



INFANT MENTAL HEALTH

A FOCUS ON MILITARY FAMILIES

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INTRODUCTION

- What is infant mental health and why is it important?
- Basics to understand infant mental health
 - Attachment Theory
 - Adverse Childhood Events
- What is the current research?
- How does it impact military families?



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the history of infant mental health services
 - Attachment theory and adverse childhood events
- Understand the role of infant mental health in working with military families
- Understand the path towards infant mental health specialists- the endorsement process



WHAT IS INFANT MENTAL HEALTH?

- A focus on infant- children under three years old- in relationship to their caregivers.
- Systems that support mental-social, emotional and cognitive development of children from birth onwards.
- Therapeutic interventions



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- For young children, being in a healthy social and emotionally supportive family environment begins before birth and has long term impact on their growth, development and sense of worth.
- Infant mental health is relationship based
 - Dependent upon the relationship young children form with their caregiver
 - The relationship is based on the child's ability to attach to a care giver and the caregiver to bond with the child.
 - The caregiver can be anyone who is consistently attentive to the needs of the child



ATTACHMENT THEORY

- **Attachment theory** is a psychological model that attempts to describe the dynamics of interpersonal relationships between human beings.
- Attachment depends on a child's ability to develop basic trust in their caregivers and self. "I cry and someone comes to comfort me"
- In infants, attachment is a developmental task- children learn to seek a connection with a familiar caregiver when they are alarmed.
- The most important tenet of attachment theory is that every infant needs to develop a relationship with at least one primary caregiver for the child's successful social and emotional development, and in particular for learning how to effectively regulate their feelings.



ATTACHMENT THEORY

- Parent's or caregiver's role
 - Respond to the infant's communication-learn the language of the child
 - Bond with the infant
- It is within the relationship between the infant and the caregiver that a life long ability to relate to other human beings is formed.



HOW IT WORKS?



ACTIVITY

- What have you heard about attachment theory?
- Why do you think that it is important?
- How is the attachment process the same and different in military families?



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WHAT ARE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES?

- The ACE Study findings suggest that certain experiences are major risk factors for the leading causes of illness and death as well as poor quality of life in the United States.
 - Child abuse (physical, emotional sexual) and neglect
 - Incarceration or death of a parent or primary caregiver
 - Substance abuse in the home
 - Witnessing violence in home or neighborhood
 - Parent/caregiver mental illness
 - Divorce
- 31.1% of children in Arizona have experienced more than 2 ACEs compared to 22.6% national average



WHAT ARE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES?



WHAT ARE RISKS FACTORS?

Risk Factors for Perpetration

Individual Risk Factors

Parents' lack of understanding of children's needs, child development and parenting skills

Parents' history of child maltreatment in family of origin

Substance abuse and/or mental health issues including depression in the family

Parental characteristics such as young age, low education, single parenthood, large number of dependent children, and low income

Non-biological, transient caregivers in the home (e.g., mother's male partner)

Parental thoughts and emotions that tend to support or justify maltreatment behaviors

Family Risk Factors

Social isolation

Family disorganization, dissolution, and violence, including intimate partner violence

Parenting stress, poor parent-child relationships, and negative interactions

Community Risk Factors

Community violence

Concentrated neighborhood disadvantage (e.g., high poverty and residential instability, high unemployment rates, and high density of alcohol outlets), and poor social connections.



ACTIVITY



How the family situations same and different in military families?



What are the risk factors that could impact a child's social and emotional development?



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WHAT ARE PROTECTIVE FACTORS?

Family Protective Factors

- Supportive caregivers who are responsive to needs of the child
- Parent knowledge of child developmental stages and realistic expectations
- Social interactions
- Supportive family environment and social networks
- <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/promoting/protectfactors/>



WHAT ARE PROTECTIVE FACTORS?



- **Family Protective Factors**

- Nurturing parenting skills
- Stable family relationships
- Household rules and child monitoring
- Parental employment
- Adequate housing
- Access to health care and social services
- Caring adults outside the family who can serve as role models or mentors



- **Community Protective Factors**

- Communities that support parents and take responsibility for preventing abuse



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ACTIVITY 2

What are the strengths found in military families that promote positive protective factors?



WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PROMOTE PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND LIMIT RISK FACTORS?



- Early identification of risks and access to support options can foster protective factors and limit the negative stresses.
- Strengthen family connections and supports
- Strengthen provider support networks
- Increase child self-regulation skills



WHAT CAN YOU DO?



INFANT MENTAL HEALTH ENDORSEMENT

- Infant Toddler Mental Health Coalition of Arizona:
<http://www.itmhca.org/>
- **There are four levels of competency** within the ITMHCA Endorsement:
 - Infant Family Associate
 - Infant Family Specialist
 - Infant Mental Health Specialist
 - Infant Mental Health Mentor
- Requirements at each level recognize the educational experiences, in-service training experiences, and work experiences appropriate for best service outcomes for infants, toddlers, and families.



INFANT MENTAL HEALTH ENDORSEMENT

- **Prerequisites for Application**

- Work experience with infants, toddlers, parents, other caregivers and families.
- Training/Education as specified and related to infants, toddlers, parents, other caregivers and families; and,
- Access to Reflective Supervision for applicants at Levels II-IV.

- **The ITMHCA Endorsement Process:**

- Inquiry
- Application
- Preparation of a Portfolio
- Documentation of Competencies
- Endorsement



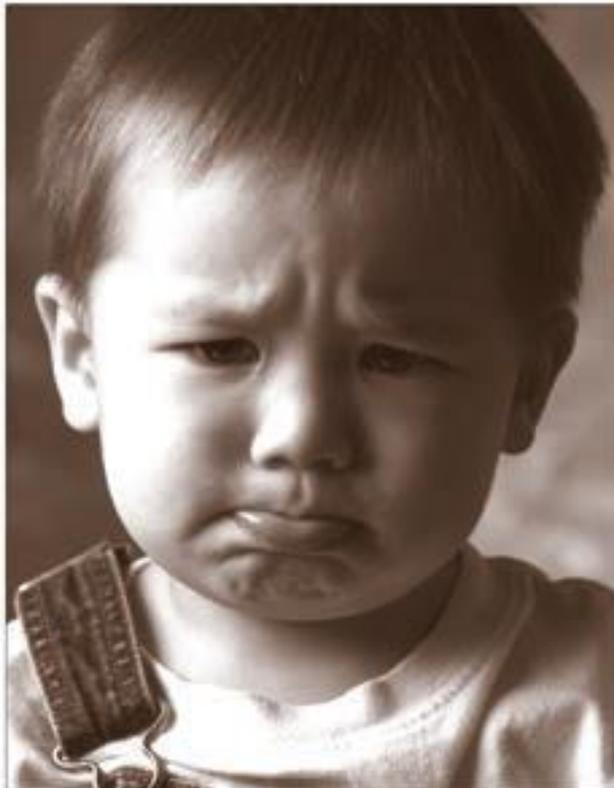
POLICY

- Promote and support infant mental health knowledge and skill development in:
 - Child care settings
 - Clinical practice with children and families
 - Child abuse prevention



RESOURCES

Interpreter-8x5 Ad 3/13/07 2:17 PM Page 1



Need an Interpreter?

Developmentally Based Diagnosis

ZERO TO THREE's *Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood, Revised (DC: 0-3R)* enhances your ability to assess, diagnose, and treat mental health problems in infants and toddlers. Mental health professionals, physicians, nurses, early interventionists, early childhood educators, and researchers will find DC: 0-3R to be an indispensable guide to effective evaluation and treatment planning with young children and their families.

Item #335-DC3 • \$32.95



National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families

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RESOURCES

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/ace>

The ACE Study examines the links between adverse childhood experiences including maltreatment, and adult health.

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child

The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child is a multidisciplinary collaboration comprising leading scholars in neuroscience, early childhood development, pediatrics, and economics.

Zero to Three: Military Family Projects: Handout

<http://www.zerotothree.org/about-us/funded-projects/military-families/>

Duty to Care – You Make a Difference (E-Learning Course) - For early child education professionals, these 3 twenty-minute interactive e-learning modules offer insights and strategies for supporting young children during deployment, injury or death of a Service member.



DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS



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