



# Early Relationships Matter



SPRING 2016

## REGISTER NOW!

**2016  
Infant and Early  
Childhood  
Mental Health  
Conference**

**June 13-14 2016  
Osthoff Resort,  
Elkhart Lake, WI**

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## What Parent Cafes Have Taught Me About Community

Like the tangled patterns of our fingerprints, our stories are uniquely ours. Sometimes in our mission to serve and strengthen others we fail to recognize the beautiful stitch that connects us to one another. Our journeys though different are very much intertwined. I, myself was reminded in a series of meaningful conversations that at the core of our being what we really want is to feel validated, be seen, and be heard. The following is what happens when you intentionally create those opportunities for connection.

When I began to think about how to implement Parent Cafes, I tried to keep the connection in mind. I wanted to include parents in leadership roles and to be inclusive of members of our Hispanic community while offering an opportunity for community to rally behind families as a whole. Partners such as area 4Ks, Birth to Three, WIC and Head Start were actively involved in the planning and implementation process. As an alliance, we prioritized incorporating parents into our Café framework by training them to lead meaningful strength-

based conversations centered around Strengthening Families Protective Factors. We began to recruit families to lead and to be participants in both English and Spanish Parent Cafés in 3 unique neighboring communities.

While I'll admit that at times the months of planning were arduous, I knew no matter the turn out that this would be a great experience for those willing to open their hearts and minds. The days drew near to launch and momentum was growing.

Parents were abuzz about this new event that would allow them to meet other parents. Parents could have the peace of mind that their children would receive high quality care provided by Head Start staff. They also could put aside worries about juggling dinner at home and a night out as meals were provided on site at no cost. We as a team were excited to hold Cafés that put parents in the driver's seat and let us genuinely honor families and their experiences.



Image courtesy of FreeDigitalPhotos.net

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## About Parent Cafés

Parent Cafés are based on the Strengthening Families: Protective Factors Model. Strengthening Families™ is a research informed approach to increase, family strengths, enhance child development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs and committees so that they can help instill the 6 key ingredients that are necessary to build strong families.

### The 6 Protective Factors...

- Be Strong and Flexible
- Parents Need Friends
- Being a Great Parent is part natural and part learned
- We all need help sometimes
- Parents need to help their children communicate
- Give your children the love and respect that they need

Parent Cafés are a method of facilitating meaningful conversations that promote leadership and collaboration.

Through participation in Parent Cafés, parents and caregivers build leadership and relationships as well as protective factors that help strengthen their families.

As night one began, parents arrived at the venue anxiously awaiting what was to come. The Cafés were going according to plan. However, what transpired in the nights to come I could not have predicted. For three solid months, 3 nights a week in two different languages I participated in exchanges of dialogue that were full of insight, wisdom, triumphs and even trepidation.

Parents were relating in ways that aren't common in our everyday avenues of communication. I watched as we went from introductions to building relationships and bonds that transcended even my own expectations of what was possible. Community partners who chose to sit alongside parents and share their own experiences as parents in their own words were able to shed their professional skin and come to the table as an equal. There was laughter at our mistakes, affirmation of our successes and acknowledgement of the difficulty this frontier called Parenthood brings.

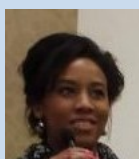
We were united and strengthened by not only what made us similar but by our differences. Aside from culture, socio economic status, religion or gender our journeys were much the same. This experience was a refreshing and extremely powerful reminder that first and foremost as human beings we are wired to connect. Although our lives and the

makeup of who we are differ, the variable that remains constant is that our humanity lies in our ability to relate to one another.

If you're wondering, I will tell you that there is no secret to the success we witnessed in our pilot of Parent Cafés. In my opinion, giving parents the keys to unlock their own strengths and talents and share those with others is true empowerment. Making parents partners in collaboration is not only ideal but smart.



Being culturally competent in the context of a community and bringing diverse people together to share is what unites us all. As for measuring success, for me it was the quality of the interactions. I measure the success of our Parent Cafés but by the moments that captured the essence and heart of what it means to be a community.



**Charisse Daniels** is a WI-AIMH Board Member and mother of four young children. She is also the Parent Ambassador Mentor, Co-Trainer, and Ad Hoc Program Specialist with the UW Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership.

# Infant Mental Health Chapters

## Northeast Region Update

It is a very exciting time in the Northeast Region as we are proudly awaiting the final approval to become the pilot location for a WI-AMIH chapter!

Our chapter goals will be to bring the mission of WI-AMIH to the area, while at the same time meeting the regional needs of infants, young children, and their families with a specific focus on building IMH competency.

Over the next three years the chapter will conduct outreach to local organizations and agencies about the mission of WI-AMIH and the importance of Infant Mental Health educate professionals and agencies about the endorsement process to support increased regional endorsement on all levels; and finally by develop opportunities for regional professionals to receive reflective supervision.

This honor speaks to the tireless efforts of the infant and early childhood professionals in the region and their continued commitment to meet the needs of our youngest members of society. We have regional WI-AMIH members who have already made a commitment to our regional success by providing time and feedback.

Finally, we have created an amazing leadership team:

- **Kristin Baumann** (Winnebago CO B-3) Endorsement Ambassador
- **Francesca Carley** (Childcare Resource and Referral Green Bay) Treasurer
- **Amy D'Addario** (Children's Hospital of Wisconsin) Secretary
- **Kim Liebhart** (EC Professor and Advocate) Vice Chair
- **Cami Molenaar** (Sherman Counseling) Chair

Please join us at our upcoming meetings and feel free to welcome other professionals who would be interested.

- ♦ April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016 from 9:30 to 10:30 at the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) 1001 W. Kennedy Avenue, Suite A Kimberly, WI 54136
- ♦ May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016 from 9:30 to 10:30 at the CCR&R in Kimberly
- ♦ June 14<sup>th</sup> 2016 at the WI-AMIH Conference, Osthoff Resort, Elkhart Lake, WI for questions & outreach (room and time TBD).

Please contact either  
Cami Molenaar @ [cmolenaar@new.rr.com](mailto:cmolenaar@new.rr.com) or  
Kim Liebhart at [liebhart08@gmail.com](mailto:liebhart08@gmail.com)  
for chapter information.

Kindest Regards,  
Northeast Regional WI-AMIH Chapter Leadership



# **2016 Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Conference**

Registration is filling very quickly this year! Don't miss your chance to sign up!



June 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup>  
2016

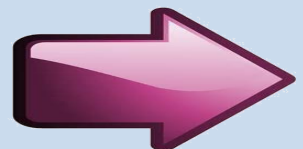


## **2016 Wisconsin Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Conference**

**The Osthoff Resort • Elkhart Lake**



See Conference Agenda on next page



Register Now at: <http://wiaimh.org/2016-conference/conference-registration/>



# 2016 Conference Agenda

MONDAY, June 13, 2016

7:00-8:00	E x h i b i t s  O p e n	Registration and Buffet Breakfast				
8:15-10:30		Conference Opening Keynote Address: Julie Ribaud <i>Understanding Young Children's "Unexplainable" Behavior: Using Infant Mental Health</i>				
10:30-10:45		Morning Break				
10:45-12:15		<b>A1: Young Children of Incarcerated Parents</b> J. Poehlmann-Tynan	<b>A2: Sensory Regulation Through Feeding</b> G. Becker Crabb	<b>A3: Fostering Parent Partnerships</b> C. Daniels	<b>A4: Integrating IMH into the NCTSN curriculum</b> A. D'Addario D. Burns	<b>A5: Parental Communication</b> R. Martin C. Hess
12:15-1:45		Lunch and Award Ceremony; Raffle Drawing				
1:45-3:15		<b>B1: Using IMH to Bring the Pyramid Model to Life</b> J. Ribaud	<b>B2: Relationship Focus in Sensory Treatment</b> J. Krull S. Peters	<b>B3: Stories from Fathers of Children with Special Needs</b> S. Tortomasi	<b>B4: Joint Home Visiting: Public Health and Early Childhood</b> C. Mischler S. Siebold S. McCoy	<b>B5: Interdisciplinary IMH Approach in Child Welfare</b> K. Trottier, E. Lanter M. Camacho
3:15-3:30		Afternoon Break				
3:30-5:00		<b>C1: Continued from B1</b>	<b>C3: Continued from B2</b>	<b>C3: Separation, Grief &amp; Trauma in Infants</b> J. Yeary	<b>C4: Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation and Home Visiting</b> K. O'Brien K. Schlippman	<b>C5: continued from B5</b>

TUESDAY, June 14, 2016

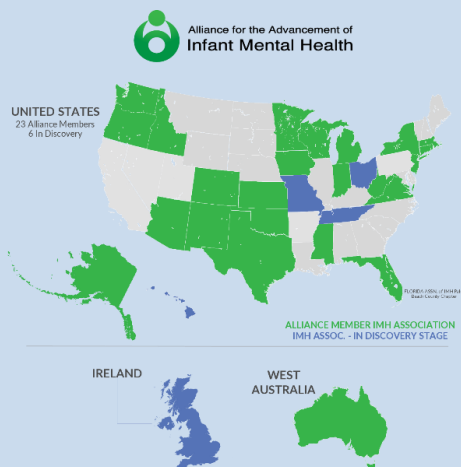
7:00-8:00	E x h i b i t s  O p e n	Registration and Buffet Breakfast				
8:15-10:30		Welcome & Announcement Keynote Address: Kadja Johnston <i>Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation: Strengthening the Capacity of Systems, Settings, and Individuals to Support Optimal Early Development</i>				
10:30-10:45		Morning Break				
10:45-12:15		<b>D1: Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation - Deepening the Conversation (for Mental Health Clinicians)</b> K. Johnston	<b>D2: Infant Massage as an Tool for IMH</b> D. Anderson J. Dellinger	<b>D3: Family Centered Care and Coaching in the NICU</b> S. Hempel R. Marrs	<b>D4: Integrating Behavioral health and Primary Care in WI</b> A. Keil	<b>D5: Using the FAN as a foundation for Reflective Practice</b> S. Sontoski
12:15-1:45		Lunch and Celebration				
1:45-3:15		<b>E1: Continued from D1</b>	<b>E2: Putting More Life into Work/Life Balance</b> E. Norton	<b>E3: Continued from D3</b>	<b>E4: Ubuntu! I Am Because We Are</b> K. Carpenter	<b>E5: Hats Off! Reflective Supervision</b> J. Hack
3:15-3:30		Afternoon Break				
3:30-5:00		<b>F1: Discussion Session</b> <i>Infant Mental Health Endorsement</i>	<b>F2: Discussion Session</b> <i>Pyramid Model Program Wide Implementation</i>	<b>F3: Discussion Session</b> <i>UW Infant, Early Childhood, and Family Mental Health Capstone Certificate Program</i>	<b>F4: Discussion Session</b> <i>WI-AIMH Northeast Region Chapter Meeting</i>	<b>F5: Discussion Session</b> <i>Reflective Practice</i>

\*Note: session titles have been abbreviated. For complete titles, please see workshop descriptions

\*Individual workshop sessions are subject to change

# Endorsement goes way beyond Wisconsin!

Endorsement goes way beyond Wisconsin! *Infant Mental Health (IMH) Endorsement® for Culturally Sensitive, Relationship-Focused Practice Promoting Infant Mental Health* is the largest and most recognized IMH Endorsement System in the United States, and it is growing! In the last year 6 more states have purchased the licensure, for a total of 23 states that hold and support IMH Endorsement®; 6 additional states are in the process of initiating licensure.



*Infant Mental Health (IMH) Endorsement® for Culturally Sensitive, Relationship-Focused Practice Promoting Infant Mental Health* is an internationally recognized credential that supports and recognizes the development and proficiency of professionals who work with or on behalf of infants, toddlers, and their families. It was developed over a 10 year period by the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health (MI-AIMH) and experts across the country, and officially launched in 2002. IMH Endorsement® is based on a set of 22 Competencies designed to support and enhance culturally sensitive, relationship focused practice

within the framework of infant mental health. An applicant demonstrates acquisition of these competencies through education, work, specialized training and reflective supervision experiences.

Endorsement is available to providers and clinicians who work in a range of work settings and professional disciplines at 4 different practice specialties spanning the continuum of care to children ages 0-3 and their caregivers. To earn endorsement, individuals apply for the IMH-Endorsement® specialty that best matches their knowledge, skills and experiences.

- **Infant Family Associate:** Promotion
- **Infant and Family Specialist:** Prevention/Intervention
- **Infant Mental Health Specialist:** Clinical Intervention/Treatment
- **Infant Mental Health Mentor:** Leadership (clinical, policy or research/faculty)

There are many benefits to earning IMH Endorsement®--for the individual professional, employers, families, communities, and the field in general. We encourage you to visit our website <http://wiaimh.org/> and explore the endorsement tab.

In addition, feel free to contact WI-AIMH staff at any time to get more information or to learn more about the process by calling (608) 442-0360 or by emailing WI-AIMH's Endorsement Specialist, Elizabeth Wahl, at [ewahl@wiaimh.org](mailto:ewahl@wiaimh.org) or Endorsement Coordinator, Carrie Finkbiner, at [cfinkbiner@wiaimh.org](mailto:cfinkbiner@wiaimh.org)

# Professional Development Opportunities in Infant, Early Childhood and Family Mental Health

Here are two opportunities for professionals in Wisconsin to learn about and gain skills related to the mental health and well-being of infants, young children and their families in the prenatal and postpartum periods through early childhood. These programs lead to increased knowledge and skills to help ameliorate and treat early parent-child disturbances and disturbances that emerge early in life before they become more serious disorders. These programs are sponsored by the Department of Psychiatry

## University of Wisconsin Infant, Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Capstone Certificate Program

Applications are now being accepted for the University of Wisconsin Infant, Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Capstone Certificate Program for the 2016-2017 cohort (June 2016 - June 2017).

### **Application & Scholarships:**

Participation is by application and enrollment is limited.

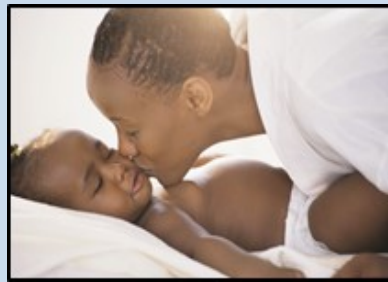
Apply by **May 9, 2016** for consideration for admission and scholarships. Applications will continue to be accepted, as space is available.

Information about the Capstone Certificate Program and Application Process, including the Application Form, is available at this site: <http://infantfamilymentalhealth.psychiatry.wisc.edu/>

### **Description:**

The Capstone Certificate Program is an interdisciplinary, one year academic program for practicing professionals who provide consultation and relationship-based services to families in the prenatal and postpartum periods and for children ages birth through five years.

Specifically, this program is designed for licensed mental health and health care professionals in clinical, counseling or school psychology, social work, marriage and family therapy, nursing, psychiatry, pediatrics or family medicine. The program is also developed for professionals from the fields of early childhood who provide direct services to young children and their families in Home Visiting, Birth to 3, Early Childhood Special Education, Early Head Start, Head Start, Childcare, and Child Protective Services.



Following a cohort model, enrolled participants are provided with three days of class instruction each month as well as a Mindfulness class and small Reflective Practice Mentoring Groups and

individualized opportunities to reflect upon and integrate program content into their professional work experiences. These experiences contribute to an increased knowledge base and skills in providing appropriate screening, assessment, diagnostic and therapeutic or supportive intervention services to support the mental health of infants, young children and their families. Those who complete the Capstone Certificate Program will earn 10-12 graduate course credits from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

### **Questions:**

For questions about whether this Capstone Certificate Program is right for you and about the application process attend an Informational Call and feel free to contact the Program Co-Directors:

**Roseanne Clark, PhD,  
IMH-E® (IV)**

Capstone Certificate Faculty  
Program Director  
Associate Professor  
Department of Psychiatry  
UW School of Medicine and  
Public Health

[rclark@wisc.edu](mailto:rclark@wisc.edu)

**Linda Tuchman-Ginsberg, PhD**

Capstone Certificate Program  
Co-Director  
Department of Psychiatry  
UW School of Medicine and  
Public Health

[linda.tuchman@wisc.edu](mailto:linda.tuchman@wisc.edu)

# Professional Development Opportunities in Infant, Early Childhood and Family Mental Health

## Wisconsin Trauma Informed Child-Parent Psychotherapy Learning Community for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Professionals

Applications are now being accepted for the next Trauma Informed Child-Parent Psychotherapy (TI-CPP) 18 month cohort (August 2016-January 2018). For first consideration for enrollment and scholarships, apply by **May 9, 2016**. Applications will continue to be accepted as space is available.

### **Application & Scholarships:**

Information about TI-CPP and the Application Process, including the Application Form, is available at this site: <http://infantfamilymentalhealth.psychiatry.wisc.edu/>. Please select the TI-CPP tab at the top of the page.

Priority for admission and scholarships will be given to clinicians who serve children and families in the child welfare system in Wisconsin, or who are at risk.

### **Description:**

Trauma Informed Child-Parent Psychotherapy (TI-CPP) is a family-focused, evidence-based therapeutic treatment for children from birth to age 6 who have early trauma histories and, as a result, are experiencing emotional, behavior, attachment, and/or mental health problems. The primary goal of TI-CPP is to support and strengthen the relationship between a child who has experienced trauma and his or her parent(s) (or caregiver) as a vehicle for restoring the child's sense of safety and well-being, attachment, and regulation of affect and improving the child's emotional, behavioral, social and cognitive functioning.

### **In order to join the upcoming TI-CPP cohort:**

You must be a licensed mental health professional with a minimum of a master's degree.

Those seeking licensure must currently be supervised by a licensed clinician.

We require that applicants have completed, are currently enrolled in or will enroll in the 2016-17 University of Wisconsin Infant, Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Capstone Certificate Program (scholarships may be available) OR who have comparable training and experience providing mental health services to infants, young children, and their parents or caregivers.

You are required to apply for TI-CPP as a team of 2-4 professionals that include both direct practicing mental health clinicians and their supervisors and when possible, agency managers, in the evidence-based treatment model of TI-CPP.

### **Program Components:**

Over the course of 18 months, enrolled participants are provided with four in-person learning sessions; twice monthly, one-hour fidelity group telephone calls with national trainers; twice monthly, one-hour small group reflective consultation telephone calls; and monthly, one-hour telephone calls for supervisors.

### **Dates of Learning Sessions:**

August 1-4, 2016

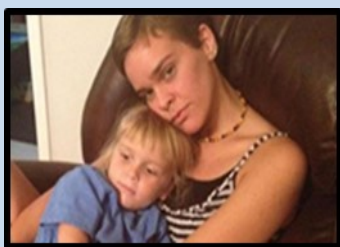
January 24-25, 2017

July 31-August 1, 2017

For questions about whether this TI-CPP cohort is right for you and about the application process contact:

**Carrie Finkbiner, MS, LMFT,**  
Clinical Project Coordinator  
Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health  
[cfinkbiner@wiaimh.org](mailto:cfinkbiner@wiaimh.org)

**Krista Duffy**  
Program Coordinator  
Department of Psychiatry  
UW School of Medicine and Public Health  
[klduffy@wisc.edu](mailto:klduffy@wisc.edu)





# Professional Development Opportunities



## Nurses Leading Change to Advance Mental Health Wisconsin Center for Nursing 6th Annual Conference

Monday, June 20, 2016

*Richard T. Anderson Education Center, Waukesha County Technical College – Pewaukee Campus*

Millions of Americans are affected by mental health conditions every year. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) reports staggering numbers of individuals and families impacted by these conditions, with nearly 10 million adults living with a serious mental illness. Nurses can play a critical role to improve the quality of care for patients and their families. The theme of this year's conference, offered by the Wisconsin Center for Nursing, Inc., will address this important healthcare issue and focus on *Nurses Leading Change to Advance Mental Health*. The goal of the conference is to strengthen the competency of nurses (in ALL settings—including students, educators, and leaders) for integrating mental health concepts to improve the outcomes for patients and their families across the lifespan.



### Meet the Keynote

**Sarah (Sally) Raphael, MS, APRN-PMH, FAAN** is an internationally known speaker who served on national and international councils (NIMH, ICN, PAHO) and task forces for global mental and behavioral care delivery. She is the former Deputy

Director of the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization Collaborating Center for Mental Health Nursing and is currently faculty in psychiatric-mental health nursing at The Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing.

### Register online today!

[www.wisconsinnurses.com/reg\\_wcn.asp](http://www.wisconsinnurses.com/reg_wcn.asp)

Register and pay by May 1 to receive the "Early Bird" registration of **\$85.00**. After May 1, the fee increases to **\$100.00**.

Student Rate: **\$50.00**

### Registration Deadline: 6/13/16

Payment can be made online by credit card or a check can be sent to the WNA office after completing the online registration. Your registration will be confirmed upon receipt of payment. Payment must be received prior to the conference.

Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided. Cancellations received prior to the conference will be charged a \$25 administrative fee. There will be **NO REFUNDS** after the conference begins or for "no-shows."



# Professional Development Opportunities



## Children's Mental Health Awareness Day Celebration

The Overture Center, Rotunda Stage  
201 State St., Madison, WI  
Thursday, May 5, 2016  
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Join us in celebrating **National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day!** Enjoy a program honoring winners of the Children's Mental Health Awareness Coalition's *My Feelings Matter* poster contest, featuring local youth performances and the winning posters on display. First Lady Tonette Walker will present the official proclamation declaring it Children's Mental Health Awareness Day in Wisconsin.

**BONUS:** Attend the Day of Action for Youth Mental Health the same day, from 10 am to 11:30 am in the Overture Center, Wisconsin Studio. This event, the culmination of *Kids in Crisis*, an in-depth series by USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin on youth mental health, is to ask lawmakers to better support children and teens with mental health challenges.

**We hope to see you on May 5<sup>th</sup> in support of  
children's mental health!**

For information and resources on how to promote positive mental health for all children, check out our website: <https://wisconsinknowschildrensmentalhealthmatters.wordpress.com/>

# Infant Mental Health... in the news

Post-Crescent | Appleton | Fox Cities  
PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Search

HOME NEWS BUSINESS SPORTS PACKERS OPINION GO 920 LIFE OUTDOORS ARCHIVES

This story is part of **WISCONSIN KIDS IN CRISIS**


Straddling two worlds: Autism, mental health  
Dancing on ice, daughter hid depression  
Years after suicide attempt, message of hope

## Kids express mental health in art

Rory Linnane, USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin 1:42 p.m. CDT April 12, 2016

Offering a window into the difficult pressures Wisconsin students are juggling, more than 200 kids and teens submitted artwork about their feelings for the Children's Mental Health Awareness Coalition's "My Feelings Matter" poster contest.

(Photo submitted)



Submission to "My Feelings Matter" poster contest. (Photo submitted)

The public is invited to vote on the finalists to pick winners, who will be honored in Madison on Children's Mental Health Awareness Day on May 5. The coalition is a collaboration of state agencies and nonprofits.

With the intention of raising awareness and starting discussions about youth mental health, students were asked to draw pictures of feelings they might not always know how to express. Subjects ranged from kindergartners feeling happy at recess to teens being called slurs.

On May 5, when this year's winners are honored at the Overture Center, USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin will be holding a **Day of Action** to promote ideas for improving how Wisconsin supports youth with mental health challenges. USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin, which has been covering youth mental health with the **Kids in Crisis** series, displayed last year's winning artwork on all its town hall meetings about youth mental health.

Voting is open online until 5 p.m. Thursday, April 14.

295 COMMENTS

Imagine being 14. And the last thing you want to be is 15.

KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE.

TOP VIDEOS

Ted Thompson explains draft philosophy 01:10

First Water Crisis: 3 Officials Charged With Evidence Tampering 00:45

Trump Wins New York, Causing Issues For The #NeverTrump Movement 00:51

Daniels: Packers' defense will 'get it done' 01:16

This is why they support Donald Trump 00:02

Whole Foods: Cake with alleged gay slur is false

Read the article at: <http://www.postcrescent.com/story/news/2016/04/12/kids-express-mental-health-art/82931300/>



# Infant Mental Health... in the news

## HUFFPOST PARENTS

### BABIES' MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

[Matthew Melmed](#) Executive Director, ZERO TO THREE. International leader and advocate for infants and toddlers.

When we hear about a person's mental health, it's often in the context of a problem — a colleague is struggling to handle stress at work, a friend's child is having behavioral problems at school, or a family member has received a diagnosis. And almost always, these discussions are limited to older children and adults. So it begs the questions: when does mental health begin? Do babies have mental health?

As babies, the way we are held, talked to and cared for teaches us about who we are and how we are valued. This profoundly shapes who we will become. The first days, months, and years of life are when the adults who care for us can truly promote strong, positive mental wellness.

Let's look at the world through the eyes of 3-month-old, Shayla, who is hungry and communicating this through her cries:

*When I let you know I'm hungry and you come with food, that tells me that you understand my needs and will respond to them. That makes me feel loved and important, and lets me know I can trust you and that the world is safe. I love being cuddled while I eat. But I also love to explore — find out what's going on around me. So I may pull away to see who else is around, or to find out where all the noise is coming from. I'll also want to grab your fingers and your clothing, or just look up at you with an ear-to-ear smile. When I coo at you, and you coo back, I learn about the power of connecting and communicating. Mealtime is about a lot more than just food for me.*

What Shayla and her parents are learning is like a dance — an intricate dance of development. She and her parents become [attuned to each other's cues](#). She learns to communicate what she needs, and they learn to read her cues and answer them. And in the process, a delightful rhythm emerges as they form the relationship that we call attachment. What they are really building is a strong foundation for Shayla's [social and emotional development](#) — a positive beginning for her mental health. It is on this foundation of mental health that all of Shayla's future learning and relationships will be built.

Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, celebrated on May 7th, is an important opportunity to recognize that mental health is not something that pertains only to adults or older children. Babies have "[mental health](#)" — they are deeply feeling beings who are developing a sense of who they are, their value and worth, from day one. This process begins with the dance that takes place during [everyday moments](#), like feeding, which are actually quite extraordinary when you look at them through the eyes of a young child.

So how do we, as parents, caregivers, and professionals, promote a baby's mental health?

Engage in loving, responsive, positive interactions. [Early experiences matter](#) — a lot. [Research shows](#) that parents' attunement to their babies' cues, and sensitive response shapes the architecture of babies' brains and has long-term impacts on academic and social competence. Babies who experience sensitive, responsive caregiving are more likely to develop stronger problem-solving and critical thinking skills, to become effective communicators, and to learn to understand and manage feelings.

Seek to understand the meaning behind young children's behavior. All behavior has meaning. The better we understand what drives young children's behavior, the better we are able to meet their needs. Picture a parent who has learned that her baby is slow-to-warm-up in new situations; so she introduces him to new people from the safety of her arms to give him time to feel comfortable before expecting him to engage. Or a parent who tunes in to her toddler's hard time with transitions, so she alerts him when a change is going to happen, and helps him find a way to cope, perhaps by bringing a special book to look at in the car when heading to childcare. Understanding the [root cause](#) enables us to respond in an effective way that teaches good coping skills and reduces shaming and making kids feel they are "bad"—which is detrimental to their mental health. Recognize that challenges and stress are a natural and important part of a baby's

growth. The ability to manage stress and muscle through challenges builds self-esteem and self-confidence. Again, let's picture a toddler playing with a sorting toy. You might see her work on fitting shapes in the holes, turning them, pushing them, until she finds the matches. Making mistakes, also known as failure, is a critical part of learning, as it leads to [problem-solving](#) and the building of new knowledge and skills. Experience with managing everyday stressors also helps young children learn to cope with frustration and disappointment — like not getting ice cream before dinner, or having to leave the playground before they are ready — gives young children the tools necessary for getting along with others, and ultimately succeeding in school, work, and life. And let's not forget the feeling of pride and accomplishment when the block falls through the correct hole. The good news is that nurturing strong [mental health in young children](#) is not a specific undertaking in which parents need to engage — as if it were a "job" or task. It is how [parents are with their babies that matters](#) — providing comfort when fussy; responding to their child's efforts to communicate first by facial expressions, sounds and gestures, and later words; engaging them in joyful play and exploration by following their interests and lead; coaching and supporting them to persist with challenges; providing appropriate limits to help children learn to manage when they can't have everything they want; and most of all delighting in the joy of young children's daily discoveries, and in the power of the bond they are building together. This kind of responsive care builds babies' trust and sense of security, and makes them feel adored and loved — the key ingredients for positive mental health.

We can and should do much more to support parents in their all-important job of getting their babies off on the path to good mental health. For example, [paid parental leave](#) would give new parents and babies the gift of time to become adept at the developmental dance that shapes the person a child becomes. We also could offer more parenting support—after all, it is our future workers and citizens for whom they are laying the groundwork. Finally, reaching parents through [home visiting, pediatric visits, and early childhood programs such as Early Head Start](#), could help them build their support network and find mentors along the way.

So, as a society, we are left with a choice. We can support young families as they master that critical dance of development. Or we can wait to address the mental health problems of older children and adults down the road, which is not only draining for them, but also expensive for society. Why not recognize where the foundations of mental health are laid and seize the opportunity to promote a good start?

*This blog post is the first in a three-part series exploring the mental health needs of very young children. Stay tuned for future posts on strategies to prevent mental health problems in young children, and effective treatment for those with diagnosed mental health disorders.*

Follow Matthew Melmed on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/ZEROTOTHREE](https://www.twitter.com/ZEROTOTHREE)

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# Infant Mental Health... in the news



## Developmental Foundations of School Readiness for Infants and Toddlers: A Research to Practice Report

Read the entire report at: [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/opre\\_nitr\\_school\\_readiness\\_report\\_v05cover\\_title.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/opre_nitr_school_readiness_report_v05cover_title.pdf)




# Upcoming Events



June 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup>  
2016




**2016 Wisconsin Infant and Early  
Childhood Mental Health Conference**  
**The Osthoff Resort • Elkhart Lake**

*Children's Mental Health  
Awareness Day Celebration*

The Overture Center, Rotunda Stage  
201 State St., Madison, WI  
Thursday, May 5, 2016  
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.



**Nurses Leading Change to  
Advance Mental Health**  
Wisconsin Center for Nursing 6th Annual Conference  
Monday, June 20, 2016  
Richard T. Anderson Education Center, Winnebago County Technical College - Potosi Campus

**Intersecting Interests 2016:  
A Collective of Communities of Practice**  
**May 25-26, 2016**  
**Heidel House Resort & Spa**




**Wisconsin  
Head Start Association**

*Finding Your Way: Collaborating to Promote  
Parent, Family, Community Engagement...Next  
Steps to Empowerment*


May 18, 2016 @ 9:30 am – 4:45 pm  
Jefferson Street Inn - 201 Jefferson Street, Washington  
Square Lifestyle Center, Wausau, WI 54403, USA

**Explore nature education and inspirations with Claire Warden!**

Choose a two-day in-depth exploration with Claire July 21-22, 2016  
or a one-day introduction to her work July 23, 2016  
or come for both!



**Wisconsin  
Family  
Child CARE**  
**WFCCA'S 35TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
**MAY 5-7, 2016**  
**TUNDRA LODGE**  
**GREEN BAY, WI**



**WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

**Just-in-Time Interventions for Students with Trauma  
Histories - Fond du Lac**  
Thursday, May 26, 2016 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM (Central Time)  
**Holiday Inn Fond du Lac**  
625 West Rolling Meadows Drive  
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin 54937



The 27th Annual Children Come First Conference  
**"NEVER, NEVER, NEVER GIVE UP:  
THE POWER OF PERSISTENCE"**  
**November 16 - 17, 2016**  
Glacier Canyon Lodge at the Wilderness Resort, Wisconsin Dells  
**3 Keynote Speakers and more than 30 workshops!**

*Save The Date!*



**Wisconsin  
Head Start Association**

2017 WHSA 15th Annual Training Conference	February 6-8, 2017	Kalahari Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells
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Is your organization or agency having an upcoming event that might be of interest to newsletter readers?  
Send your flier to [knsitker-magin@wiaimh.org](mailto:knsitker-magin@wiaimh.org) for review and inclusion in the next issue of *Early Relationships Matter*.  
The newsletter is published quarterly and submission deadlines are 30 days before the publishing date.  
Contact Kathie at the above email address for more information.



133 S Butler St  
Suite 340  
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Phone: 608-442-0360  
<http://www.wiaimh.org>

### **Our Values**

- ◇ Relationships are central to all aspects of our work
- ◇ Interactions with others are defined by mutual respect and trust
- ◇ Reflective interactions are supported and encouraged
- ◇ Self-care, flexibility and professional development are critical to quality work
- ◇ Passion drives our work
- ◇ Developing capacities of individuals, organizations

### **Our Mission**

WI-AIMH strives to promote infant mental health by building awareness, promoting professional capacity, fostering partnerships, and supporting policies which are in the best interests of infants, young children and their families.

Strategies used to promote infant mental health include:

- ◆ Increase public awareness on the influence early experiences and relationships have on development.
- ◆ Develop professional capacities to understand and support infants and young children within the context of their relationships.
- ◆ Foster partnerships, policies, and best practices to better support healthy development in infants, young children, and their families.

***Early Relationships Matter***