



**Improving Youth Child Mental
Health in North Carolina:
Learning and Action Workshops
March – May 2013**

Connection Station Topic #5

What are some of the barriers and challenges to providing prevention and intervention services to infants, young children and their families, and what are some solutions that might work in our region and state?

Leadership

In North Carolina, responsibility for promotion, prevention and intervention services for the mental health of young children is fragmented across a number of different agencies and divisions. This patchwork system for addressing young children's social-emotional development and mental health means that communication is compromised and no single system has leadership responsibility for the social and emotional well-being of North Carolina's children (*North Carolina Institute of Medicine. Growing Up Well: Supporting Young Children's Social-Emotional Development and Mental Health in North Carolina. Morrisville, NC. North Carolina Institute of Medicine, 2012*).

Lack of Awareness

At a basic level, there is a need for a common understanding across state agencies around the importance of young children's social-emotional development and a commitment to foster such development, regardless of the agency's primary mission. (*North Carolina Institute of Medicine. Growing Up Well: Supporting Young Children's Social-Emotional Development and Mental Health in North Carolina. Morrisville, NC. North Carolina Institute of Medicine, 2012*). In 2012 for Medicaid enrolled children only 3% of the total child population served with mental health diagnoses are between 3-5 years of age. CDSA's are required to follow eligibility definitions that include some children with social-emotional challenges, but do not include many others.

Reimbursement Issues

There is growing evidence of the effectiveness of serving infants, toddlers and preschoolers in natural environments. Current reimbursement systems don't account for this variable and often reinforce the use of enhanced mental health services while failing to support basic

outpatient services and supports to young children and families. Coding, billing and continuing authorization issues discourage qualified practitioners from serving very young children and their families. Additionally, current diagnostic classification systems approved for billing and reimbursement (e.g., American Psychiatric Association Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV) are inadequate and developmentally inappropriate for reflecting the manifestation of mental health issues in infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

Workforce Issues

The work force appropriate to address young child mental health needs comes from a variety of disciplines and is employed in a number of different work settings. This very strength represented in such a diversity of backgrounds makes it difficult to standardize their education and training experiences. While there is a high degree of professional training in the current work force, very few clinical training programs offer in early childhood.

Where can I get more information?

Making it Happen: Overcoming Barriers to Providing Infant-Early Childhood Mental Health. PDF available at: <http://www.zerotothree.org/public-policy/federal-policy/early-child-mental-health-final-singles.pdf>

A Call to Action On Behalf of Maltreated Infants and Toddlers. PDF available at: <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/health-nutrition/childwelfareweb.pdf>

ZFive Recommendations: Addressing the Social-Emotional Needs of Children 0-5 with a Substantiated Finding of Abuse or Neglect or in Need of Services in Mecklenburg County. PDF available at: <http://www.zfive.org/docs/ZFive-Recommendations-Addressing-the-social-emotional-needs-of-children-0-5-2010.pdf> 9 (for more specific information on this particular collaborative contact John Ellis at john.ellis@mecklenburgcountync.gov)

Many states have developed competency based endorsement programs for early childhood mental health; See for example Indiana's adopted early childhood mental health competencies: <http://www.iaitmh.org/endorsement/CompetencyGuidelines2011.pdf>

LEARN, SHARE, EXPLORE, ACTIVATE, HAVE FUN!