Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health

Laura Lucas, MS
Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Director
Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
Learning Objectives:

- Learn what Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) is and why is it important.

- Learn how child–serving state agencies and others are working together to build a better system in GA to support IECMH.

- Discover how you can promote IECMH!
What is Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health?

A young child’s developing capacity to...
- experience, regulate, and express emotions
- form close and secure relationships
- explore the environment and learn

Source: Handbook of Infant Mental Health, 4th Edition
“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men”
Frederick Douglass
1817-1895
Early Childhood Presents a Window of Opportunity

The brains of young children develop in response to the environment around them.

Dramatic Growth of Neuronal Architecture from Birth to 2 Yrs

Source: "The Pediatrician's Role in Addressing Childhood Poverty", David Kelber
A Continuum from Stress to Trauma

- Normative, Developmentally Appropriate Stress
- Emotionally Costly Stress
- Traumatic Stress
Early Adversity has Lasting Impacts

- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Fractures
- Burns
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Suicide
- PTSD
- Unintended pregnancy
- Pregnancy complications
- Fetal death
- HIV
- STDs
- Infectious Disease
- Chronic Disease
- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Alcohol & Drug Abuse
- Unsafe Sex
- Risky Behaviors
- Education
- Occupation
- Income
- Opportunities

Adverse Childhood Experiences
The development of problems with child and adolescent mental health can often begin with problems in the child's primary attachment relationship as an infant.

• The developing brain is affected by children’s experiences and interactions with the important people in their lives.

• Adults play a critical role in supporting young children’s social and emotional development.

• Brain connections are experience dependent; early experiences last a lifetime.
IECMH Services

• Concrete Assistance
• Emotional Support
• Developmental Guidance
• Early relationship assessment and support
• Advocacy
• Infant – Parent Psychotherapy
Mental, Behavioral and Developmental Disorders Begin in Early Childhood

1 in 6 U.S. children aged 2–8 years (17.4%) have been diagnosed with a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.

Source: CDC -2015

9.5%-14.2% of children ages 0-5 experience emotional or behavioral disturbances, same rate as school aged children

Source: US National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health. Public Health Reports

More Than 5 Million Children Lost a Primary or Secondary Caregiver Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

National Institutes of Health 2021
Georgia Preschool Development Grant (PDG)
Birth-5 Needs Assessment 2019 Findings:

• Limited or no access to mental health services
• Further development of supports and resources needed to address persistent challenging behaviors and children/families impacted by trauma
• Need for a credentialing program for professionals to provide mental health services for children birth-5
• Investment in two-generation strategies and programs
Establish IECMH State Level Leadership

✓ IECMH Director Position, housed at DECAL since November 2020

✓ IECMH Task Force with child serving state agencies represented convening monthly since February 2021
Georgia System of Care State Plan

- Develop prevention/intervention strategies to address early childhood (0-4) mental health.

- Promote educational opportunities for the new and existing workforce to develop capacity to serve infants and toddlers ages 0-4 and their care givers.

- Clarify Medicaid service coverage/billing mechanisms for behavioral health services and supports for children under 4.
Goal:
To Build Georgia’s Early Childhood System of Care Together!

zerotothree.org
The role of IECMH Task Force is to build and sustain a comprehensive and collaborative Early Childhood System of Care in Georgia.

An Early Childhood System of Care
- promotes coordinated policy and collaborative service delivery
- supports young children and their caregivers to address social and emotional health needs
- promotes early relational health
Early Childhood Mental Health Task Force Workgroups

- Promotion/Prevention
- Policy/Finance
- Workforce Development
IECMH Workforce Development

Co-Chairs:
Callan Wells
Senior Health Policy Manager
GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students
Founding Exploratory Board Member of the Georgia Association for Infant Mental Health
Chelsea Morris, PhD
Assistant Professor - Literacy and Special Education
Faculty Director at the College of Education Early Learning Center
University of West Georgia
Kick Off Event 10/5/22
Endorsement®: 4 Career Pathways

1. **Infant Family Associate**
   - Promotion
   - Early Care & Education
   - Administration
   - Case Management
   - Wraparound
   - Child Welfare

2. **Infant Family Specialist**
   - Prevention/Early Intervention
   - Part C
   - Early Head Start
   - 0 – 3 Home Visiting (PAT, HFA, NFP)
   - Mental Health Consultation

3. **Infant Mental Health Specialist**
   - Intervention
   - Infant Mental Health Home Visiting
   - Infant/Child Parent Psychotherapy
   - Minding the Baby
   - Interaction Guidance

4. **Infant Mental Health Mentor**
   - Macro
   - Research
   - Faculty
   - Reflective Supervision
   - Policy
   - Advocacy
   - Administration
Child Parent Psychotherapy (CPP)

- **Dyadic Treatment** is a form of therapy in which the infant or young child and caregiver are treated together. A clinician is present with the caregiver-child dyad, or in a nearby room, and coaches the parent to encourage positive interactions that can help improve parenting, the caregiver-child relationship, and the child’s behavior.

- **Child Parent Psychotherapy** is an evidence-based dyadic therapy for young children from birth through age five and their parents/caregivers
  - Supports family strengths and relationships
  - Helps families heal and grow after stressful experiences
  - Respects family and cultural values
DC:0-5 Training

- IECMH Task Force Members
- CPP Training Cohort
- Overview Training will be offered through GA-AIMH
IECMH Policy and Finance Workgroup

Co-Chairs:
Wendy White Tiegreen, MSW
Director, Office of Medicaid Coordination and Health System Innovation, Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD)

Catherine Ivy, LCSW
Deputy Executive Director, Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH)
House Study Committee Recommendations:

1. Convene meetings with the state Medicaid to discuss Medicaid reimbursement for behavioral health services for children ages birth to 4.

2. Documentation of where behavioral health services are not covered for children ages birth to 4 in Medicaid state plan.

3. A plan to add language to existing billing codes to clarify appropriate behavioral health services for children ages birth to 4. In progress

4. Consider a plan for health providers working with young children to utilize the DC:0-5 for diagnosis. In Progress

5. A plan for Medicaid to cover the mother of 12 months after the birth of the child. (Medicaid has made the recent change to cover mothers 6 months after birth).
Georgia State University
IECMH Systems Analysis

The Georgia Health Policy Center – Center for Excellence in Children’s Behavioral Health will:
- provide research and subject matter expertise related to Medicaid policy and data
- create statewide heat maps reflecting program availability for this age group to identify opportunities/gaps in the service system
- designing the evaluation plan for the Child-Parent Psychotherapy training pilot
- create an issue brief that highlights opportunities for Georgia’s IECMH systems
Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) Collaboration

- Partnering to examine the impact of Georgia’s home visiting programs on the social emotional learning of families
- Partnering to expand Child Parent Psychotherapy in Georgia
Goal to Build (or Expand) Trauma Informed Communities Across the State

• Regions in Athens, Augusta, Macon and Savannah will create strategies to build a 0-5 workforce presence in existing coalitions

• 4 Regional Coalitions will host Community Resiliency Model (CRM) Trainings for the 0-5 workforce and families in their region

• 4 Regional Coalitions will host Mindful Self Compassion (MSC) Trainings for 0-5 Leaders

• Partners from Several Organizations will work to Create Early Care Resiliency Zones in the Savannah Region
Zero to Three – The Growing Brain

• IECMH Director became a provisionally certified trainer in the Growing Brain Curriculum from Zero to Three
  • Training will be delivered to DECAL Infant and Toddler Specialists, 21 hours of content in 2022.
  • Partnering with Better Brains for Babies to identify collaboration opportunities
May 2nd-6th

#littlekidsbigfeelings
#DECALCMHWeek2022
Children's Mental Health Week at DECAL
"A love of learning has a lot to do with learning that we are loved"

Mister Fred Rogers
Children's Mental Health Week, May 2 - 6
Next Steps

What can you do?
- Join the GA- AIMH mailing list
- Visit DECAL IECMH webpage for resources
- Share our video!
- Remember that every interaction counts and that caregivers play a key role in social and emotional health!
SEEDS Helpline

Who we serve:
Childcare Centers, GA Pre-K Programs, HS/EHS Programs, Public Preschool Classrooms, Family Members

Supports and Services:
• Connect with resources
• Trainings/Professional Development
• Practice-based coaching
• Guidance addressing persistent challenging behaviors
Learn the Signs. Act Early.
cdc.gov/ActEarly
development.decal.ga.gov
childdevelopment@decal.ga.gov
“Early is better, but it’s never too late”

Harvard Center for the Developing Child Director – Dr. Jack Shonkoff
Questions?
Laura.Lucas@decal.ga.gov

More information:
http://www.decal.ga.gov/Prek/InfantAndEarlyChildhoodMentalHealth.aspx