

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH)



Addressing mental health needs
of all young children and their
caregivers in Hawai`i

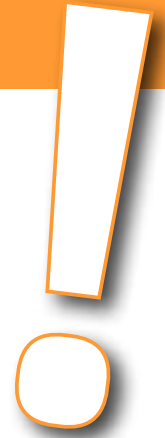
An Opportunity For Hawai`i

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH)

is foundational to a child's development including physical health, cognitive skills and language acquisition.



Preventing and treating mental health concerns early is more beneficial and cost-effective than intervening later.



Benefits for our communities:

- * Increased early identification of potential clinical diagnoses and referral to treatment
- * Reduced turnover and burnout for our early childhood workforce
- * Reduced preschool suspension and expulsion
- * Increased identification of and intervention for adverse childhood events (ACEs) and reduction of their negative, long-term health impacts
- * Increased health equity for all children and their families

Mental Health Starts at Birth.

In the first 5 years of life, mental health fosters the capacity of the child to:

- * Recognize, identify and understand their own feelings
- * Manage, express and regulate strong emotions
- * See and understand emotions in others and develop empathy
- * Establish and build meaningful relationships
- * Maintain curiosity for lifelong learning



Our youngest children develop mental health capacities in the context of their family, community and culture.

Stressors

Young children are at higher risk for stress when their families are dealing with:

- Separation and loss
- Substance use
- Parental mental illness
- Exposure to trauma
- Exposure to family violence

! Poverty, housing and food insecurity can multiply the mental health risks for children.

Health Risks

When challenges are not addressed, early experiences can impact brain development and may have a negative effect on:

- Body and physical functions
- Behavior and attention
- Self awareness and emotions
- Cognitive and language skills

Resilience is built in young children through nurturing, stable, supportive relationships.



Protective Factors

IECMH professionals provide supports for families and caregivers to prevent mental health instability in young children by recognizing and addressing potential challenges early.

IECMH interventions can help heal inter-generational, cultural and historical trauma.

The social-emotional health of infants and young children is closely intertwined with their parents' and other caregivers' mental health.

Adult mental health challenges are often felt and experienced by infants and young children.

The full continuum of IECMH services seeks to improve the social and emotional well-being of all infants, young children, and their families.



IECMH practitioners have a unique, specialized knowledge base that informs practices specific to infants and early childhood.



Promotion

- Increase public awareness of social-emotional development and the identification of mental health needs of infants and toddlers

Examples:

- **Community services** that provide family support;
 - such as Family Child Interaction Learning programs which are trained in IECMH fundamentals
- **Universal training** of childcare staff on the basics and importance of IECMH
- Ensuring all children (0-5) are screened for family needs, healthy development and mental health



Addressing needs of all children (0-5) and their caregivers

Prevention

- Support healthy and nurturing child-parent/caregiver relationships and environments to lessen the impact of stressors
- Reach high risk populations by targeting diverse settings
- Identify risk factors, and recognizes opportunities



Examples:

- **IECMH consultation**
 - A specialized IECMH practitioner works with child-serving professionals like Pediatricians, Childcare Providers, Educators, Home Visitors, and Early Intervention
- **Family support programs** helping family members
 - To develop skills and IECMH understanding
 - To navigate child-serving systems to access needed services

Assessment & Diagnosis

- Ensure that all children (0-5) are screened and assessed for developmental and social emotional delay
- Ensure that those noted are referred to Early Intervention for additional assessment
- Provide clinical classification and diagnosis of children
- Early identification possible through age-appropriate system



Examples:

- Ages & Stages Questionnaires®: Social-Emotional (ASQ:SE) **Screenings**
- **Early Intervention Services**
- Referral to a **licensed IECMH specialist** for further diagnosis

Treatment

- Offer individualized, developmentally appropriate practices
- Provide relationship-based treatments that include child and primary caregiver
- Culturally and linguistically responsive to the family

Examples:

- **Family dyadic therapy** with a licensed clinician
 - Child Parent Psychotherapy (CPP)
 - Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC), provided by a certified clinician



Addressing needs of subgroups with concerns



Workforce

A diverse, well-trained workforce is central to ensuring all children in Hawai'i have access to IECMH services. The current workforce must be expanded and supported to meet these needs.

Ongoing learning opportunities and supervision is essential to IEMCH system success.



Policy

Policies to ensure workforce training and support will go a long way to create a loving network around our most vulnerable citizens.

Critical to the efficacy of a continuum of IECMH services are policy and workforce supports.

Want to learn more about
the Integrated Infant and Early
Childhood Behavioral Health
(IECBH) Plan in Hawai`i?

Contact:
christina@ecashawaii.org