

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

As a community...

Let's talk about



infant and early childhood mental health!

Where do we go from here¹...

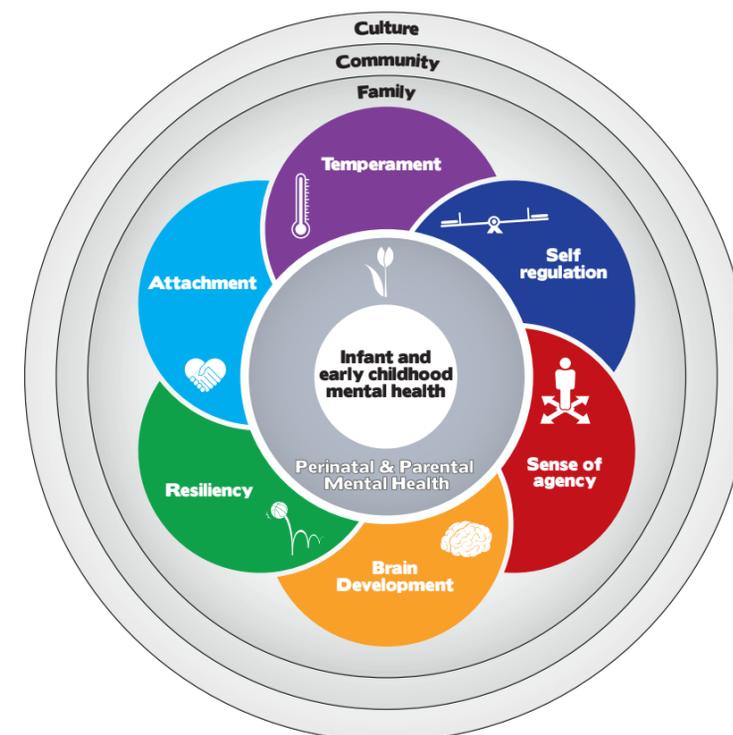
- Adopt and promote the common definition of infant and early child mental health across all sectors.
- Invest in training the infant and early childhood mental health workforce, recognizing the many roles and sectors with a direct stake in infant and early childhood mental health.
- Ensure the provision of infant and early childhood mental health promotion, prevention and intervention in all service areas.
- Engage families and caregivers together with service providers in developing and implementing infant and early childhood mental health policy and system planning.
- Strengthen data collection, monitoring and research on infant and early childhood mental health and improve communication among ministries.

References

For more information on the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative in Ottawa or a complete reference list, please contact:

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Infants and young children have mental health. It is the developing capacity of the child from birth to six years of age to form **close** and **secure adult** and **peer relationships**, experience, manage and express a full **range of emotions**, and **explore** the environment and **learn** – all in the context of family, community and culture¹. It is comprised of multiple interrelated components. It is also important to recognize that brain development begins in pregnancy. Therefore, the prenatal period must also be considered in relation to infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH).



- **Perinatal mental health:** refers to the mental health of the mother pre pregnancy, during pregnancy, and in the postpartum period². **Parental mental health:** is more than the absence of a mental health condition or illness; it refers to striking a balance in all aspects of the caregiver's life: socially, physically, spiritually, economically and mentally³.
- **Brain development:** Brain Development begins in pregnancy and undergoes its most rapid period of growth during the first 2000 days - It is the most important time of brain growth⁴.
- **Attachment:** Is a deep and lasting connection babies form with their caregivers. Babies need to feel safe, cared for, and protected. When caregivers respond consistently in a manner that is warm and sensitive a secure attachment develops. A secure attachment is foundational to positive developmental outcomes and future relationships with peers and partners.⁵
- **Temperament:** Is a set of personality traits that people are born with. A child's temperament can shape their outcomes and influence how others respond to them⁵.
- **Self-regulation:** Refers to how efficiently and effectively children deal with stressors and then recover from them⁶.
- **Resiliency:** Develops over time and is the ability to bounce back from adversity in a positive way⁵.
- **Sense of agency:** Is the child's ability to make choices and decisions that have an influence in their environment. It is linked to having a sense of control over matters that affect them⁷.

Mental illness and poor mental health is a problem...

In Ottawa

- Since 2010, mental health emergency visits at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario have increased by 75%⁸.
- In the last year, 45% of children who accessed Crossroads Children’s Centre walk-in clinic were under the age of 6. In their intensive home based program, supporting families with severe challenges, 30% of the children are also under the age of 6⁹.
- In 2015-16, 17% of children under the age of 6, who accessed Centre Psychosocial, were referred to the early screening program. 50% of these children were referred to other agencies for specialized developmental assessments or services¹⁰.

Based on Early Development Instrument (EDI) data, one in four (26%) children are vulnerable in one or more areas of their development as they enter school¹¹.

- One in eight (12%) of grade 7-12 students had seriously considered suicide in 2013¹².

In Canada

- 70% of mental health problems start during childhood or adolescence¹³.
- The disease burden of mental illness and addiction in Ontario is 1.5 times higher than all cancers put together and more than 7 times that of all infectious diseases¹³.



Poor mental health also costs our economy...

- In Ontario the annual cost of alcohol-related health care, law enforcement, corrections, lost productivity, and other problems is estimated to be at least \$5 billion¹³.
- In any given week, at least 500,000 employed Canadians are unable to work due to mental health problems¹³.

The economic burden of mental illness in Canada is estimated at \$51 billion per year. This includes health care costs, lost productivity, and reductions in health-related quality of life¹³.

\$51 BILLION

The evidence is clear that prevention and early intervention are important¹...

Economists have shown that high-quality early childhood programs bring impressive returns on investment to the public. **Studies found a range \$4 to \$9 return on investment for every dollar invested in early learning programs** for low-income children¹⁴.

- Early interventions such as parenting programs have a higher economic rate of return to society than interventions offered later in life such as remedial education, prisoner rehabilitation, and public job training programs¹⁵.

\$4-\$9 RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Don't wait. Starting early can change the trajectory of a child's mental health.

- From conception to age 6 is the most influential time in brain development. Early experiences especially in the first 2000 days⁴ can have an effect on the wiring and sculpting of the brain that can influence a child's learning, behaviour and health for a lifetime¹⁶.

The developing brain makes 1,000,000 new brain connections every second¹⁴.

1 MILLION NEW BRAIN CONNECTIONS