My Background

Master of Science in Behavioral Disabilities
Direct service work for 10 years
• Last position served as clinical manager of targeted case management program for adults with mental illness

Master of Public Administration
• Wanted to decide who received money rather than begging for dollars

State of Wisconsin
• Community Mental Health
• Medicaid

Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health – Founding Executive Director

ZERO TO THREE – Support states and communities with infant and early childhood mental health policy

Copyright © 2022 ZERO TO THREE. All rights reserved.
Let's Take a Poll:

Who is here today?
Today’s Agenda

• What is Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health?
• Why is Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health important?
• How is Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health developed?
• Infant and Early Childhood Continuum
• Diagnosis and Treatment
• Resources to learn more on Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

Photo by Filip Mroz on Unsplash
What is IECMH?

The developing capacity of a child from birth to age five to:

- Experience, express and regulate emotions;
- Form close, secure interpersonal relationships; and
- Explore their environment and learn;

All in the context of family, community, and culture¹
Why is IECMH Important?

- It is the **foundation** for all future development
- ALL experiences make an **impact**
- Involves developing curiosity, persistence, motivation, trust
- Infants and young children **can** and **do** experience mental health problems
How is IECMH Developed?

• **All** early experiences shape the developing brain and can have lifelong impacts

• Brain development is dependent on relationships

• The brain forms **more than a million** neural connections **each second** in the first years of life

• Baby's mental health is dependent on the mental health and well-being of their primary caregiver(s)
Continuum of IECMH Supports & Services

Promotion
Prevention
Developmentally Appropriate Assessment and Diagnosis
Treatment

Increasing intensity and specialization of services and supports
Who is able to promote infant and early childhood mental health?
Prevalence and the Importance of Addressing Problems Early

• Young children experience mental health issues at roughly the same rates as older children, ranging from 10-16%[^3][^4][^5]

• Young children in childcare are expelled at a rate 13 times higher than all K-12 expulsions combined[^6]
  • Black preschoolers are more than 2 times as likely to be expelled than their white peers[^6]

[^3]: Reference 3
[^4]: Reference 4
[^5]: Reference 5
[^6]: Reference 6
Intervening Early can Redirect the Trajectory!

• Young children, including infants, can and do show early warning signs of mental health disorders

• Serious mental health problems can manifest without intervention

• Early identification and treatment can redirect the trajectory from "at risk" to the path for well-being and success
What Do Mental Health Issues in Young Children Look Like?

Infants
- Failure to gain weight
- Inconsolable crying
- Flat affect
- Sleeping and feeding problems
- Resistance to being touched or comforted

Toddlers and Preschoolers
- Impulsive or aggressive behavior
- Inability to pay attention
- Defiance
- Regression in sleep, toileting or eating routines

Parlakian and Seibel (2002)
The Institute of Medicine estimates that the ensuing indirect and direct costs of ACEs total $247 billion annually, impacting federal and state spending on health care, education, child welfare, criminal justice, child welfare, and economic productivity.
Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood: An Overview of DC:0-5™
Diagnostic Classification

1994

2005

2016

Copyright © 2022 ZERO TO THREE. All rights reserved.
The Balancing Act

Identify children with clinically impairing disorder to increase chance of access to evidence-based treatments.

Avoid pathologizing children demonstrating normal variations of typical development.
The Benefits of IECMH Investment
Dyadic Treatment

• Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) showed a return of investment of $3.64 per dollar\(^9\)
  • In families at risk of child maltreatment: reduced child maltreatment potential and lower rates of future referrals to child welfare systems\(^{10}\)

• Child Parent Psychotherapy (CPP) has shown significant cost-associated impacts including:

  **Healthcare:**
  • In children, improvements in child cortisol patterns, PTSD symptoms, comorbid conditions\(^{11-19}\)
  • In caregivers, decline in maternal psychiatric symptoms\(^{11-19}\)

  **Education:**
  • Improvements in behavior problems, aggression, and cognitive performance\(^{11-19}\)

  **Child Welfare:**
  • In families involved with the child welfare system: reduced recidivism rates, reduced placement in foster care\(^{20}\), and fewer placement changes for preschoolers already in foster care\(^{21}\)
Concluding Remarks

It is all about relationships!

Mental health is a good thing!

We all have mental health, even babies!
To develop a child’s mind, we must first nurture a child’s heart.
“THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A BABY
THERE IS A BABY AND SOMEONE”

D.W. Winnicott
What are you most curious about?

What will you do in your role to promote infant and early childhood mental health?
IECMH Resources

- How to Talk About IECMH Infographic
- State of Babies Yearbook
- Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children, and Families
- The Racial Equity Institute
- We Are: Working to Extend Anti-Racist Education
- Exploring State Strategies for Financing Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Assessment, Diagnosis, and Treatment
- Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Policy Series
- Expanding Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Supports and Services: A Planning Tool for States and Communities
- Planting Seeds in Fertile Ground: Actions Every Policymaker Should Take to Advance Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health
- Join Think Babies!
References


Copyright © 2022 ZERO TO THREE. All rights reserved.