

# Beginning at the Beginning : Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation in Infant & Toddler Care

## Part III

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# Who We Are

**The New York City Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC)**, is funded through **ThriveNYC**, in partnership with the **NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)**

TTAC is a partnership between the New York Center for Child Development (NYCCD) and the McSilver Institute on Poverty Policy and Research

- **New York Center for Child Development** has been a major provider of early childhood mental health services in New York with expertise in informing policy and supporting the field of Early Childhood Mental Health through training and direct practice
- **NYU McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research** houses the Community and the Managed Care Technical Assistance Centers (CTAC/MCTAC), which offer clinic, business, and system transformation supports statewide to all behavioral healthcare providers

TTAC is tasked with building the capacity and competencies of mental health and early childhood professionals through ongoing training and technical assistance

<http://www.TTACny.org>



# Visit our Website

TTACNY.org  
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## NYC Early Childhood Mental Health **TTAC** Training and Technical Assistance Center

TTAC is funded by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene through ThriveNYC.

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### Events

*Thursday, April 2, 2020*

TTAC Webinar: Supporting Families and Caregivers of Infants and Young Children Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic

*Wednesday, May 20, 2020*

Beginning at the Beginning: The Foundational Elements of Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation – Part I

*Friday, May 29, 2020*

Beginning at the Beginning: The Foundational Elements of Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation – Part II

*Thursday, June 4, 2020*

Beginning at the Beginning: Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation in Infant & Toddler Care - Part III

*Wednesday, June 10, 2020*

TTAC Webinar: The Loss and Grief of COVID-19: Real Challenges and Practical Suggestions

*Friday, June 12, 2020*

TTAC Webinar: Reducing Bias during COVID-19 using the Crawford Bias Reduction Theory & Training

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### NYC DOHMH Bureau of Early Intervention E-Learning Modules



Foundations of Social-Emotional Development in Infants and Toddlers  
[Learn More](#)

### NYC Early Childhood Mental Health Network COVID-19 Resource Guidance



Self-care resources for child serving professionals and resources to inform your work with children and families.  
[Learn More](#)

### The Early Childhood Mental Health Network



Get to know the Early Childhood Therapeutic Centers (ECTCs)! Available in both English and Spanish.  
[Learn More](#)

# ECMH Consultation in Infant & Toddler Care

- Apply foundational principles and elements of the Consultative Stance
- Identify the unique characteristics and concerns
- Adaptations based on age group and the current circumstances
- Start with what is special about infancy



# Development Is Transactional



- Development is dynamic
- Occurs in the context of relationships
- All domains of development are shaped by early relational experiences



# Relational Capacities of Infants

- Infants come preprogrammed to connect.  
“They are born looking for us” *Jeree Pawl*
- Infants actively seek stimulation
- Babies’ favorite stimuli are all that is human
- Babies have the ability to discriminate
- Infants develop expectations and preferences based on how they are treated



# Relational Contributors to Development

- Both infant and adult are active contributors
- The infant is more greatly influenced by the quality of the relationship because s/he has no other experience with which to compare it.
- Language, turn-taking, sharing and empathy are mediated relationally from the beginning



# Definitions of Infant Mental Health

- The capacity of children from birth to age five to experience, regulate and express emotions, form close and secure relationships, and explore the environment and learn. (Zero to Three Infant Mental Health Task Force Steering Committee, 2001)
- The thoughts/feelings/attitudes/expectations one develops toward self and others (Kadija Johnston)





# Expectations Evidenced

- Early relationships shape expectations for good or for ill
- Contributions to negative expectations are multiply determined
- Infants' expectations, attitudes and feelings are brought into childcare.



# Relationships in Childcare Matter to Mental Health

- Childcare providers are significant contributors to very young children's mental health
- Majority of children in out of home care by age 1, many for more than 30 hours a week  
<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013029rev.pdf>
- Quality of care should be equated to quality of relationships

# Predictors of Quality

- Staff wages
- Adult-child ratio
- Group size
- Caregiver continuity
- Caregiver training
- Underlying significance of these factors, is their effect on provider- child relationship



# Quality Care is Uncommon

- Most care rated poor to mediocre
- Infants and toddlers endure lowest quality
- Babies of color and/or from low-income families, in worst quality programs

(Cost, Quality and Childcare Outcomes Study 1993-2002 )



# Current Concerns

- Historically childcare has been a service for adults
- Considering quality is relatively recent
- Current circumstances could cause regression
- Protocols prohibit contact and obscure connection.
- Both babies and caregivers are in untenable positions



# Purposes of Consultation

- **Cannot** combat all ills or be a panacea
- Aimed at enhancing relationships, especially between provider – child
- Adult relationships are also addressed
- Can focus on fostering healthy development of ALL children



# Family and FFN Child Care



- Most children under 3 years of age are cared for in these settings
- Pandemic precautions may make more popular
- Small spaces, fewer children & single consistent adult.



# ECMH Consultation to Family Child Care

- Shaped by physical and psychological factors – intimate and insular
- Gaining entry can be arduous.
- Distance may dispel anxiety & provide a safe psychological remove





# Unique Aspects of Infant & Toddler Care



- Care is Body Based
- Protective Urges influence relationship
- Reticence about and opportunities for early identification and intervention



# Care is Body Based



- Babies' experiences are almost solely somatic
- Caring for infants requires reciprocal close contact
- Physical intimacy elicits intense emotion
- Bodies are both objective and subjective.
- Babies can serve as transference objects

# Protective Urges



- Biological influences impact providers, parents and their relationships; mental health consultants too
- Calls on us to examine responses to dependency and vulnerability



- Parents feel a range of emotion - grief, relief and uncertainty. Not just guilt

# Addressing Protective Urges in ECMH Consultation

- Called on to mediate the impact with providers and parents
- Consultation with parents more common
- Availability and familiarity promote parental engagement especially regarding typical development.



# Reluctance to Identify Concerns

- Disinclination to identify delay or disturbance in very young children
- Developmental pace adds to uncertainty – “they will out grow it”
- How parents are approached, included and respected in the process matters.



# Consultative Stance in Response to Reluctance

- Essential to hold multiple perspectives without aligning with one party over the other
- Empathically hypothesize unacknowledged feelings
- Hear and represent all voices
- Acknowledge and speak to factors underlying different views i.e.- role, requirement of setting





# Patience & Hold Hope



# Thank you!



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A COLLABORATION  
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