Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (I/ECMH)

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It’s amazing what they absorb before they’re five.
Goals

• Provide an overview of Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health (I/ECMH)
• Provide examples of best practices
• Share resources with more in-depth information
What is I/ECMH?

Not this!

“Lahwaah, buwha buwhaah, gullygah abawaa mey ayeeyah. Is that normal?”
The developing capacity of the infant and toddler to:

- Form close and secure adult and peer relationships
- Experience, manage, and express a full range of emotions
- Explore the environment and learn

...all in the context of family, community, and culture.
I/ECMH is not

- Focused on mental *illness* in young children
- A philosophy that infants and toddlers necessarily *need* MH intervention to develop healthy personalities
- Only focused on young children already identified as having problems or being at risk
- Focused solely on the child
- Synonymous only with social-emotional development and/or self-regulation
Our Guiding Principles

1.) Strengths-based perspective: *health, not illness*
2.) The importance of culture and equity
3.) An infant’s development begins and continues within the context of an emotional relationship
Our Guiding Principles

4.) The importance of brain science

5.) Social-emotional skills provide a foundation for all other domains of development
6.) Children aren’t born with these skills, but with the potential to develop them
Our Guiding Principles

7.) Relationships matter, but so do environments
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

The ACES study is the largest of its kind that looks at the health and social effects of ACES over a lifespan.
How the ACES Work

Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Abuse and Neglect (e.g., psychological, physical, sexual)
- Household Dysfunction (e.g., domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness)

Impact on Child Development
- Neurobiologic Effects (e.g., brain abnormalities, stress hormone dysregulation)
- Psychosocial Effects (e.g., poor attachment, poor socialization, poor self-efficacy)
- Health Risk Behaviors (e.g., smoking, obesity, substance abuse, promiscuity)

Long-Term Consequences
- Disease and Disability
  - Major Depression, Suicide, PTSD
  - Drug and Alcohol Abuse
  - Heart Disease
  - Cancer
  - Chronic Lung Disease
  - Sexually Transmitted Diseases
  - Intergenerational transmission of abuse
- Social Problems
  - Homelessness
  - Prostitution
  - Criminal Behavior
  - Unemployment
  - Parenting problems
  - High utilization of health and social services
  - Shortened Lifespan

CANarratives.org
Childhood Trauma

• “The three Es”: The experience of an event by a child that is emotionally painful or distressful, which often results in lasting mental and physical effects

• 3 levels of Stress Response:
  – Positive
  – Tolerable
  – Toxic

• Historical trauma/intergenerational trauma: passed down by generations
Trauma-Informed Practice

• Involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma

• Emphasizes physical, psychological and emotional safety for both clients and providers, and helps survivors rebuild a sense of control and empowerment

• It’s about asking not “what’s wrong with this child” but “what happened to this child?”
Adverse experiences and other trauma in childhood, do not dictate the future of the child!

• Protective factors are characteristics associated with a lower likelihood of negative outcomes or that reduce a risk factor’s impact. Protective factors may be seen as positive countering events.

• Risk factors are characteristics at the biological, psychological, family, community, or cultural level that precede and are associated with a higher likelihood of negative outcomes.
Resiliency is when the scale tips toward the good even when there are stressors and hard things.

Hard Things & Stressors:
- Not able to pay bills
- Not enough food to eat
- Violence
- Health problems
- Housing that does not feel safe

Things about You:
- Genetics and DNA
- Resiliency/ACE score
- Life story
- Personality

Good Things & Resources:
- People that you can count on
- Dependable transportation
- Safe housing
- A doctor you trust
- Having enough money
Early Mental Health Challenges are Real

- 9-14% of children 0 – 5 experience mental health challenges. When they reach 2 – 5 years, the rate is the same that we would find in adolescence.
- Infants, toddlers, and young children can experience significant psychological distress.
- However, with appropriate interventions, challenges can be addressed and positive outcomes achieved.
I/ECMH Red Flags

• Changes in feeding, toileting, and sleeping habits
• Excessive externalizing behavior problems, like crying, biting, tantrums, and aggression
• Internalizing behavior problems, like social withdrawal and fearfulness
• Regressions to earlier stages of development
Addressing I/ECMH

• Mental health promotion is important for all children & families
• Need for multi-pronged, multi-level approach
• Need to address disparities
• Programs, staff, and families need to be equipped with the best tools and support
How the I/ECMH Approach is Different

• A multidisciplinary field

• Promotes and supports the child’s healthy development, within the context of relationships, while considering multiple determinants

• Honoring a family’s culture with a combination of respect and appreciation.

• Reflection

• Requires a unique set of competencies informing and guiding an I/ECMH approach
Optimal times to utilize an I/ECMH approach

- During pregnancy
- Post-delivery
- Infant/child has special needs, medical issues, or is fussy
- Caregiver/family loss, crisis or trauma
- Caregiver concerns
- Attunement/mismatch
- Child abuse and neglect
- Expulsion and suspension from child care/school
Types of I/ECMH Services

- Consultation
- Emotional support
- Developmental guidance
- Parent-child interaction guidance
- Relationship assessment and support
- Dyadic therapies
- Crisis intervention
- Concrete assistance, linkage, case management
- Advocacy
Best Practices: Ways to Address I/ECMH in Programs

- Comprehensive services provided to children and their families, including mental health
- Champion I/ECMH values from the top down, at all levels
- Focus on social-emotional learning
- Implement a tiered system of supports
- Training, professional development, and supports for staff
- Support developmental screening for all children
- Parental screening and services
- Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation
Best Practices: Ways to Address I/ECMH in Programs

- Qualifications and credentials
- Basic knowledge of I/ECMH (“I/ECMH 101”)
- Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children, and Families
- Trauma and trauma-informed practice
- Access to reflective supervision & reflective practice groups
Building a System of Care

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health
The foundation of all future development

Everyone who touches the life of a child can promote social and emotional well-being

Social and emotional development, or infant and early childhood mental health, is the developing capacity of a child from birth to 5 years old to...

- Form close and secure adult and peer relationships...
- Experience, manage and express a full range of emotions...
- Explore the environment and learn...

...all in the context of family, community, and culture.

Where can we promote social and emotional well-being?

- Pediatric health care
- Early intervention
- Early care and education
- Child welfare
- Home visits
- Judicial system
- Policy

Early connections last a lifetime.

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Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

- Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership (MIECHV):

- Caregiver Connections (child care):
  https://www.caregiverconnections.org/

- Action for Children (Cook County):
  https://www.actforchildren.org/for-providers/nutrition-wellness-programs/early-childhood-mental-health-program/

- Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies:
  https://www.inccrra.org/about/sdasearch

- Illinois Association for Infant Mental Health (registry of consultants):
  https://www.ilaimh.org/sign-up-for-the-infant-early-childhood-mental-health-consultant-statewide-registry/

- Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (Head Start/Early Head Start):
  https://www.ecmhc.org/

- SAMHSA, The Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation
  http://www.samhsa.gov/iecmhc
Mental Health Referrals


• ICTC Agency Search: http://lookthroughtheireyes.org/find-help-nearby/

• Fussy Baby Network: https://www.erikson.edu/fussy-baby-network/

• Illinois Department of Human Services: Division of Mental Health: http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=29735

• Illinois Department of Public Health: http://www.dph.illinois.gov/
Mental Health, Social and Emotional Learning, & Trauma

- Illinois Association for Infant Mental Health
  http://www.ilaimh.org
- Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership
  http://www.icmhp.org
- Illinois Childhood Trauma Coalition
  http://www.lookthroughtheireyes.org
- Erikson Institute
  http://www.erikson.edu
- The Ounce of Prevention Fund
  http://www.theounce.org
- Zero To Three
  http://wwwzerotothree.org
- The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)
  http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/
- The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
  http://www.casel.org/
Reflective Learning/Practice Groups

- Illinois Association for Infant Mental Health
  https://www.ilaimh.org/reflective-practice-groups/

- Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership
  http://icmhp.org/icmhp-in-action/projects/reflecting-learning-groups/

- The Ounce of Prevention (for Ounce-funded programs)
  http://www.theounce.org
  (contact Hannah Jones-Lewis: hjoneslewis@ounceofprevention.org)
Training, PD, and Supports for Staff

- Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
  https://www.inccrra.org/about/sdasearch
- Early Childhood Center of Professional Development
  http://www.eclearningil.org/
- Early Choices
  www.eclre.org
- Erikson Institute
  http://www.erikson.edu/
- Gateways to Opportunity
  http://www.ilgateways.com/
- Illinois Head Start Association
  https://ilheadstart.org
- Illinois STARnet
  www.starnet.org
- Illinois State Board of Education
  https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Topics.aspx
- The Ounce of Prevention Fund
  https://www.theounce.org/what-we-do/professional-development-offerings/
- Town Square
  http://townsquareil.org
Coaching and Program Quality

- ExceleRate IL
  http://www.excelerateillinois.com/

- Infant Toddler Specialists & Quality Specialists at Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
  https://www.inccrra.org/about/sdasearch

- Lead, Learn, Excel
  https://www.theounce.org/lead-learn-excel/
Pyramid Model

- Illinois Pyramid Model Partnership
  https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/OECD/Pages/Pyramid-Model.aspx

- National Center on Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI)
  http://www.challengingbehavior.org

- Pyramid Model Consortium
  http://pyramidmodel.org
Developmental Screening & Inclusion

- ExceleRate Illinois, Child screening guide and tools
  http://www.excelerateillinoisproviders.com/resources/resources-by-standard?id=52
- ExceleRate Illinois, Inclusion of Children with Special Needs
  http://www.excelerateillinoisproviders.com/resources/resources-by-standard?id=52
- Illinois Early Intervention
  https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=31889
- Illinois Early Childhood Special Education
  https://www.isbe.net/Pages/early-childhood-special-education-services.aspx
- Birth to Five, Watch Me Thrive
  https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/child-health-development/watch-me-thrive
- Early Intervention Training Program “Natural Partners” series
  https://eitp.education.illinois.edu/
- Early Intervention Clearinghouse Resource Guides
  http://eiclearinghouse.org/resources/guides/
- Early CHOICES
  http://www.eclre.org/
- Illinois Early Learning Project
  https://illinoisearlylearning.org/
- Illinois STARnet
  https://www.starnet.org/
Questions?
Visit our Advocacy Action Center at:

www.theOunce.org/advocacy

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