

## **Rebekah St James**

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### **ECD and airway health: How ECDs will save 10M children**

#### **Abstract:**

The Children's Airway First Foundation (CAFF) is proud to present the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Program, a transformative initiative poised to reshape the future of pediatric health for children ages 0-6 years of age. This program addresses a critical yet often overlooked factors in early childhood wellness: airway and sleep health. Airway and sleep disorders in children—ranging from sleep-disordered breathing to structural anomalies—are frequently undiagnosed or untreated, leading to profound lifelong consequences, including developmental delays, behavioral challenges, mental health issues, ADHD, and other chronic health issues. It is estimated that 20-30% of young children experience sleep disorders.

1. Every day, early childhood educators and child-care workers have a bird's eye view of the 'fall out' of untreated airway and sleep disorders - learning, memory, focus and emotional regulation challenges, missed milestones, speech-language delays and behavior that can be misdiagnosed as ADHD. They see signs and symptoms of poor executive function that typify many children with airway and sleep challenges but may not understand the cause. They also may be unaware of the impact of airway disorders and the simple signs of breathing and upper airway disorders. Yet they are in a perfect position to observe children's behavior up close every day, to fully inform parents and to encourage them to seek professional help. accurate medical evaluations.
2. This program is more than a response to an existing crisis—it is a proactive movement aimed at prevention. By embedding airway and sleep health education within early childhood frameworks, the ECD Program has the potential to save an estimated 10 million children from the detrimental impacts of undiagnosed and untreated airway and sleep disorders. This initiative also aligns with CAFF's broader mission of fostering lifelong health (based on airway, sleep, and nutrition) and well-being, starting in the earliest stages of life. Attendees of this presentation will gain critical insights into the science and strategy behind the ECD Program, including its foundational principles, implementation models, current successes with similar programs around the globe, and measurable outcomes. Together, we can empower a generation of providers to prioritize airway health and ensure every child has the opportunity to thrive.

Join us in this conversation and learn how ECDs can transform airway and sleep health—one child at a time.

## Biography

**Rebekah St. James** serves as the Executive Director of the Children's Airway First Foundation (CAFF) in the United States. With a background in media services, she leads CAFF's mission to educate parents and clinicians on children's airway health and management. In addition to her role at CAFF, Rebekah is the founder of Media With Coffee, a company specializing in high-quality content creation, social media management, and marketing strategies to enhance online presence