

# Infancy Childhood and Relationship Enrichment (I CARE)



*All parents want what is best for their children. Sometimes, family experiences or behaviors in very young children require specialized help. Such help is available through infant/early childhood mental health treatment programs.*

## *What is Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health?*

Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health is a comprehensive approach to the social and emotional well being of very young children. Positive relationships between young children and adults lay the foundation for healthy social and emotional development. This foundation allows children to:

- Experience a range of emotions, cope with frustrations, and regulate their behaviors;
- Safely explore and learn from their environments;
- Feel protected in the context of their families, neighborhoods, and cultures.

*Developmental, emotional, physical, environmental, and familial problems may place very young children at additional risk for behavioral problems. Examples of such risk factors include:*

- Premature birth
- Very low birthweight
- Prenatal exposure to alcohol or drugs
- Failure to Thrive
- Abuse or neglect
- Developmental delays & disabilities
- Speech and language problems
- Physical disabilities
- Multiple foster placements

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### ***When should an infant or young child be referred to a treatment program?***

Some of the emotional and behavioral signs that may indicate a need for evaluation for infant/early childhood mental health services include:

- Chronic sleeping or feeding problems
- Excessive fussiness or irritability
- Incessant crying with little ability to be consoled
- Extreme upset when left with another adult
- Indifference to caregivers or willingness to go home with anyone
- Inability to adapt to new situations
- Easily startled or alarmed by routine events
- Inability to establish relationships with other children or adults
- Excessive hitting, biting and pushing of other children or very withdrawn behavior
- No response to consequences or is overly compliant
- Any other behaviors that cause concerns in the Caregivers

### ***Types of Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Services:***

- Dyadic Therapy (Child/Primary Caregiver)
- Dyadic education with videotaped feedback
- Family therapy
- Assessment services
- Parent support groups
- Therapeutic preschool programs
- Relationship-based therapeutic interventions
- Home visiting
- Coordination with schools, other service agencies, and professionals
- Training and consultation for parents and professionals

### ***Parents give the following reasons for seeking specialized infant/early childhood mental health treatment services:***

- "Learning that my son has behavior problems."
- "The way my child handles animals, very rough."
- "To know if my child had physical and mental problems like me."
- "To learn parenting skills."
- "Behavior problems, fight among siblings."
- "Playing hard, hitting, talking back."
- "Wanting to learn how to care for my child better and know how she is developing."