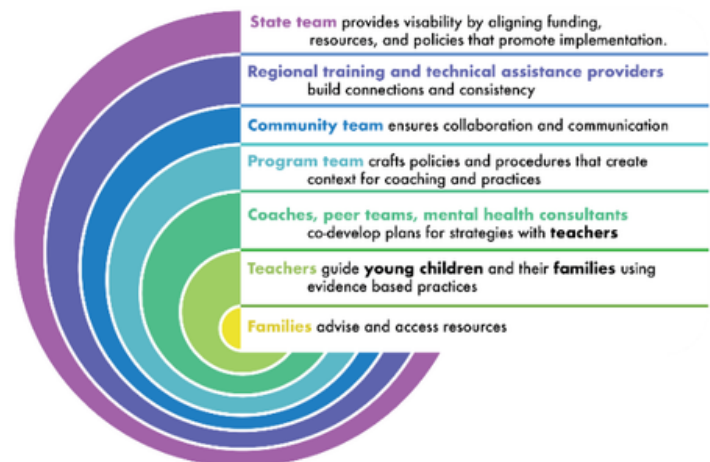
Each and every Wisconsin infant and young child will experience nurturing and authentic relationships within engaging, culturally responsive environments that honor diversity in all its forms in order to ensure healthy social and emotional development.

WI-AIMH

The Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health (WI-AIMH) has held a contract with the Department of Children and Families for 16 years to lead a multi-agency State Leadership Team responsible for guiding statewide Pyramid Model implementation. WI-AIMH ensures consistent content delivery, strengthens the state's professional development network, and builds workforce capacity to sustain high-quality practices that support social and emotional development and reduce challenging behaviors. By advancing unified messaging and supporting alignment across homes, classrooms, and communities, WI-AIMH helps enhance a connected and effective statewide support system for the professionals who serve young children and their families. As a cornerstone of Wisconsin's statewide approach, the Pyramid Model team at WI-AIMH provides the coordination, collaboration, and infrastructure necessary to turn the state's vision into measurable impact for programs, educators, and families.

The Wisconsin Pyramid Model team recognizes that sustainable change requires coordinated, statewide support that prevent staff burnout, provide intentional professional development, and improve outcomes for children and families. This report highlights WI-AIMH's statewide reach, key impacts, challenges, and opportunities for each of the critical layers of Pyramid Model implementation in Wisconsin.

Figure 1. Layers of Pyramid Model Infrastructure



**This work is from the 2025 calendar year and bridges the last 6 months of the previous state budget cycle (2023-2025) and the first 6 months of the 2025-2027 cycle.*

FAMILY

FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS, CONNECTION AND SUPPORT ARE AT THE CENTER OF IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN



Families are the foundation for a child's thriving, by being the first and continued presence in a child's life attending to their feelings, needs, and experiences. The Pyramid Model framework provides opportunities for families to feel supported and better equipped to provide a steady, caring foundation for their children to rely on.

Positive Solutions for Families (PSF)

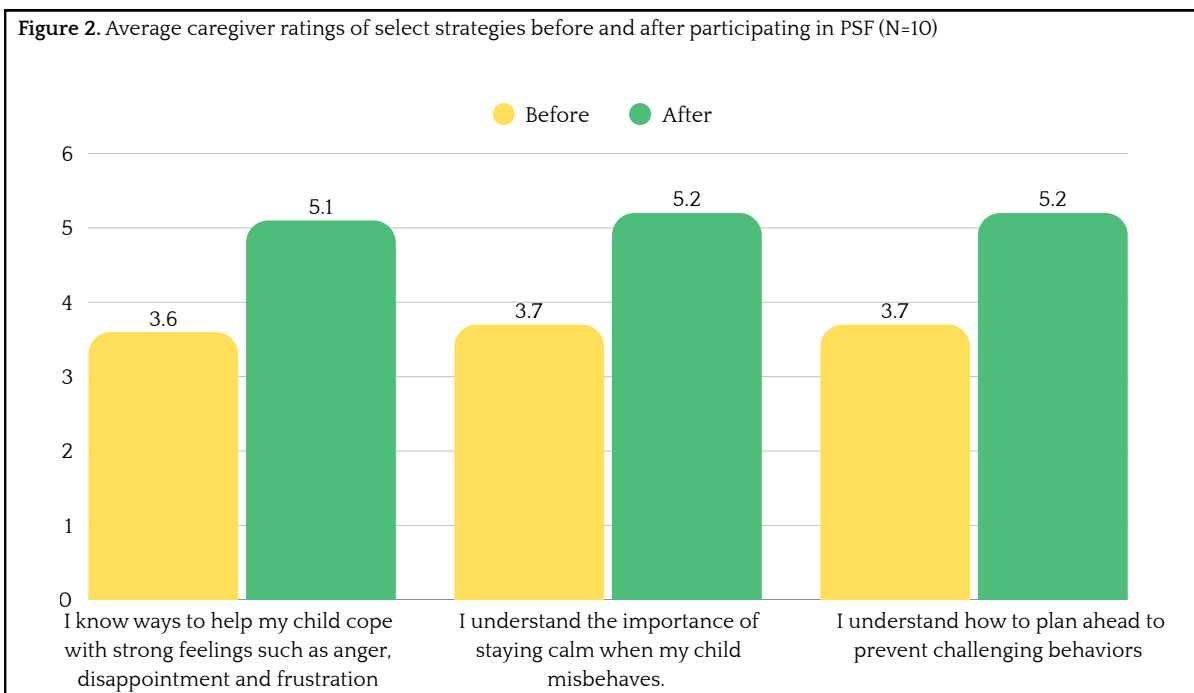
PSF provides strategies for families grappling with common stressors of parenting:

- Time pressures and constant demands of caregiving
- Concerns about children's health and safety
- Parental isolation and loneliness
- Pressure around children's future, development, and well-being

These stressors are especially intense for parents of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, who require constant, hands-on care (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2025).

How does PSF help families?

When caregivers participate in PSF they feel more equipped to support their child's development and well-being. On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), caregivers report the greatest gains in these strategies:





PSF feedback survey demonstrated that **100% of caregivers** agreed with the following statements:

1. *This training has improved my knowledge of social and emotional learning*
2. *After this training, I will make steps to utilize what I learned about social and emotional learning*

Families have reported that developing structured rules and routines provides shared language to talk with their children about behavior proactively.

PSF provides opportunities for families to connect with others, reducing isolation and loneliness: *"I learned how much parents are also grappling and struggling with doing this right, how not alone my partner and I are in figuring out how to set up our kid with the skills they need, how profound an impact 'filling their bucket' can have, and the ways that small changes on my part can render big results in creating a more positive and well-functioning family."* ~ Participant

Parents Interacting with Infants (PIWI)

PIWI is a play-based program for groups of caregivers and infants that fosters engagement and development. Trained in infant mental health competencies, facilitators guide parent-child play to strengthen caregiver-child relationships, build caregiver confidence, and provide practical, everyday strategies to support infant development.

Members of the Wisconsin Pyramid Model team collaborated with the Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board and Healthy Minds Healthy Children (WI-AIMH's Infant Mental Health Consultation program) to pilot PIWI as an intervention playgroup. Results indicate strong satisfaction and reported growth in relational strengths for caregivers who participated. Despite promising data, shifts in statewide funding led to a pause in PIWI implementation. [This infographic provides a detailed summary of facilitator and family experiences with PIWI.](#) **Given the positive outcomes, we recommend PIWI implementation and scale up efforts be included in future funding opportunities so more families can experience similar benefits.**

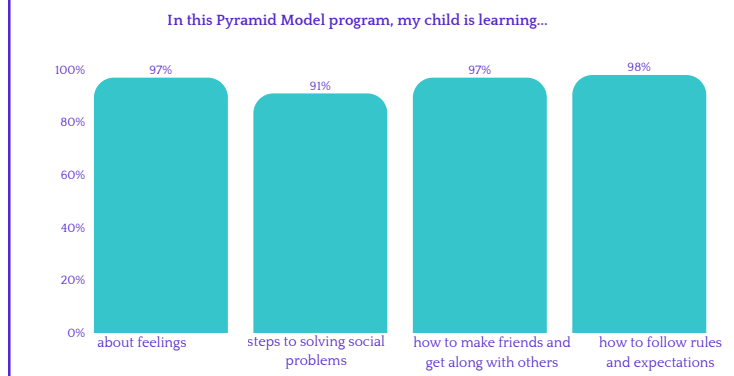
Family Survey

Since 2023, program-wide implementation sites have been surveying families to learn about their experiences and outcomes related to the Pyramid Model. In 2025, 38 programs received survey responses that were also summarized in a statewide analysis. Results indicate the majority of families in PM programs feel supported, feel like they are part of the team, and see the vast majority children learning critical social and emotional skills.

FAMILY SURVEY

Over 90% of PM family survey respondents indicated their children were learning important, lifelong social and emotional skills.

Figure 3. Percent of families who selected "yes" for each statement



We know that when families are supported with plans, information and resources, children learn new skills that reduce challenging behavior. These are critical practices that can prevent suspension and expulsion. Families report that PM programs provide such support and work hard to keep children in their programs.

88% of families believe the program uses intentional strategies aimed at reducing suspension or expulsion of young children by working to resolve behavior that feels challenging.

Figure 4. Percent of families who selected "yes" for each statement

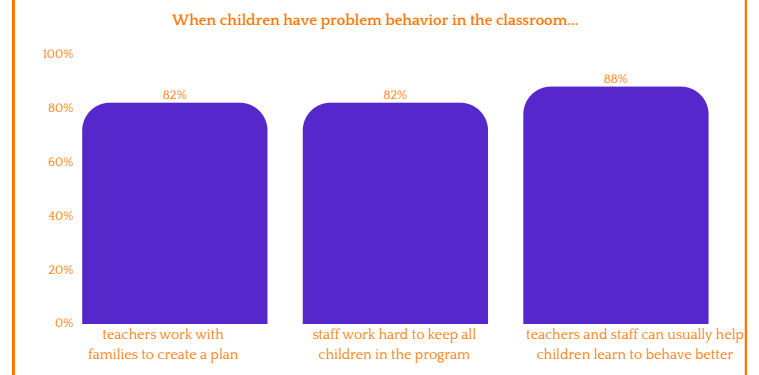
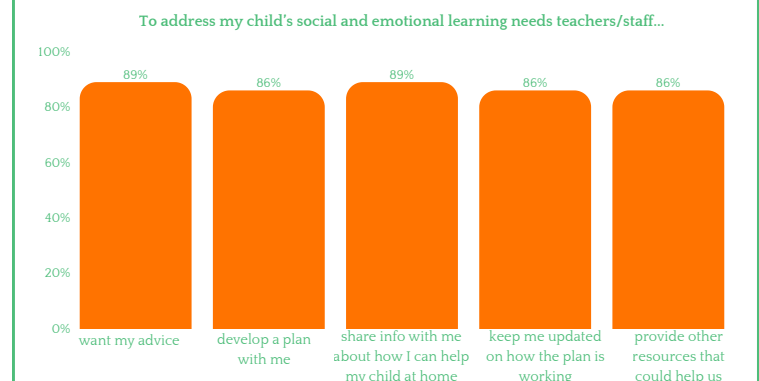


Figure 5. Percent of families who selected "yes" for each statement



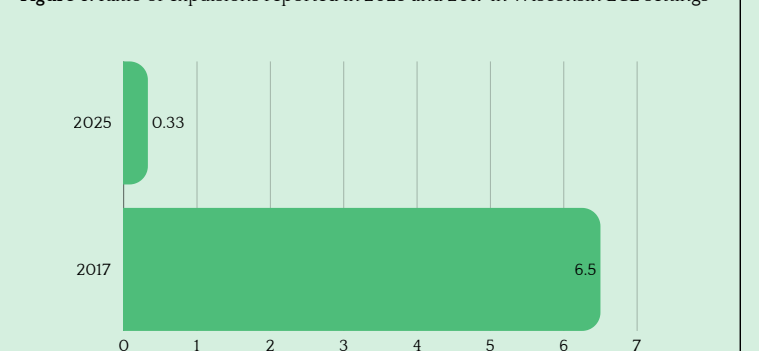
We continue to collect suspension and expulsion data across implementation sites, and programs consistently demonstrate very low rates of suspension and expulsion. This ongoing data collection provides valuable insight into how evidence-based practices reduce challenging behaviors and keep children engaged in learning. Through professional development, coaching, and systems-level support, programs are equipped with practical, proactive solutions that help prevent exclusionary discipline and promote positive outcomes for young children.

In program-wide implementation sites in Wisconsin in 2025, 3 of 9076 children were asked to leave a program due to behavior. **This is much lower than previous statewide estimates of expulsion from Early Care and Education in Wisconsin.**

It's critical to note that, without current statewide comparative data, we cannot examine whether program responses to

challenging behavior are different in PM programs compared to non-PM programs. We are poised to collaborate with state partners to conduct essential statewide data collection to better understand the landscape of suspension and expulsion in Wisconsin.

Figure 6. Ratio of expulsions reported in 2025 and 2017 in Wisconsin ECE settings*



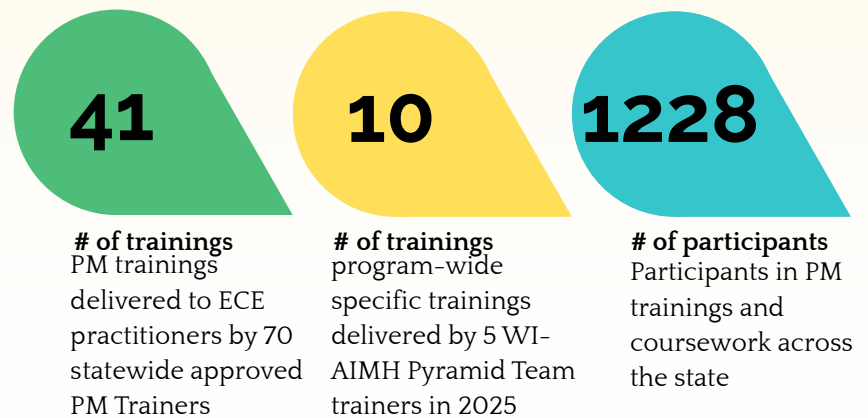
Note. These data sets were collected as part of two different data sets. In 2017 data were collected as part of an SFTA retention study and in 2025 the data were analyzed based on the data entered into PIDs by PM programs. The accuracy and validity of these data are dependent on the consistency of data entry and accuracy of child enrollment data in PIDs.

TEACHERS

TEACHERS GUIDE YOUNG CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES USING EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

WI-AIMH collaborates with statewide training and technical assistance organizations to provide practitioner training that is aligned with national PM efforts. WI-AIMH facilitates the approval process to become a PM trainer in Wisconsin and in return provides cost effective access to handouts, training materials and online learning modules. High quality practitioner training is the first step in ensuring teachers have access to building their toolkit of evidence-based practices and strategies to support healthy development.

Figure 7. Frequency of Trainings and Content Delivery Statewide



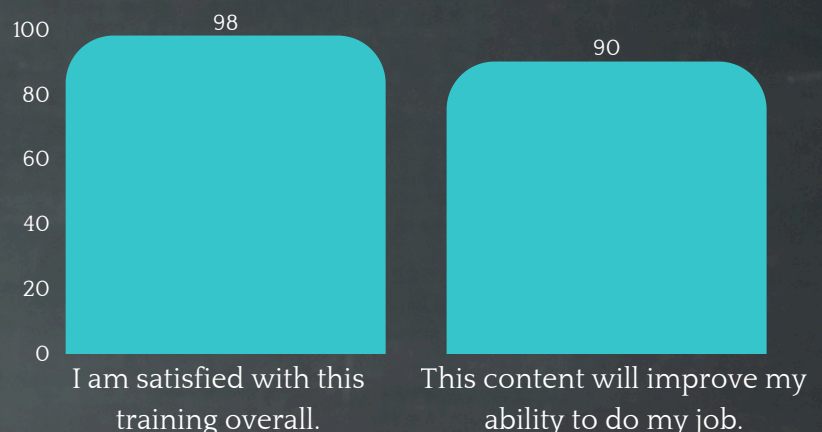
Note. Refers to 2025 data entered by training organization into The Wisconsin Registry.

In 2025, Wisconsin approved 6 new trainers for a total of 70 official PM trainers across the state.

Feedback from participants in PM Trainings

ECE practitioners who attend PM training continue to report high degrees of satisfaction with the content, and relevant application to their work with children and families.

Figure 8. Percent of participants in Wisconsin PM practitioner trainings who agreed



Note. These data include all respondents from PM practitioner content delivery across WI on feedback surveys in 2025.



Infant/Toddler Pyramid Model 8-Part Series

Practitioners shared the important changes they made in their practice to support children's social and emotional development. (See participants' responses in the box to the right.)

Family Child Care e-Modules + Reflective Coaching

Wisconsin was one of the first states to test the new PM e-modules specifically designed for Family Child Care (FCC). Launching the FCC e-modules training with reflective coaching was an essential component of capacity building and supporting FCC programs' alignment with statewide quality-improvement priorities. This early progress demonstrated strong potential for scalable, relationship-based professional development tailored to the unique needs of FCC providers.

While there was strong evidence underscoring the demand for and impact of the PM content for FCC on our small group of providers and their reflective coaches, dedicated funding for FCC efforts ended with the budget cycle in June 2025. Statewide implementation efforts related to FCC were paused, which has delayed the opportunity to expand evidence-aligned social and emotional support to FCC programs across the state.

"Explain and discuss individual feelings at a deeper level. Tell children it's OK to be sad. Tell the children that I am here for them. Be kinder, spend more time working through each child's feelings, one child at a time."

"I will continue to remain patient and come up with creative solutions to help work through difficult behaviors in a positive way."

"Use pictures and posters showing different feelings among different children."



"Get down on the floor and get to know the kids."

FCC providers reported making changes to the strategies and practices they use to support children's social and emotional development:

"After participating in the Pyramid Model Training, I have implemented several strategies to promote social-emotional development and positive behavior in my family childcare."

"I am planning to use more anecdotal notes and observations to understand why things happen with some children in my care. I plan to use some of the calming and emotional regulation techniques highlighted in the model."

"I adopted some additional positive behaviors strategies to help me promote social-emotional development and positive behavior. Implemented more preventive practices."



PROGRAMS

PROGRAMS CRAFT POLICY AND PROCEDURES THAT CREATE CONTEXT FOR COACHING AND PRACTICES

Program-Wide implementation provides the structure and framework to ensure program leadership can guide teachers to support young children and their families. Program administrators and the leadership team, guided by a program coach, plan for and ensure practitioners are trained and coached to use evidence-based practices. In Wisconsin, Child Care, Head Start, and School District programs serving young children and their families are welcome to launch program-wide. Capitalizing on strong statewide partnerships, Regional Leads from WI-AIMH walk alongside programs as they explore and implement program-wide PM practices. **This year alone, we launched seven new program-wide sites!** Leadership teams from each program attended the Team Launch, bringing the total number of sites implementing PM and receiving support from WI-AIMH to 73—an expansion that reflects growing interest and momentum across the state.

Team Launch

After launch, participants answered the question, **“What parts of Team Launch were most useful or interesting for you?”**

“How important social and emotional skills and tools are.”

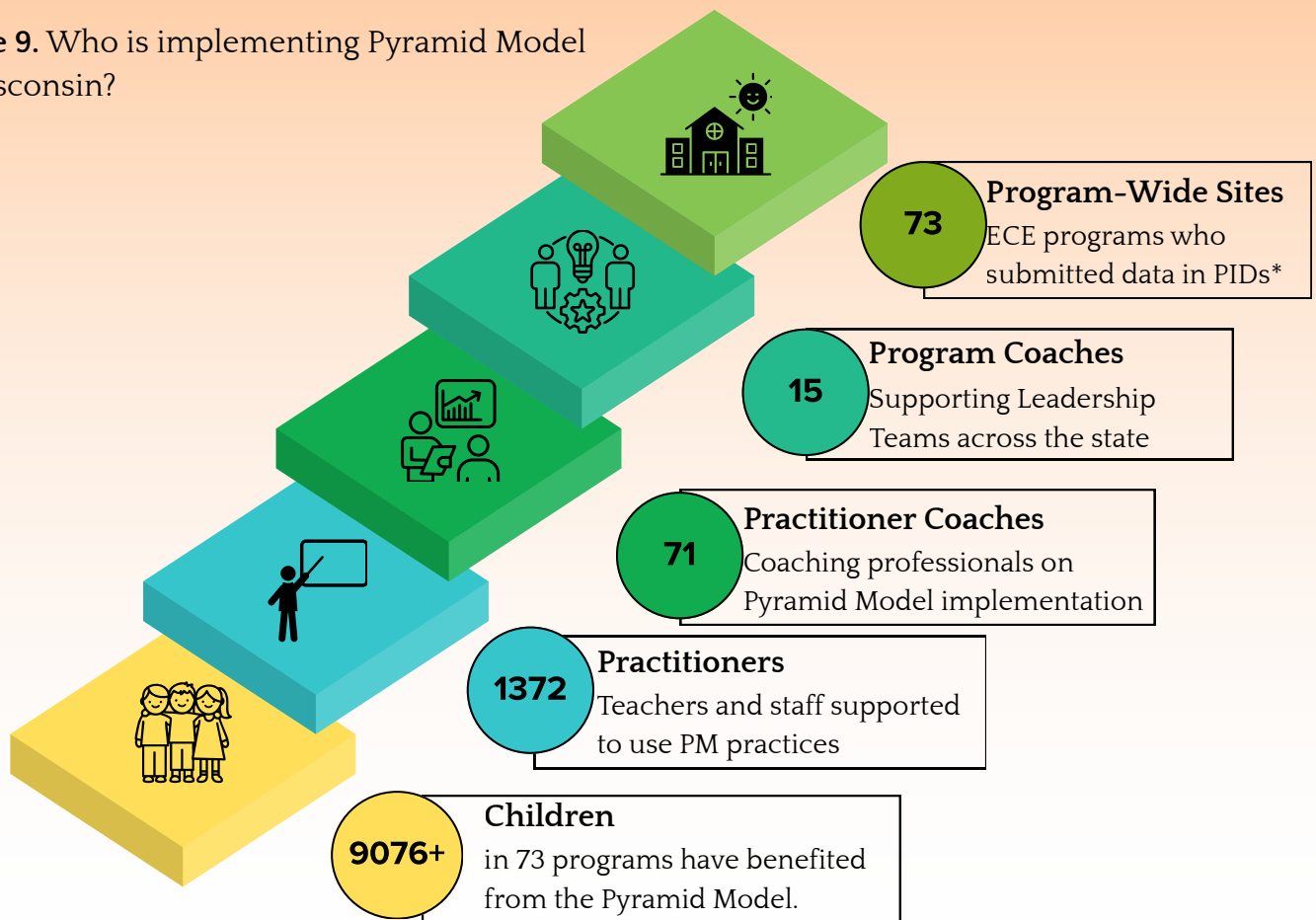
“The whole process... it made me more intentional in our process.”

“The resources available... opened doors to many other things.”

Even with continued uncertainties for ECE in Wisconsin, programs are sustaining their work to implement program-wide – an indication that program leadership teams believe PM has been a helpful way to create an environment where professionals feel supported and effective. These data have led to the hypotheses that **program-wide PM may have a positive impact on retention, stress and burnout reduction for ECE professionals.** We look forward to exploring these impacts and to position the Wisconsin Pyramid Model as a viable solution to well-known challenges faced by the ECE sector across Wisconsin.



Figure 9. Who is implementing Pyramid Model in Wisconsin?



Note. *=submitted data in 2025; PIDs = Pyramid Implementation Data System



Programs also demonstrate their commitment to PM by entering data they collect into the Pyramid Implementation Data System (PIDs). **Annually, we celebrate programs engaged in program-wide implementation for their use of the Benchmarks of Quality (BoQ) to assess progress and drive continuous quality improvement.** The BoQ includes 41 indicators that reflect high-quality, system-level implementation. Programs that have at least 80% of these benchmarks in place are recognized for demonstrating fidelity of implementation.

Everyone deserves a coach! Practice Based Coaching is an essential element of program-wide implementation for which each leadership team is responsible for creating a plan to roll-out. Practitioner coaches provide onsite essential professional development on practices that training alone does not improve.

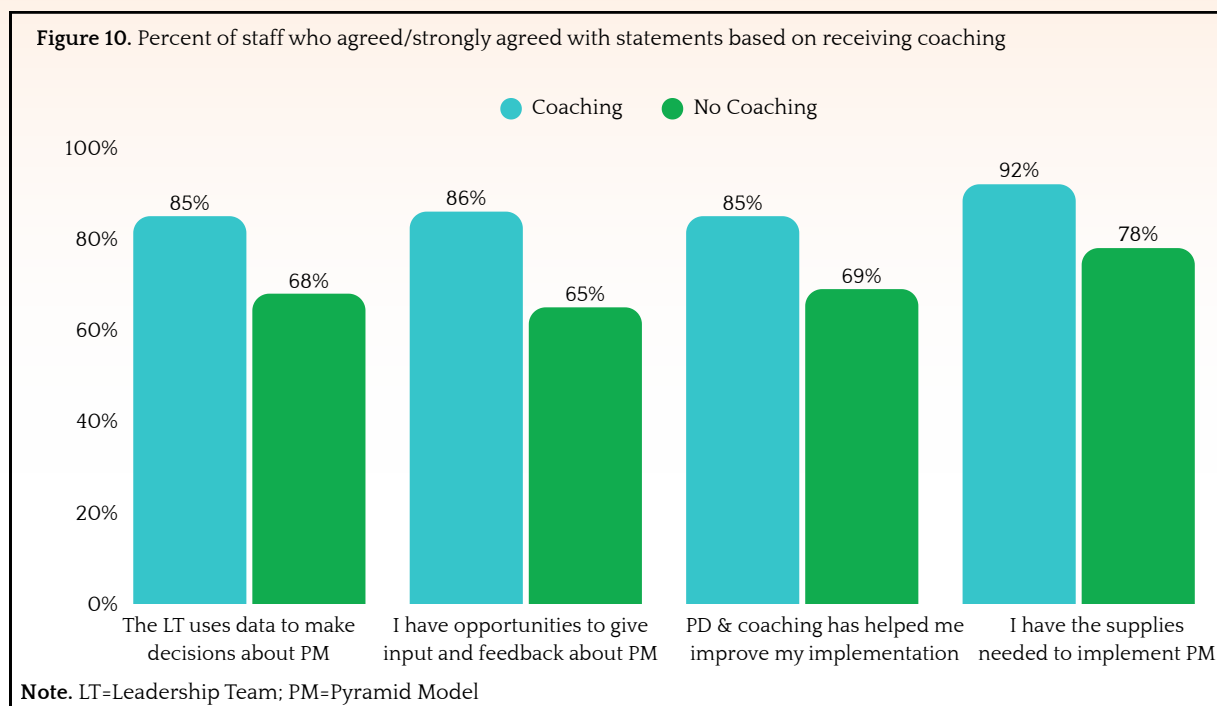
In 2025, 32 programs demonstrated fidelity on the BoQ, reflecting their sustained commitment to creating supportive environments that promote positive social and emotional outcomes for infants and young children.



Annual staff survey results show that coaching impacts staff perception positively, creating an environment where staff are more likely to report feeling supported. Specifically, those who receive coaching are more likely to agree or strongly agree with the following statements:

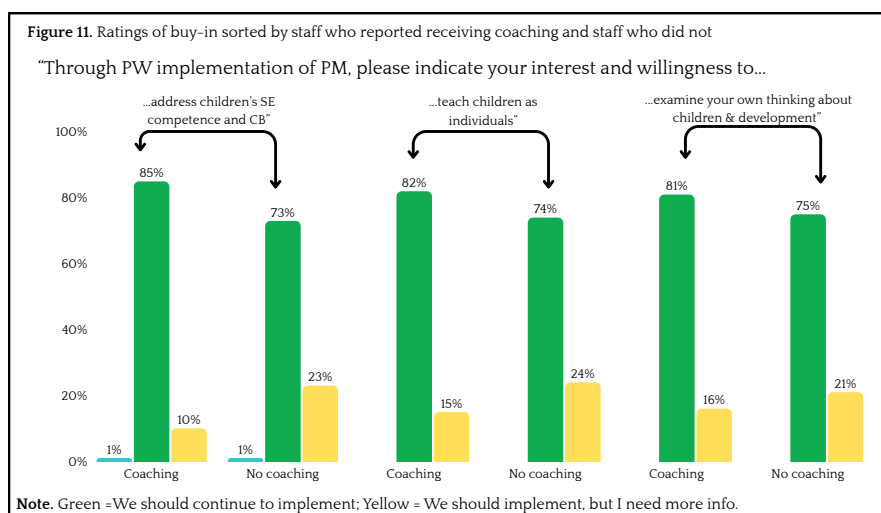
- 1) They have the time and resources to implement Pyramid Model in their classroom.
- 2) Data is used for decision-making by the Leadership Team.
- 3) They are given opportunities for input and feedback related to program-wide efforts (See Figure 10).

In addition, a higher percentage of staff who received coaching selected “we should continue to implement Pyramid Model” across all three staff buy-in statements than staff who did not receive coaching and a lower percent of staff who were coached reported “wanting to implement but need more information.” (See Figure 10.)



Although coaching revealed slight differences in buy-in, **nearly all staff reported that they were interested and willing to use Pyramid Model practices to:** 1) address children’s social and emotional competence and challenging behavior, 2) teach children as individuals by knowing their interests, their family and their community, and 3) examine their own thinking about children and development to learn how it might support children reaching the best social and emotional outcomes.

For all three “buy-in” questions, fewer than 1% of staff completing the survey selected “program-wide is not a good fit” or “it’s a fit for others but not me.”



COMMUNITY-WIDE IMPLEMENTATION

COMMUNITY-WIDE IMPLEMENTATION AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION WITH TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS BUILDS ESSENTIAL CONNECTIONS THAT STRENGTHEN AND ELEVATE PYRAMID MODEL IMPLEMENTATION

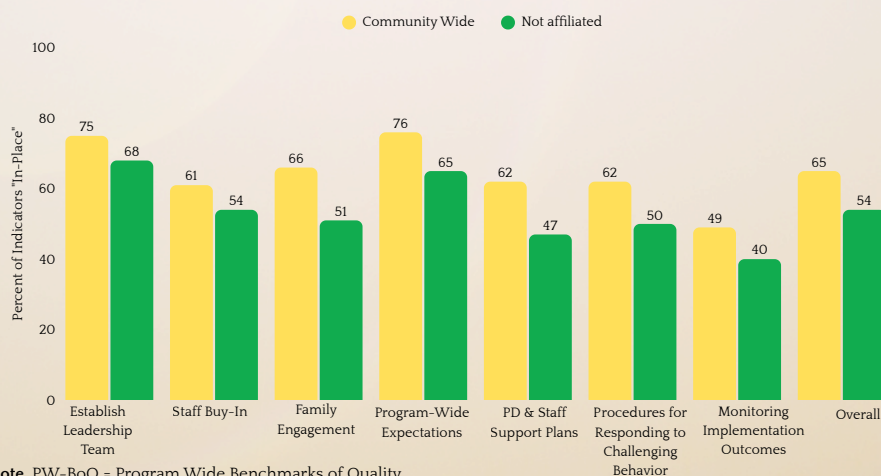
Community-Wide implementation of the Pyramid Model reflects a coordinated effort among agencies serving infants, young children, and their families to streamline services and improve outcomes. Community-Wide Implementation Teams (CLTs) are shaped by local needs, funding, and available resources. CLTs operate with shared commitments, collaborative decision-making, and pooled resources.

For the last two years, program-wide sites connected to a community-wide leadership team (CLT) consistently demonstrate higher rates of implementation compared to programs not engaged in this structure. The collaborative support, shared decision-making, and coordinated infrastructure provided by CLTs are clearly contributing to stronger, more consistent use of Pyramid Model practices in classrooms, programs and communities.

Programs that submitted a PW-BoQ assessment scored higher across every critical element when connected to a Community-Wide Leadership Team (Figure 12). This trend highlights the value of community-level collaboration in strengthening fidelity and improving outcomes for children, families, and staff.

We continue to experience an increased interest in community-wide Implementation. In response, Wisconsin's Pyramid Model team developed a clearly defined pathway to guide Community-Wide Leadership Teams through each stage of implementation with the support of a Regional Lead. **This work was highlighted as a national resource, and is now used to support other states as they develop their own Community-Wide Implementation efforts.**

Figure 12. Percent of PW-BoQ indicators rated "in-place" for programs by Community Wide affiliation





Sustaining and expanding community-wide implementation requires ongoing collaboration with national experts to expand resources, strengthen data-based decision making, and enhanced coaching for community-wide Implementation teams.

Statewide partners play a critical role in promoting community-wide Implementation as a strategic way to align public and private efforts to expand access to high-quality child care across Wisconsin communities.

Regional Connections

Through Pyramid Model community of practice (CoP), WI-AIMH's PM team creates collaborative networking opportunities for Wisconsin's Regional Pyramid Model promoters, supporting their efforts to build and sustain implementation across the state.

Participants reported the CoP was relevant to their work, and improved their competence and confidence around their skills:

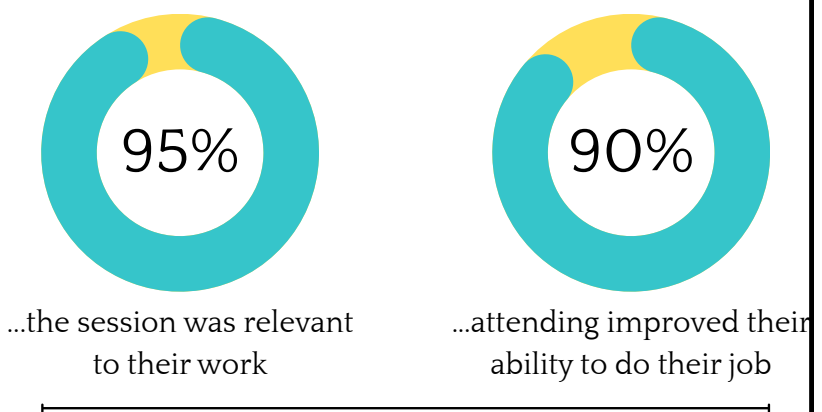
“

Getting the opportunity to talk with others in the field face to face with a specific subject was valuable.

Hearing all the hard work happening around the state and talking with others to hear how they are implementing or seeing implementation at work.

Please continue to have opportunities for people to connect and inspire this program.

Figure 13. Percent of participants who reported agreement



Note. These numbers represent the percent of individuals who agreed with each related to their experiences in the CoP.

STATEWIDE IMPLEMENTATION

STATEWIDE PYRAMID MODEL IMPLEMENTATION BRINGS FUNDING, RESOURCES, AND POLICY INTO ALIGNMENT TO STRENGTHEN, SCALE, AND SUSTAIN EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION ACROSS WISCONSIN'S EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS

The Pyramid Model is an evidence-based framework that serves as a shared foundation guiding how Wisconsin professionals support infants, toddlers, and preschoolers across ECE settings. The statewide collaboration and regional structure used in Wisconsin's Pyramid Model implementation creates alignment across agencies and strengthens coordination between state systems, regional partners, and local programs.

The Wisconsin Pyramid Model is guided by two distinct but related State Leadership Teams, formed by representatives across various early childhood organizations, who partner together in support of babies, toddlers, and young children across the state.

The Wisconsin Core State Leadership Team meets quarterly, and the Advisory State Leadership Team meets twice a year to review progress, address challenges, and provide feedback that drives continuous quality improvement. Find more information about the [State Leadership Teams here](#).

The Core State Leadership Team dove into the updated Statewide Benchmarks of Quality (SW-BoQ) to better monitor implementation sustainability and statewide scale-up. This updated self-assessment tool will strengthen discussions, guide decision making, and enhance collaborative support across the state.

The new SW-BoQ will help ensure that Wisconsin has:

- A shared, statewide collaborative effort across all levels of implementation.
- A clear, cross-sector approach that broadens reach, impact, and funding.
- Attention to Wisconsin's unique needs, ensuring communities receive the tailored support and dedicated resources necessary for effective implementation.
- A focus on the professional needs of both practitioners and the trainers and technical assistance providers who support them.

The Wisconsin Pyramid Model team acknowledges the commitment, collaboration, and wisdom of our State Leadership Team members. Their partnership is central to advancing high-quality social and emotional development and well-being across all ECE settings.



Inaugural Midwest Pyramid Model Summit

The State Leadership Team partnered with three state teams from the Midwest as well as the national Pyramid Model Consortium to launch the inaugural Midwest Pyramid Model Summit. Of the 69 sessions offered, 16 were presented by Wisconsin, including 10 sessions led by Pyramid Model programs which showcased a wide range of implementation experiences and expertise.

WI-AIMH's Executive Director, Lana Shklyar Nenide, co-facilitated a special pre-summit session, "State Day," where she guided Midwest State Leadership Teams in advancing their work toward integrating Pyramid Model and infant/early childhood mental health consultation within their states.

Looking Ahead

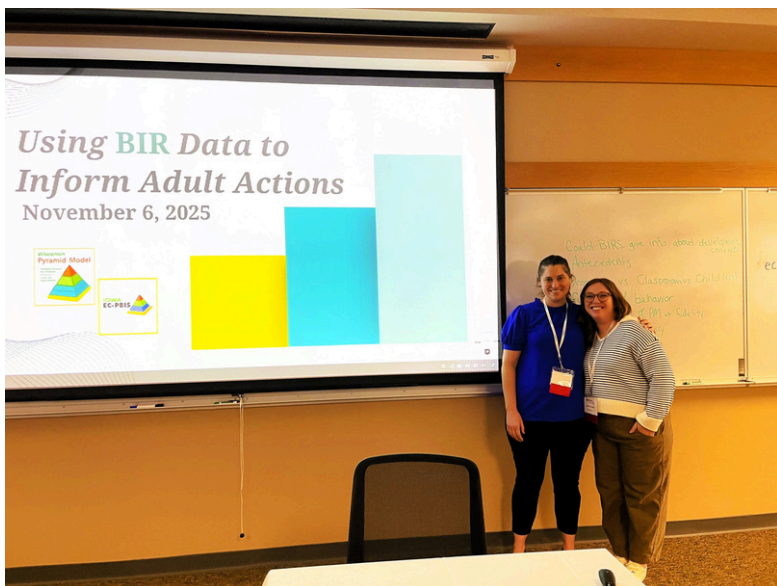
The Pyramid Model is a key part of Wisconsin's statewide collaborative effort to build high-quality programs that support young children and their families. Thus, our goals for 2026 include leveraging our strong relationships to continue building a sustainable statewide Pyramid Model implementation system focused on continuous improvement and long-term stability. We continue to advocate for the increased funding necessary to support ongoing scale-up and ensure more of Wisconsin's ECE programs can continue to benefit from effective Pyramid Model practices in the years ahead.



**2026 Midwest
Pyramid Model**

November 18 – 19, 2026

Hyatt Regency Coralville
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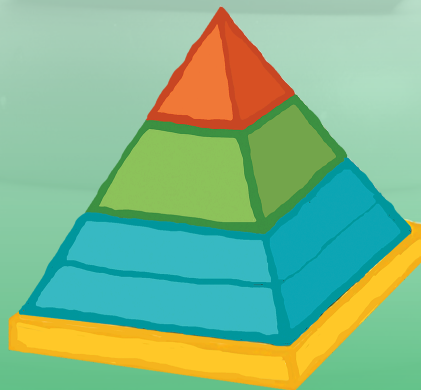
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Wisconsin **Pyramid Model**



Wisconsin Pyramid Model is a
project of the Wisconsin
Alliance for Infant Mental Health

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