IMPROVING EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH

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Infant Mental Health IS Social Emotional Development:
An Overview of Virginia’s Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative

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Improving Early Childhood Mental Health:
What Is being done in Virginia?
PRACTICE

Adoption of the Pyramid Model

CSEFEL / TACSEI

Center on the Social Emotional Foundations of Early Learning Technical Assistance Center for Social Emotional Intervention

Virginia
The Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children

- **Effective Workforce**
  - Systems and policies promote and sustain the use of evidence-based practices

- **Nurturing and Responsive Relationships**
  - Supportive responsive relationships among adults and children is an essential component to promote healthy social emotional development
  - High quality early childhood environments promote positive outcomes for all children

- **High Quality Supportive Environments**
  - Systematic approaches to teaching social skills can have a preventive and remedial effect

- **Targeted Social Emotional Supports**
  - Assessment based interventions that result in individualized behavior support plans

- **Intensive Intervention**
  - Treatment
  - Few Children

- **Children At-Risk**
  - Prevention

- **All Children**
  - Universal Promotion
90% of brain growth happens in the first 3 years...
Responsive parents, caregivers, and community develop pathways of learning for a lifetime with children 0-5 years
A CHILD IS BORN READY TO LEARN

Each child is unique...

Unique Temperament
Rate of Learning
Style of learning
Processing Differences
Middle of the Pyramid

- Intensive Intervention
- Targeted Social Emotional Supports
- High Quality Supportive Environments
- Nurturing and Responsive Relationships
- Effective Workforce

Children At-Risk
Top of the Pyramid

Few Children
PRACTICE

Established Mental Health Endorsement System
INFANT/EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH IS NOT:

- BABIES ON A COUCH
- TALKING THERAPY WITH TODDLERS
- THERAPY WITH A TODDLER AND NOT PARENT/CAREGIVER
“Early childhood mental health is the capacity of the child from birth – age five to experience, regulate and express emotions, form close and secure interpersonal relationships and to explore their environment and learn. Infant mental health refers to how these issues affect development in the first three years of life. Early childhood mental health is synonymous with healthy social and emotional development.”

zero – three policy center
Warning signs of emotional distress in young children that may indicate a need for emotional health supports:

- Prolonged tantrums
- Disruptive screaming
- Property destruction
- Withdrawal
- Excessive crying
- Difficult to soothe
- Self-injury
- Excessive non compliance
- Attachment difficulties
- Sleeping and eating difficulties
VIRGINIA’S EFFORTS TO DEVELOP AN IMH TRAINING SYSTEM

MICHIGAN, TEXAS, OKLAHOMA, NEW MEXICO, ARIZONA, CALIFORNIA, VERMONT AND FLORIDA……..

ARE LEADING THE WAY IN DEVELOPING TRAINING SYSTEMS
THE STATES THAT UTILIZE THE INFANT MENTAL HEALTH ENDORSEMENT RECOGNIZE THAT THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL BEING OF YOUNG CHILDREN START WITH:

- EDUCATORS/CHILDCARE PROVIDERS, PEDIATRICIANS, DOULAS, LACTATION CONSULTANTS, PRACTICIONERS IN EARLY INTERVENTION/SPECIAL EDUCATION AND CHILD WELFARE SOCIAL WORKERS.
Some facts from the Virginia Association for Infant Mental Health

**Virginia is ranked 10th** in the nation for the *number of children* expelled from their daycare or preschool setting

**One-third of children ages 2 – 5 in child welfare** need mental health services and related interventions

**In Virginia, Infants and toddlers are the 2nd largest population of children in foster care**
VIRGINIA DECIDED THAT SOMETHING NEEDED TO BE DONE!
MICHIGAN’S COMPETENCY AND ENDORSEMENT SYSTEM WAS SELECTED

- IT’S A FRAMEWORK FOR KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE EXPERIENCES SPECIFIC TO THE PROMOTION OF INFANT MENTAL HEALTH

- IT PROVIDES A GUIDE FOR THOSE WORKING WITH PREGNANT WOMEN AND FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN 0 – 3.
Those who receive an endorsement in Infant Mental Health will be skilled to consult with professionals in early childhood settings and home.

A mental health consultation focuses on enhancing the quality of young children’s social and emotional affective environments as well as the needs of individual children.
PRIMARY GOALS OF INFANT MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS:

• Aims to strengthen the capacity of staff, families, programs and systems to promote positive social and emotional development
• IT PREVENTS, IDENTIFIES AND CAN REDUCE THE IMPACT OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS
• CONSULTANT WORKS WITH CONSULTEES, STRENGTHENING THEIR KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, STRATEGIES
4 LEVELS OF COMPETENCY

- INFANT FAMILY ASSOCIATE
- INFANT FAMILY SPECIALIST
- INFANT MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST
- INFANT MENTAL HEALTH MENTOR
THESE COMPETENCIES:

- HELP TO DEFINE BEST PRACTICE WITH INFANTS, TODDLERS AND VERY YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
- IN STATES WHERE THERE WERE FEW SERVICES, PROGRAM DEVELOPERS HAVE USED THE COMPETENCIES TO BUILD SERVICE SYSTEMS.
NEWS FLASH

- Most recently, VAIMH Association was proud to announce the first professional to be endorsed as an:
  - VAIMH-E II Infant Family Specialist

Laurie R. Feldman, MSW
Clinician II
Virginia Beach Infant Program
90% of brain growth happens in the first 3 years...

WHAT’S NEXT?
Healthy human relationships help a child...

- learn faster
- feel better about self
- understand their world
- develop relationships
Virginia’s Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative

Strengthen Linkages with Early Childhood Partners
Questions?
THE PYRAMID MODEL: Promoting Social Emotional Development in Infants and Young Children

Module 1

Social Emotional Development within the Context of Relationships

Principles:
- a. Families provide a unique role in the social emotional development of infants and toddlers.
- b. Caregiver awareness is essential to the positive social emotional development of infants and toddlers and to supporting families rearing infants and toddlers.
- c. Relationships are the cornerstone to early social emotional development in infants and toddlers.

Topics:
- d. Social Emotional Wellness
- e. Experiencing, Expressing and Regulating Emotions
- f. Temperament
- g. The Balance of Close, Secure Relationships, Learning and Exploration
- h. The Developmental Course of Social Emotional Wellness
- i. Children's Social Emotional Development within the Context of Families
- j. Using Your Relationship to Promote Social Emotional Development

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to describe:
- k. The importance of relationships to early social emotional development in infants and toddlers.
- l. The elements of social emotional wellness.
- m. Key developmental concepts that impact the social emotional development.
- n. The importance of families to the social emotional development.
- o. The importance of caregiver self-awareness to the positive social emotional development of infants to five-year-olds and to supporting families rearing infants to preschoolers.
- p. Describe key social emotional needs of infants and toddlers.
Module 2

Responsive Routines, Environments, and Strategies to Support Social Emotional Development

Principles:

a. Caregivers must be intentional about supporting social emotional development in infants and toddlers.

b. The physical environment can promote or hinder social emotional development.

c. Positive interactions between adults and infants, toddlers, or preschool children to five years of age can support the early development of emotional literacy.

Topics

d. Careful Observation

e. Responsive Routines and Schedules

f. Responsive Environments

g. Strategies to Build Emotional Literacy

h. Strategies to Build Social Skills

i. Working in Partnership with Families

Learning Objectives: participants will be able to:

j. Discuss why it is important to be intentional about supporting social emotional development.

k. Describe the importance of caregiver routines and identify strategies for using them to support social emotional development.

l. Identify key ways in which the physical environment can promote social emotional development.

m. Examine the environments in which they were in and begin to make plans to enhance them to meet needs.

n. Define emotional literacy and describe the kinds of interactions between adults and infants, toddlers, and preschool children that support emotional literacy.

o. Identify strategies for helping to build social skills.
Module 3

Individualized Intensive Intervention: Determining the Meaning of Behavior and Developing Appropriate Responses

Children’s challenging behaviors most often serve to express some feeling, need, or meaning that they are unable to communicate in a more appropriate manner. This suggests the need for identifying the meaning and the skills that the child needs to communicate that meaning more effectively. **Focus is on effective strategies for observing children and identifying the meaning of their behavior as a means of identifying strategies to developing appropriate response plans.**

Topics:
- a. Individualized Intervention
- b. Ways that Children Communicate Unmet Needs in Distress
- c. Examining Acting Out and Withdrawing Behaviors
- d. When Behavior Goes Off Track
- e. Paying Attention to the Effects of Challenging Behavior on the Caregiver
- f. Enlisting the Help of Parents/Families/Providers
- g. Using a Program Process to Develop a Support Plan

**Learning Objectives: Participants will:**
- h. Understand and be able to describe the relationship between the behavior and communication of distress for children.
- i. identify the characteristics of challenging behavior for children
- j. Describe acting out and social withdrawing behaviors exhibited by children.
- k. Identify family circumstances, including maternal/provider depression, they can have an impact on the social emotional development of children.
- l. Identify steps for working with parents/providers in addressing concerns about children's behavior.
- m. Explore the effect of children's behavior on the caregiver and identify ways in which the caregiver can use her/his reflections to understand and effectively address the needs of the child.
- n. Describe and have an opportunity to use a process for developing and implementing a support plan to respond to challenging behavior.
Module 4
Leadership Strategies

The extent to which programs can implement the practices described in the first three modules will depend in large part on this administrative support. **Focus is on identifying barriers to the effective use of these practices and strategies for addressing barriers. Collaborative planning is an essential feature.**

**Topics:**

a. Identifying Challenges and Barriers to Implementing Effective Practices
b. Identifying Strategies for Addressing Barriers and Challenges
c. Developing Program Policies and Staff Development Plans that Promote the Use of Effective Practices
d. Identifying Steps to Collaborative Planning for Programs and Systems that Support All Young Children Social Emotional Development and Address Challenging Behaviors As Needed

**Learning Objectives:** Participants will:

e. describe an evidence-based framework for addressing social emotional development and challenging behavior
f. identify strategies to address common barriers to evidence-based practices
g. identify effective leadership strategies including collaborative planning, program wide planning, and professional development
h. apply collaborative action planning strategies for improving children's social emotional and behavioral outcomes.