

PA Project LAUNCH Partnershipⁱ



Ensuring an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health lens in Mental Health First Aid[®] Trainingⁱⁱ

During the past 10 years, Mental Health First Aid has gone from a phone call to a movement in Pennsylvania and across the Nation. Mental Health First Aid[®] (MHFA[®]) is a public education program that introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental illness, builds understanding of their impact, and provides an overview of common supports. Like CPR, Mental Health First Aid prepares community members to interact with a person in crisis and connect the person with help.

Over the course of the PA Project LAUNCH Partnership, and in collaboration with many local stakeholders and workgroup members, guidance has been developed to share infant and early childhood mental health resources during MHFA[®] training events. One key effort the grant wanted to achieve is to promote increased public knowledge of the importance of social-emotional wellness for children birth through eight years of age. Research tells us that very young children's earliest relationships and experiences shape the architecture of their brain, creating a foundation on which future development and learning unfoldsⁱⁱⁱ. Young children who engage with responsive, consistent, nurturing caregivers and who are living in safe and economically secure environments are more likely to have strong emotional health—also referred to as infant and early childhood mental health.

“Infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH) is the developing capacity of the child from birth to 5 years old to form close and secure adult and peer relationships; experience, manage, and express a full range of emotions; and explore the environment and learn—all in the context of family, community, and culture.” ZERO TO THREE, 2017

Because there is not yet an early childhood version of MHFA[®], the Partnership pursued the curation of IECMH focused resources to enhance the current MHFA[®] movement across Pennsylvania. By incorporating an infant and early childhood mental health lens into these training efforts, we are helping to build public awareness of the importance of promoting social-emotional health of very young children and their families.

How to Incorporate the IECMH Handouts into MHFA[®] Trainings

1. PREVALENCE OF MH Disorders section

- Corresponding pages in Teaching Notes:
 - Adult: pages 9-10, slide 7
 - Youth: pages 13-16, slides 9-12

Mental Health and Young Children / Age-Related Reactions to a Traumatic or Stressful Event

Highlights prevalence of mental health issues across childhood as well as how children of different ages exhibit trauma and/or stress.

2. ENCOURAGE SELF-HELP & OTHER SUPPORT STRATEGIES (ADULT)/PROTECTIVE FACTORS (YOUTH) section

- Corresponding pages in Teaching Notes:
 - Adult: page 41-42, slide 40
 - Youth: page 31-32, slides 27 & 28

Protective Factors / Social Emotional Health

Summarizes 5 key protective factors for family strengthening and provides tips for promoting social-emotional health in children.

3. ENCOURAGE SELF-HELP & OTHER SUPPORT STRATEGIES (ADULT & YOUTH)/ASSESS FOR RISK OF SUICIDE OR HARM (YOUTH) section

- Corresponding pages in Teaching Notes:
 - Adult: pages 41-42, slide 40
 - Youth: pages 35 & 51, slides 32 & 44

Self-Help Tips for Parents & Caregivers

Highlights symptoms of stress and breaks down for parents the ingredients to maintaining a secure & health relationship with their child.

4. ASSESS FOR RISK OF SUICIDE OR HARM ASSESSING FOR A PANIC ATTACK (ADULT)/PROTECTIVE FACTORS (YOUTH) section

- Corresponding pages in Teaching Notes:
 - Adult: page 49-50, slide 46
 - Youth: page 31-32, slides 27 & 28

The Truth About ACEs

Breaks down Adverse Childhood Experiences with information on prevalence, types, and outcomes.

5. OVERVIEW OF DEPRESSION & ANXIETY section

- Corresponding pages in Teaching Notes:
 - Adult: page 17-19, slides 13-16
 - Youth: page

Talk About Depression and Anxiety During Pregnancy and After Birth

Summarizes signs of depression & anxiety and ways to help

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ⁱⁱ www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org

ⁱⁱⁱ www.developingchild.harvard.edu