



NATIONAL CENTER ON

Early Childhood Health and Wellness

Early Childhood Mental Health: Social Emotional Competence



One of the founding principles of OHS was the promotion of social competence as a way to nurture children's mental health. Early educators and families are better able to support children's learning and development when they are knowledgeable about early childhood mental health.

This handout focuses on resources that promote mental health via social-emotional competence. Mental health and physical health, however, are intimately linked. Please be sure to refer to the handout titled Wellness: Tools for Promoting Healthy Living for additional resources.

Other handouts that provide resources for early childhood mental health are Promoting Resilience, Reducing Stress, Trauma and Toxic Stress, Promoting Positive Relationships, Social Emotional Development and Challenging Behaviors, and Parental Depression.

For Practitioners

These resources were developed for staff and consultants working in early childhood settings. Some resources may also be useful to families.

[InBrief: Early Childhood Mental Health](#)

A summary video and its accompanying handout (in English and Spanish) provides an overview of early childhood mental health as the foundation for lifelong health. The research provides evidence that early experiences shape the architecture of the developing brain and guides how adults can support healthy development.



Social and emotional skill development is closely linked to school readiness.

Mental Health

This web page compiles multiple resources on the varying factors that affect the mental health of children and their families. Explore the variety of materials for families and educators that include video, tip sheets, training and webinars.

Establishing a Level Foundation for Life: Mental Health Begins in Early Childhood

Sound mental health is the foundation that supports all other aspects of human development, from the formation of friendships to success in school. This working paper from the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child explains how early childhood experiences can strengthen or disrupt a child's emotional well-being.

Classroom-Based and Parent-Focused Interventions for Promoting Social and Emotional Competence in Young Children

This Front Porch Series Broadcast presents an overview of 10 classroom curricula that focus on enhancing children's social and emotional competence as well as outcomes research. The video also explores eight parenting interventions.

Understanding and Using Evidence-Based Social Emotional Curricula

This video presentation explores recent research on social and emotional curricula, and offers guidance on the implementation of social emotional curricula in preschool classrooms.

News You Can Use: Supporting Families and Staff – Mental Health Services in EHS

Promoting mental health is a vital component of the work done every day to enrich the lives of Head Start children and families. Head Start program staff may benefit from the strategies and approaches discussed in this bulletin.

Head Start CARES: The Implementation and Impacts of Preschool Social-Emotional Interventions at Scale

This video describes the Head Start CARES study, a large-scale trial of three social and emotional interventions in Head Start programs: Incredible Years Teacher Training, Preschool PATHS, and Tools of the Mind – Play. Dr. Mattera describes their use in the classroom and the systems put in place to support the interventions, including training, coaching, monitoring, and technical assistance. She also presents lessons learned and the effect of each enhancement on teacher practices and child outcomes.



[Infant Toddler Temperament Tool \(IT³\): Supporting A “Goodness of Fit”](#)

The compatibility (or “goodness of fit”) between adult and child temperaments can affect the quality of relationships. After a caregiver answers nine questions about themselves and a child, the results provide information on temperament traits and provide positive support strategies. This is particularly useful when adult and child temperaments differ.

[News You Can Use: Foundations of School Readiness: Social Emotional Development](#)

This description of social emotional development along with brief examples is meant to be used with the sample goals in [Program Level School Readiness Goals for Early Childhood Programs](#).

[Healthy Gender Development and Young Children: A Guide for Early Childhood Programs and Professionals](#)

Find practical guidance on healthy early childhood gender development that draws on decades of research and experiences of early childhood educators, pediatricians, and mental health professionals. This guide was developed in line with the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

For Families

These ready-to-print resources were designed for families with young children.

[Mental Health: Tips for Families – What is Mental Health?](#)

Families play a crucial role in supporting the social and emotional development of their young children. This family-friendly tip sheet, available in 13 languages, provides an overview of early childhood mental health for children from birth to 5. It also explains how families can nurture their child’s development.

[Social Emotional Tips for Families with Infants](#)

Parents and are their baby’s first teacher. The resource provides information about infants’ social and emotional development and practical strategies for supporting children’s learning and well-being through care routines. [English only]





[Social Emotional Tips for Families with Toddlers](#)

Learn more about the role of parents and caregivers in nurturing toddlers' mental health. The resource provides information about toddlers' social and emotional development and practical strategies for supporting children's learning during daily routines. [English only]

[How Emotional Development Unfolds Starting at Birth](#)

In this podcast for families, Dr. Ross Thompson describes how early emotional development unfolds. Discover what families can do to nurture their child's social and emotional skills starting at birth. [English and Spanish transcript of audio]



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Contact Us: The National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness welcomes your feedback as well as your suggestions for topics for future resources!

Please forward your comments to: health@ecetta.info or call us at 888-227-5125.

School readiness begins with health!