

### Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Guide for Professionals: Temperament

#### Here's what we know about temperament:

- It is an individual's innate way of approaching and responding to the world.
- Some children approach situations with ease while others may experience more challenges.
- Temperament describes a range of character traits which include: activity level, adaptability, approach and withdrawal, distractibility, intensity, persistence, positivity/mood, regularity and sensitivity.
  - A child's temperament can shape their outcomes and influence how others respond to them.
  - Each parent or caregiver has their own unique temperament; how these temperaments interact can impact the quality of the relationship. This is known as the "goodness of fit," which is the ability of the parent or caregiver to adapt their expectations and responses to the child's personal style and abilities.

#### Within your professional role and considering the social determinants of health, how do you:

- Provide opportunities for a parent or caregiver to learn more about temperament.
- Explore individualized strategies to support the parent or caregiver and the child.
- Discuss how the parent or caregiver is coping and their support system.
- Explore opportunities for connecting to informal and formal supports (community, neighbourhood, resources, groups).
- Support the parent or caregiver to have realistic, age appropriate expectations for their child.
- Administer an appropriate screening tool to ensure that the child is meeting their expected developmental milestones and refer if applicable.

#### Where can you find more information:

- Parenting in Ottawa
- Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development: Temperament
- Parents 2 Parents: Temperament
- Raising Your Spirited Child. Book by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka
- City of Hamilton: Parenting with LOVE Video - Temperament
- Public Health Agency of Canada: Social Determinants of Health
- Parent Resource Centre
- 211 Ontario

#### References

- Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development: Temperament
- Parents 2 Parents: The Temperament Corner
- Georgetown University, Centre for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation