The Early Childhood Mental Health Public Outreach Project

NEW Spring 2021 Workshops

Could there be a more important time than right now to raise awareness about the mental health needs of very young children? Early childhood development happens best in the context of healthy family and school relationships, and both of these support systems have suffered from relentless stress over the course of the last tumultuous year. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control recently reported a 24% increase in the proportion of pediatric emergency mental health admissions involving anxiety and panic attacks.



This is why in Colorado the Office of Early Childhood wants to get the word out to the full range of adults currently spending time with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers that the early detection of mental distress in young children is possible and paramount. The sooner that developmental and mental health challenges can be identified, the sooner young children's suffering can be alleviated and their ability to focus on the three cornerstones of emotional wellbeing--*forming close relationships, exploring their environment and expressing and managing their emotions*—can resume and flourish.

Throughout the spring, Jane West, an early childhood mental health clinician with over 20 years of experience, will offer two-hour virtual workshops to a variety of early childhood and family serving professionals (e.g. early intervention providers, pediatricians/family physicians, judges, food assistance program managers, family resource center staff, home visitors, child welfare, and more) so they may be able to **spot the early signs of distress** in young children and **share information about the next steps in the referral and assessment process**. The centerpiece of the training will be the culturally and developmentally sensitive diagnostic system, the DC:0-5, created by ZERO TO THREE, a national leader of the early childhood mental health field. Over the last two years, hundreds of mental health professionals in Colorado have been trained to use this diagnostic system. As the next step, it is essential that frontline workers are aware of these diagnostic criteria such that we can bridge the gap between the number of young children with unaddressed mental health needs and recently available

clinical services. Each workshop will be followed by office hours in which participants can bring questions and engage in deeper discussion.

Core questions that will be answered in this training:

Mental Health in Early Childhood

- *What does mental health have to do with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers?*
- *What are the most important qualities of a healthy caregiving environment?*
- *What are potential behavioral red flags in young children that can be observed and should be acted upon?*
- *How do ACES and toxic stress fit into this picture?*
- *What other aspects of a child's life are essential to consider when evaluating a child for a mental health challenge?*

Assigning Mental Health Diagnoses

- *Can young children be diagnosed with clinical disorders and what does that process look like? What are the risks and benefits of diagnosing?*
- *What kinds of clinical disorders do young children experience?*
- *How is the cultural context of a child's life valued in the diagnostic process?*
- *What are the existing ways to refer a child for treatment? What does treatment look like and how does that differ from family supports like home visiting?*
- *What impact does a clinical referral and therapeutic treatment have on a family?*

Register for a Workshop: Select a registration link below to sign up for the workshop day and time that works best for you. As appropriate and desired, we encourage teams and communities to sign up together. For more information or to book an individualized workshop for your staff, reach out to Jane West at heartofthewestcounseling@gmail.com.

These workshops are supported by CARES Act funding appropriated to the Fostering Well-being Unit at the Office of Early Childhood in partnership with Heart of the West Counseling, LLC.

APRIL DATES: Friday, April 9 / 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm REGISTER Tuesday, April 20 / 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm REGISTER Thursday, April 29 / 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm REGISTER **MAY DATES:** Monday, May 10 / 3:00 pm to 5: 00 pm REGISTER Friday, May 21 / 10:00 am to 12:00 pm REGISTER	**JUNE DATES:** Thursday, June 3 / 9:00 am to 11:00 am REGISTER Friday, June 11 / 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm REGISTER Wednesday, June 23 / 10:00 am to 12:00 pm REGISTER