May is Children’s Mental Health Awareness Month…

In recognition of Children’s Mental Health Awareness month, the May edition of the Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia Technical Assistance Update is devoted to information on this topic.

What Is Early Childhood Mental Health?

ZERO TO THREE has described it as: “The developing capacity of children birth through age five to experience, regulate and express emotion; form close, secure, interpersonal relationships; and explore the environment and learn—all in the cultural context of family and community. Early childhood mental health is synonymous with general health and well-being and healthy social, emotional, and behavioral development. It is affected by a child’s biological predisposition, the child’s environment, including access to adequate food, clothing, and safe shelter, and the continuity of nurturing relationships”.

Why Is It So Important?

Evidence based research is providing information and data that is driving the growth and expansion in the field of infant-child mental health. From the earliest ages, early relationships are critical. Strong, responsive relationships have permanent effects on brain development, physical health, and mental health. In the early stages of child development, social emotional and physical health go hand in hand. Responsive providers/caregivers can improve the effects of varying conditions such as prematurity or poverty.
The intent of the VAIMH Endorsement is to recognize the professional development of infant and family service providers within the diverse and rapidly expanding infant and family field. Endorsement by the VAIMH will verify that an applicant has attained a specified level of functioning and understanding based on a set of competencies that have been identified and agreed upon by professionals, service providers, faculty members and policy makers in the infant and family field.

The VAIMH Endorsement offers individuals in the infant and family field a professional development plan that focuses on knowledge, best practice skills, and supervised work experiences that lead to increased confidence and credibility within the infant and family field. Of additional importance, the VAIMH Endorsement informs prospective employers, agencies and peers about culturally sensitive, relationship-based practice promoting infant mental health. Those who earn the VAIMH Endorsement will be recognized for their education, training, leadership roles and work experiences within a rapidly growing field.

The process begins when a potential candidate calls or emails to inquire about Endorsement. The office will send a general Endorsement brochure and a Preliminary Application. The candidate then returns the Application, along with the application fee, to the VAIMH Central Office. Upon review of the application, the Central Office confirms at which level the candidate is qualified to apply and forwards the informational packet to the candidate, including Competency Guidelines for that level. The candidate will then create his/her professional portfolio and arrange (if applying at Level 3 or 4) to take the written examination.

The written exam is a 3-hour exam offered twice a year and is based on the identified competencies at Levels 3 & 4. Following completion of the written exam, a three-member panel will review the exam and professional portfolio. The panel then makes recommendations to the Committee regarding endorsement. VAIMH encourages continuing professional growth and development for all members.

The Association requires providers who have successfully completed the VAIMH Endorsement at all levels to continue membership in VAIMH and to participate annually in 15 hours of culturally sensitive, relationship-based training experiences that promote infant mental health practice.

TO BEGIN ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS IN JANUARY 2013

Prerequisite Requirements

1. Membership in the VAIMH;
2. Training/Education as specified and related to infants, toddlers, up to age 3, parents, other caregivers and families; and
3. Experience working with infants, toddlers up to age 3, parents, other caregivers and families.

Levels of Endorsement

There are four levels of competency within the VAIMH Endorsement:

1. Infant Family Associate (CDA or Associates degree or 2 years paid work experience in infant & early childhood);
2. Infant Family Specialist (Bachelor’s or Master’s w/ a minimum of 2 years paid professional work experience promoting infant mental health);
3. Infant Mental Health Specialist (Master’s or post-graduate degree w/a minimum of 2 years supervised work experience providing relationship-focused infant mental health services);
4. Infant Mental Health Mentor (Master’s or post-graduate degree w/a minimum of 3 years specialized work experience in at least one of three categories:
   ➞ Clinical - Post graduate experience as practice leader in infant mental health (e.g. infant mental health supervisor, trainer or consultant);
   ➞ Policy - Post graduate experience as a leader in policy and/or program administration related to the infant/family field;
   ➞ Research/Faculty - Post graduate experience as a leader in university-level teaching and/or published research related to the infant/family field.

Each level recognizes the educational experiences, in-service training experiences, and work experiences appropriate for best service outcomes for infants, toddlers, and families.

For more information, contact the State ECMH Coordinator, Bonnie Grifa @ bgrifa.vcu.edu
The VAIMH was founded in October of 2010 for the purpose of supporting a culturally sensitive and relationship focused system of supports and services for young children that promotes infant mental health. Membership provides an opportunity to:

- Give input into a state system of mental health supports for providers as well as young children and their families;
- Vote on critical early childhood mental health matters and projects;
- Meet and network with other early childhood providers, infant mental health providers, families and students at both the state and local level;
- Learn about early childhood mental health training opportunities sponsored by the VAIMH and other organizations & receive reduced registration fee for VAIMH sponsored training;
- Serve on a work group of your choice with a specific focus area related to statewide early childhood mental health projects;
- Receive the VAIMH newsletter;
- Participate in the annual meeting each September in Richmond;
- Assist Virginia in moving forward with the development of a comprehensive system of early childhood mental health supports and services for children and their families.

The process for developing chapters so that members from the same general area can meet together to focus efforts on local needs and to encourage networking is currently being developed.

Per the VAIMH By-Laws, each chapter designates a voting representative on the VAIMH Board of Directors.

Cost to Join the VAIMH: $25 annually (each September)

The VAIMH meets quarterly on the first Thursday of September, December, March and June from 12:30-2:00 p.m. at ChildSavers, 200 North 22nd Street, Richmond Virginia 23223 with capacity for connecting members by phone.

World Association for Infant Mental Health

www.waimh.org

COST: $75 annually

- Receive the Signal (quarterly WAIMH newsletter);
- Reduced cost for Journal subscription (additional $45);
- Access to WAIMH database (information network);
- Reduced cost for Regional & World Conferences;
- Opportunities to keep pace with new findings and innovations in scientific, clinical, and educational research and programs.

To request a VAIMH application, contact VAIMH Treasurer, Terry Erlichman @ 1eterry@comcast.net
The Pyramid Model is a conceptual framework of evidence-based practices that support the social and emotional development of young children & was developed by the Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL).

The Pyramid is a model that teaches strategies that parents, caregivers, teachers, and other professionals can use to assist children in developing social and emotional competence.

The CSEFEL Pyramid model concepts and strategies ensure that infants and toddlers receive the level of support they need to be successful and maximize their social emotional development.

Training at the base of the pyramid teaches techniques to promote healthy social and emotional development for all children. It includes learning about evidence-based practices that ensure nurturing and responsive relationships between the child and adult caregivers and high quality supportive environments.

In the middle of the pyramid, the focus of training is on prevention through targeted strategies to prevent problems. At this level of the pyramid, providers learn and utilize systematic approaches to teaching social skills to help provide additional support to children who may be at risk for social-emotional issues or are beginning to show early signs of a possible problem.

At the top of the pyramid, training is focused on Intervention for those children needing individualized help in their home or childcare setting. At this level of the pyramid, providers learn and utilize techniques for a small number of children that are either diagnosed with a mental health issue or are demonstrating severe behavior or social-emotional issues. At this level, providers learn about assessment based intervention that results in individualized Behavior Support Plans designed to be implemented by the child’s natural caregivers in home and early care and edu-

For more information, visit the CSEFEL website@ www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/
Pyramid Model Corner

Understanding Temperament in Infants and Toddlers…

An example of the information available at the CSEFEL Website:

A child’s temperament describes the way in which she approaches and reacts to the world. It is her personal “style.”

Temperament influences a child’s behavior and the way she interacts with others. While temperament does not clearly define or predict behavior, understanding a child’s temperament can help providers and families better understand how young children react and relate to the world around them. Information about temperament can also guide parents and caregivers to identify children’s strengths and the supports they need to succeed in their relationships and environments.

The 23rd installment to the CSEFEL What Works Brief series explains why temperament is important, provides some clarifications about temperament, and tells you how you can use what you know about temperament to promote positive social-emotional development and behavior.

A handout called the Temperament Continuum is also provided to help you analyze where your temperament is similar and different to the children you provide services for.

Visit the CSEFEL website at: www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/

Visit the TACSEI website at: www.challengingbehavior.org

Sooo... What’s available at the CSEFEL Website???

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Modules</th>
<th>Information for Parents</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scripted Stories for Social Situations</td>
<td>Family Tools</td>
<td>Order Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools for Building Relationships</td>
<td>What Works Briefs</td>
<td>Links to Other Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book List</td>
<td>Research Syntheses</td>
<td>Materials in Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videos</td>
<td>Decision Making Guidelines</td>
<td>Training Kits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Strategies</td>
<td>Chat Sessions</td>
<td>Sign-Up for Pyramid Model Newsletter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mary Mackrain, a national presenter on early childhood mental health will be presenting a 3 hour seminar and two additional 90 minute sessions at the 2012 Creating Connections to Shining Stars: Virginia’s Collaborative Early Childhood Birth through Five Conference at the Cavalier Hotel in Virginia Beach, July 17th from 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Mary Mackrain is a National Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant. She provides training and systems support in her home state of Michigan around early childhood mental health consultation and various social and emotional efforts. She holds an Infant Mental Health Endorsement Level IV (Policy) through the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health. Mary is also a National trainer and consultant for the Devereux Center for Resilient Children and author of the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment Infant and Toddler (DECA-I/T) Program, including the DECA-I/T Infant and Toddler Strategies Guide & Building Your Bounce, Simple Strategies for a Resilient You. She is also a consultant on behalf of Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development’s Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation. Mary has worked in the field of early childhood for over 20 years as a teacher, mental health consultant, administrator and research and evaluation specialist. Her major research interests focus on supporting and understanding the social and emotional health, self-determination and resilience of infants, toddlers and young children and the adults that care for them. She has presented nationally to audiences regarding these topics.

Her 2012 Creating Connections to Shining Stars Conference presentations will include:

- **Tips and Tools for Supporting Social Emotional Health of Young Children within Natural Environments** (3 hour seminar);
- **Enhancing Supervision through Relationships, Respect and Reflection** (90 minute session); and
- **Building Family Partnerships through Reflective Practices** (90 minute session)

**If you are considering applying for the new Virginia Infant Mental Health Endorsement, all three sessions cover competencies for the endorsement including the following:**

- **Theoretical Foundations** (relationship-based practice, cultural competence, infant & young child development, behavior & attachment);
- **Direct Service Skills** (observation and listening, responding with empathy);
- **Thinking** (planning & organizing);
- **Communicating** (listening & speaking);
- **Reflection** (self-awareness, contemplation)

**In addition to Mary’s topics, there are a variety of additional sessions at this year’s Conference focused on supporting young children’s healthy social & emotional development.**

**REGISTER @ www.ttaonline.org**
GRANT AWARDED TO VIRGINIA

Virginia recently was awarded a Doing What Works Grant to promote young children’s positive behavior by adapting and incorporating the Doing What Works materials into current healthy social and emotional development efforts in Virginia. The project is focused on reducing the number of prekindergarten expulsions due to problematic behavior. Virginia currently ranks 10th in the nation for the percentage of expulsions from prekindergarten programs. The Department of Education will oversee the project.

ONLINE TRAINING MODULE

A brand new online training module about The Social Emotional Development of Young Children is available at http://www.veipd.org/elearning/ & it’s FREE! It was written specifically for Virginia by a CSEFEL master trainer, is interactive and results in a certificate of completion for 1.5 hours of training.

DID YOU KNOW?

4 of the 9 professionals going through the initial Infant Mental Health Endorsement process on behalf of Virginia are Early Interventionists???

Laura O’Neal, Norfolk
Terry Erlichman, Prince William
Laurie Feldman & Jennifer Wolff, Virginia Beach

NEW WEBSITE: ecmhVA.org

Virginia’s new Early Childhood Mental Health Website is currently under development & will house a training calendar, endorsement application and materials, VAIMH application & links to other websites & resources… among other things. An application for the domain name has recently been requested with plans to have it up and running by September.

Regional Training Consortiums

Regional Professional Development Consortiums are coming to an area near you! Training teams are currently being developed to bring early childhood training on a variety of topics, including early childhood mental health to 5 regions in the state: Fairfax, Richmond, Norfolk, Harrisonburg and Blacksburg. CSEFEL Pyramid Model Trainers are currently in the process of identifying which of the 5 regions they are willing to train in to quickly assist us in linking available trainers with training requests. Stay tuned!

State Early Childhood Mental Health Coordinator

3 state agencies combined funding to support a full-time position to coordinate VA’s Early Childhood Mental Health initiative. The position is housed at VCU’s Partnership for People with Disabilities. Contact Bonnie Grifa @ bgrifa@vcu.edu for more information about her new position or any of the projects in this Update.

VAIMH UPDATE...

The Virginia Association for Infant Mental Health is off to a great start. In less than 10 months, the VAIMH has grown to 65 members; elected officers, approved by-laws, held regular meetings and established a Board of Directors. For information on how to apply to start a chapter in your local area, contact Bonnie Grifa @ bgrifa@vcu.edu
Specific to Early Intervention/Part C of IDEA

Early Intervention Professional Development Website  [www.eipd.org](http://www.eipd.org)
Includes resources, articles and hand-outs as part of a Social Emotional Landing Pad where you can read about it, see for yourself, find it online and review Virginia guidance related to Social emotional development.

*Click on the document name for the following 3 documents & it will link you directly to the document:*

**Infant Mental Health Approaches and IDEA Part C Position Paper,** July 2005, IDEA Infant & Toddler Coordinators Association,

**POLICY BRIEF: Promoting Social, Emotional and Behavioral Outcomes of Young Children Served Under IDEA,** January 2007, Lise Fox and Barbara J. Smith

**Promoting the Social-Emotional Wellbeing of Infants and Toddlers in Early Intervention Programs: Promising Strategies in Four Communities,** June 2010, National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)

Additional Resources

**Bright Futures**  [http://brightfutures.org/tools/index.html](http://brightfutures.org/tools/index.html)
This site includes *What to Expect & When to Seek Help* - written in family friendly language for families & child development professionals in a range of disciplines, including health, education, childcare and family services. The companion *Referral Tool* and the guide *Locating Community Based Services to Support Children and Families* are tailored to help providers and families connect with the specific resources they need.

**National Technical Assistance Center for Children’s Mental Health**  [http://qucchd.georgetown.edu/programs/ta_center/](http://qucchd.georgetown.edu/programs/ta_center/)
Located within Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., they provide information on “what works” and how to help transform mental health service delivery systems for children and their families.

**National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC)**  [http://www.nectac.org](http://www.nectac.org)
Includes a resource section on early childhood mental health and early identification of children with social-emotional needs. In addition, NECTAC has developed a technical assistance document “Developmental Screening and Assessment Instruments with an Emphasis on Social Emotional Development for Young Children, Ages Birth through Five” (May 2008) compiled by Molly Ringwalt.

**SAMHSA**  [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)
Includes statistics, ECMH System of Care information & activities for Children’s Mental Health Awareness month.

**Zero to Three**  [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)
Best known for their expertise in infant mental health and social emotional development, they are a national non-profit organization whose mission is to promote the health and development of infants and toddlers. They developed the **DC: 0-3R** (Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood, Revised). It can be purchased online @ [www.zerotothree.org/estore](http://www.zerotothree.org/estore)
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