

INFANT & EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH [IECMH]



Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health [IECMH] refers to the healthy development of children from birth to age six in how they:



Experience, express, and manage a range of emotions



Form secure relationships with caregivers and others



Explore their environment and learn within the context of nurturing relationships

Positive early relationships - especially with caregivers - shape how young children understand themselves, others, and the world around them.



Why IECMH Matters

- Brain development is fastest in the first 3 years of life.
- Secure attachments influence mental, emotional, cognitive, and physical development.
- Early experiences shape lifelong mental health and resilience.

Healthy IECMH supports the whole child -mind, body, and emotions - and builds the foundation for school readiness, healthy relationships, and future well-being.

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER.

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IECMH-Informed Professionals

A workforce that understands IECMH is essential to building strong families and communities. An IECMH-informed professional:

- Understands that relationships are the primary tool for growth and healing
- Supports, restores, and sustains nurturing relationships for all infants, young children, and families
- Collaborates across sectors to strengthen services and systems
- Recognizes how past relationships shape current behavior and development
- Practices with empathy, compassion, and cultural sensitivity

IECMH • It Takes All of Us

Whether you work directly with young children or support the adults who care for them, your role matters in building safe, loving, and resilient communities. IECMH spans many disciplines, including:

- Early childhood educators
- Health care providers
- Mental health professionals
- Child welfare workers
- Home visitors
- Family support staff
- And more!

Supporting IECMH is one of the most powerful ways we can invest in our future.

Healthy early relationships shape the brain, buffer stress, and build emotional strength that lasts a lifetime.

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