Infant Mental Health in Primary Care Settings

Kay Connors, MSW, LCSW-C

with contributions by Sarah Edwards, DO

Antonia Girard, PsyD, BCBA, LBA

Acknowledgement: Project LAUNCH

Disclaimer

Infant and Early Mental Health Competencies

Foundation:

- Child Development
- Brain development
- Attachment and Relationships
- Family-Centered Approach
- Risk and Protective Factors
- Community
- Advocacy
- Cultural Humility
- Recognition of Evidence-Informed Practices
- Trauma-Informed Care

Promotion:

- Nurturing Development
- Family Engagement
- Interdisciplinary Practice

Prevention:

- Supporting Developmental Vulnerability
- Understanding Developmental Profiles
- Trauma-Informed Practice
- Creating Pathways to Services and Supports

Early Intervention:

- Theoretical Application
- Learning with the Child and Family
- Partnering with Parents/Caregivers and Children
- Formulation and Service Planning

Treatment:

- Assessment, Formulation, and Diagnosis
- Therapeutic Approaches
- Planning

Module 1

Overview of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health in Primary Care Settings

Today's Objectives

1 Define Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH)

2 Understand the prevalence rates and outcomes of untreated early childhood mental health disorders

3 Describe medical and mental health providers' role in IECMH within a pediatric setting

4 Identify strategies to integrate mental health into busy pediatric workflow

Competencies Covered in this Module

- Child Development
- Recognizing Evidence-informed practices for Screening and Monitoring Development
- Family Centered Approach

Definition of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

Defining Early Childhood Mental Health Concerns

- Child abuse and neglect
- Divorce
- Domestic Violence
- Family mental health issues
- Natural disasters
- School crises
- Military deployment
- Grief and loss

- Behavioral
- Neurodevelopmental
- Psychiatric
- Somatic
- Psychological
- Emotional
- Social
- Impact of fetal substance exposure

Grow Well & Love Well

Early childhood mental health is defined as the capacity to *"grow well and love well."*

Emotions

Relationships

Culturally expected development

-Alicia Lieberman and Patricia Van Horn, 2008.

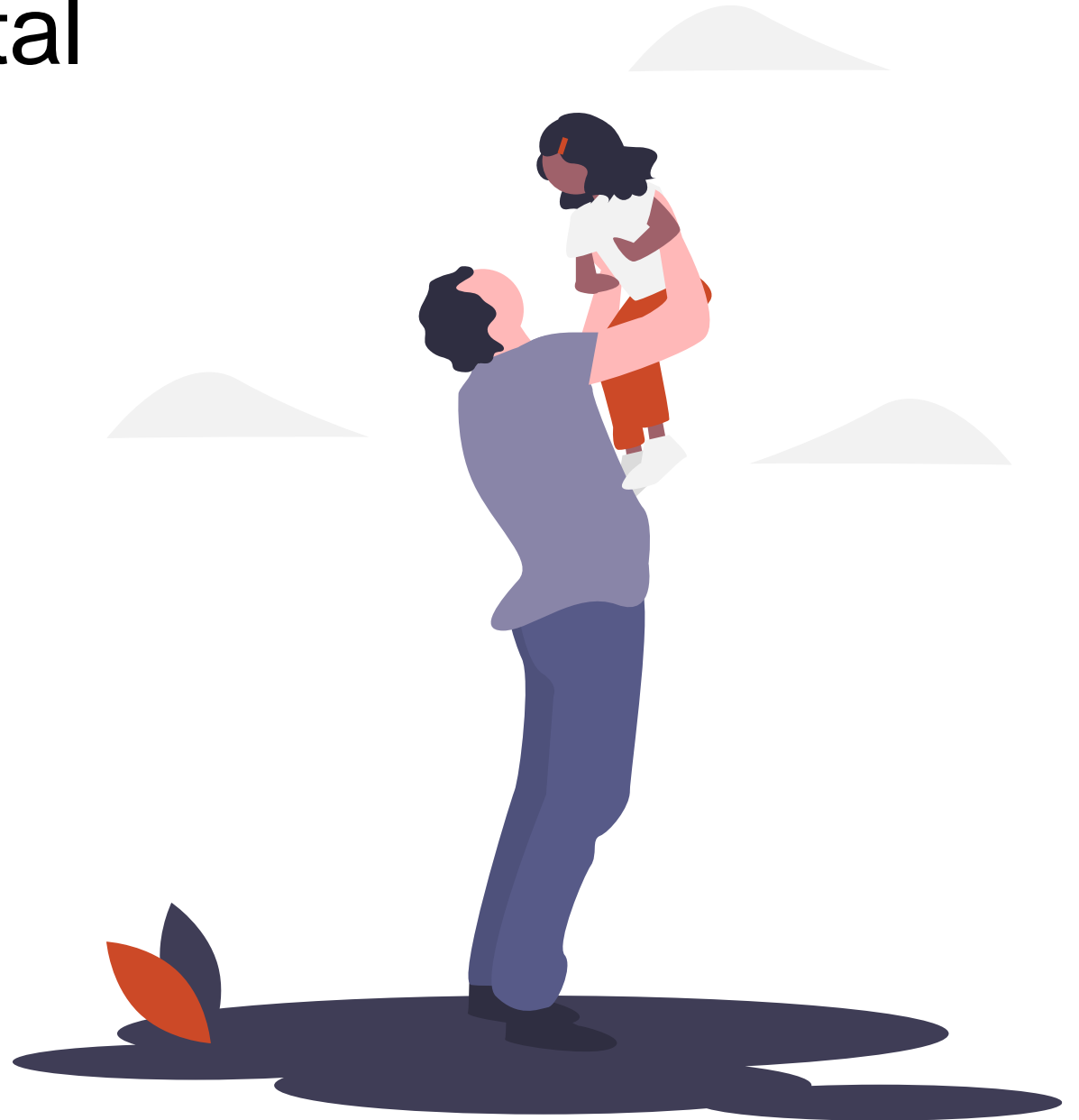# Prevalence of Early Childhood Mental Health Concerns

Early Childhood Mental Health Concerns

17%

of all children experience a mental health disorder in early childhood.

7%
Emotional and motor regulation difficulties

25%
Feeding problems

1%
Reactive attachment disorder

10-20%
Anxiety disorder

2%
Depression

1 in 6 children

have a developmental delay or disability
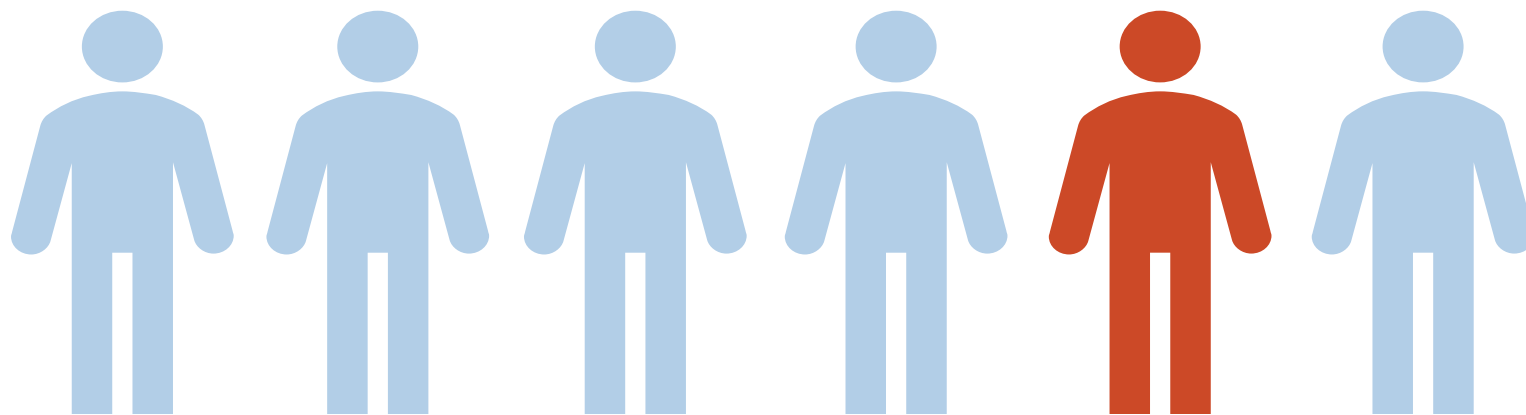
Course of Mental Illness

- **Disruptive behavior disorders** (including ADHD and ODD), are among **the most diagnosed** and stable disorders in children.

- **Symptoms evident as early as 1 to 3 years** of age. Often continue into later childhood and adolescence

- Symptoms were related to:
    - Disruptions to family life/activities
    - Parent-reported worry about behaviors

- **Higher risk** for children with **family history of psychopathology, exposure to childhood adversity,** and **low SES**

<25%

of young children identified with behavioral problems receive treatment

Changes in Children's Health in USA

- Reduction of serious infections and disease
- Increases in treatment and recovery rates for acute illnesses
- Increases in metabolic and mental health conditions

Early Intervention Opportunities in Primary Care

1000 Days

270 Days during pregnancy

+

365 days Year 1

+

365 days Year

=

1,000 Days of Opportunity

Primary Care Perspective

- Infancy is an optimal time to prevent psychosocial problems

- Foundation for children's mental health starts in infancy
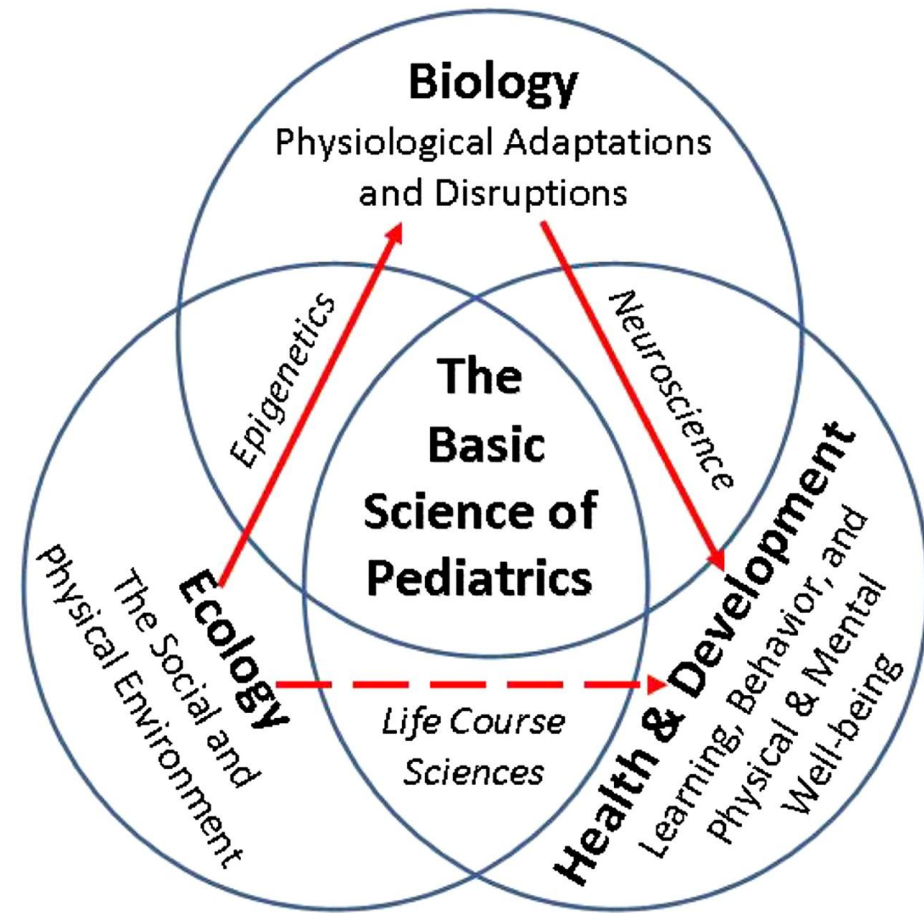
Garner, A. S., Shonkoff, J. P., Siegel, B. S., Dobbins, M. I., Earls, M. F., McGuinn, L., ... & Wood, D. L. (2012).

Pediatrics as a Frontline Provider

- **25%** of the **150 million child visits** per year **for primary health care** have a **psychological** problem associated **with the presenting** problem

- **20%** of such **visits** are **prompted by mental health concerns**

Tolan, P. H., & Dodge, K. A. (2005). Children's mental health as a primary care and concern: a system for comprehensive support and service. American Psychologist, 60(6), 601.

We Know What Works

Early Detection

Preventive measures
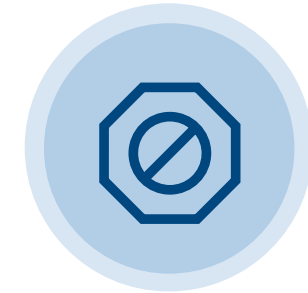
Tailored interventions

Sensitive Periods of Development
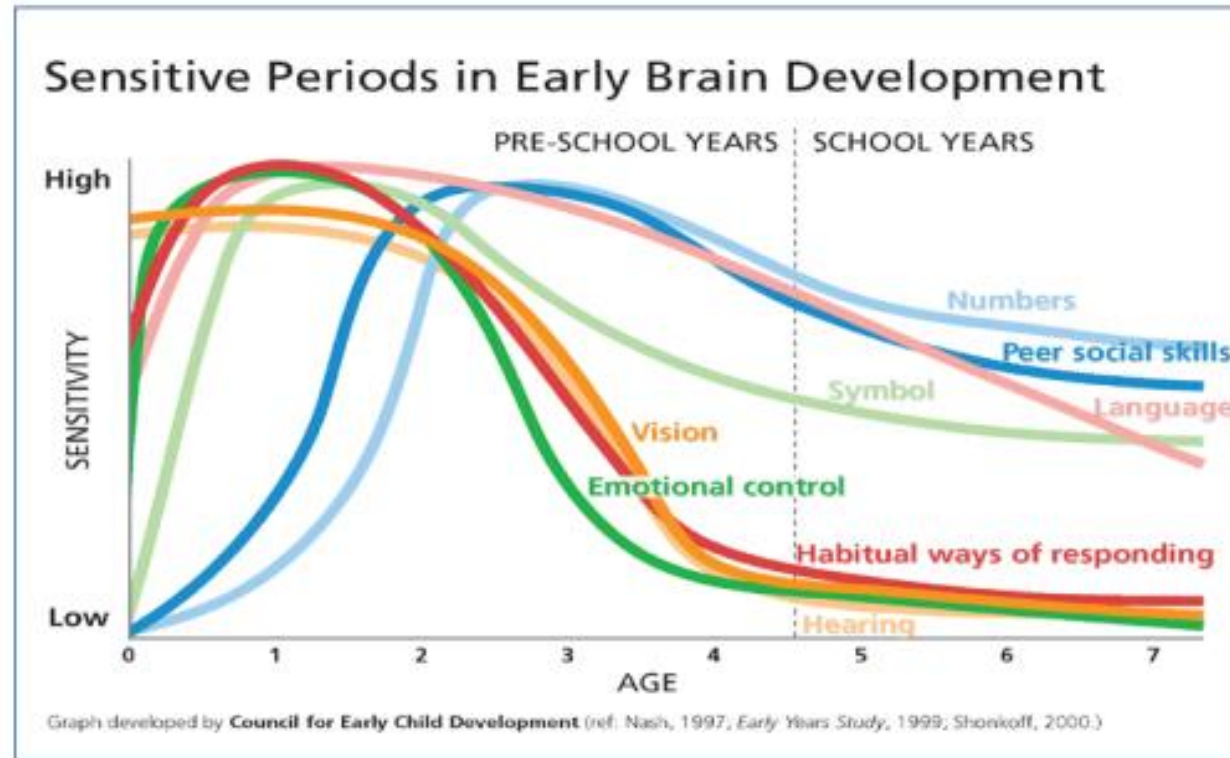
Figure 1   Sensitive periods in early brain development

Brain architecture is developed in a bottom-up sequential manner, and is especially sensitive to environments and experiences in the early years (Council for Early Child Development, 2010).

Used with permission.

Role of Primary Care

Role of Primary Care

"Pediatric Advantage" (Foy et al., 2019)

See patients longitudinally

Prevention

Family-centered approach

Opportunity to ensure social-emotional stability

Early detection
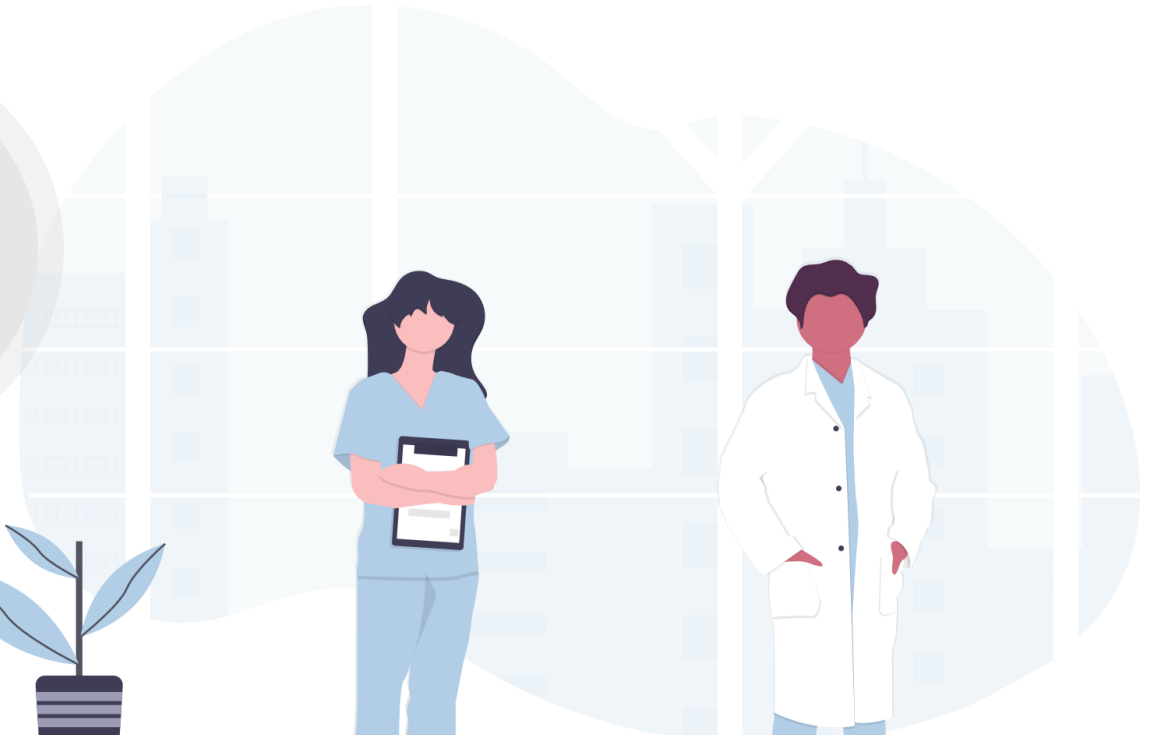
Role of Primary Care

- Mental health needs are **high** among children; unmet need is especially high among children **under 6 years** (**94%**) (Kataoka, Zhang, & Wells, 2002)

- Pediatricians are often the first professional to whom parents express concern regarding social-emotional and behavioral problems (Ellingson, Briggs-Gowan, Carter, & Horwitz, 2004)

- Pediatricians play a role in addressing chronic stress and adverse early childhood experiences (ACEs)

Only 1 in 4 children

with a mental health condition, including developmental delays and disability, is identified by the primary care provider
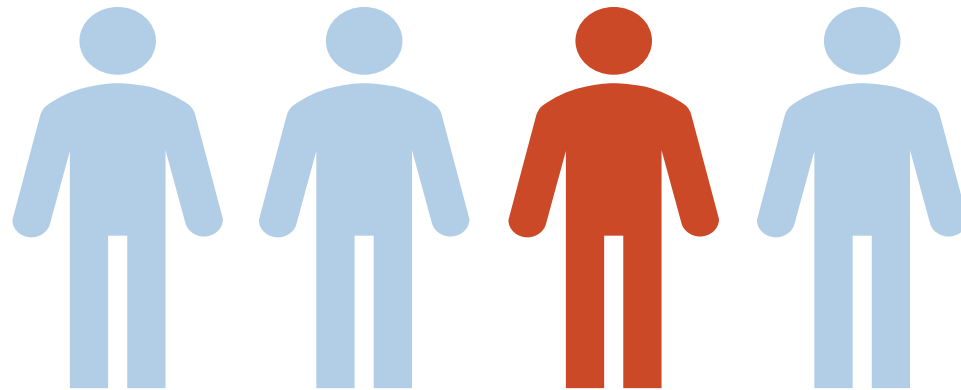
Pediatrics Essential Role in Detection

In fact, the best predictor of a PCP identifying a child's mental health problem is whether parents draw the PCPs attention to the issues rather than any PCP-initiated procedure
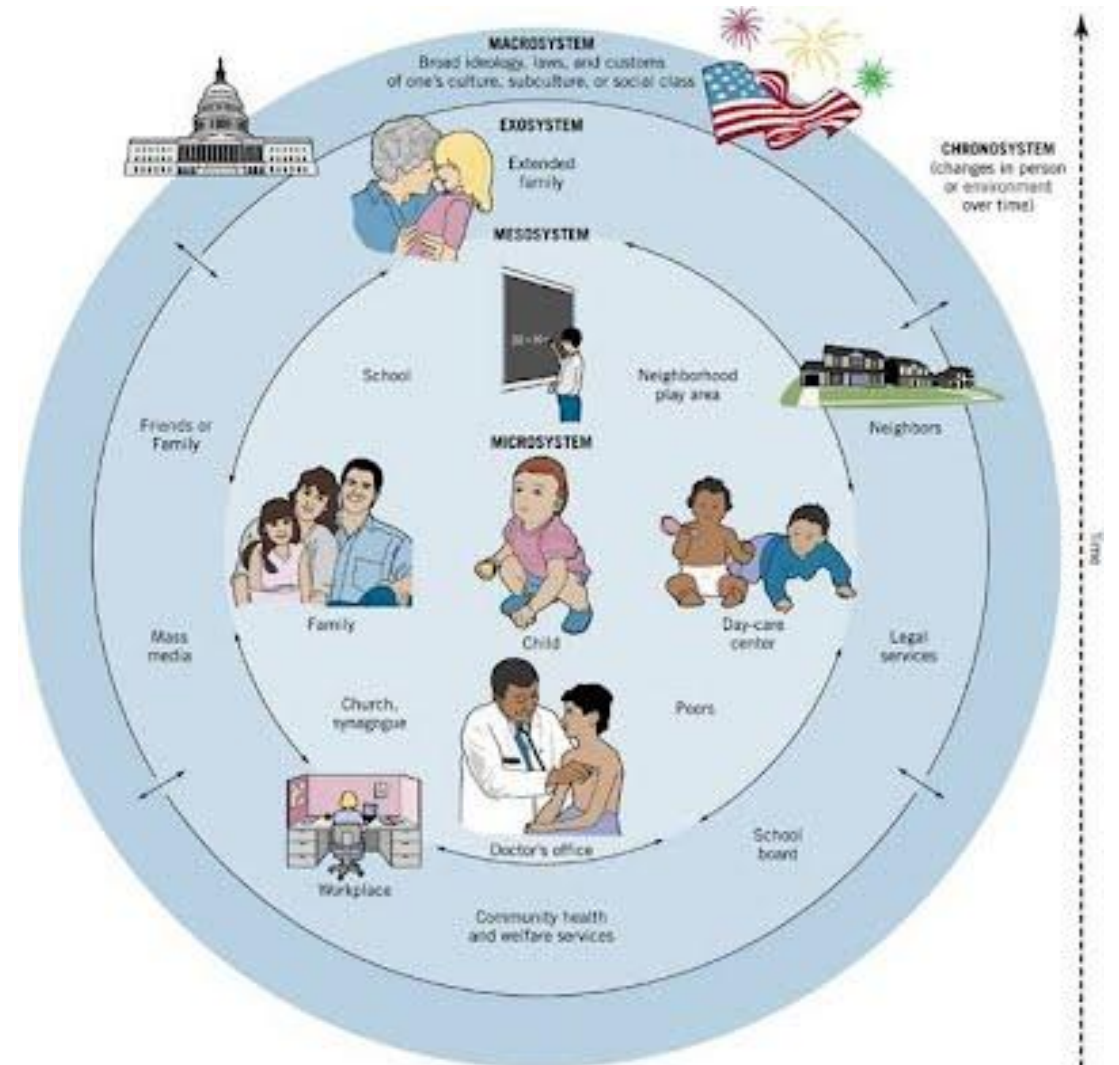
Barriers

- **Training/Competence**
  - 2013 national data indicates that:
    - 57% of pediatricians consistently treat ADHD
    - <25% treating any other disorder
  - Providers reported this is due to inadequate training in treatment of Mental Health
  - Lack of confidence in addressing mental health

- **Time Limitations**

Barriers

- **Parents rarely** bring up mental health concerns during PCP visits

- **Screeners** are being completed in only about **1 out of 5** visits

- **Close-ended questions** from providers

Integrating Mental Health into Busy Pediatric Workflow

DEVELOPMENTAL SURVEILLANCE OR MONITORING

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

Done by parents, teachers & health professionals

On-going process begins at birth

Sample Tool: "Learn the Signs. Act Early." Milestones Checklist

Both look for developmental milestones

Important for tracking signs of development & identifying concerns

Formal process recommended by the AAP at 9, 18, 24, or 30 months

Done by health professionals or by teachers with special training

Uses a valid screening tool

Sample Tool: Ages & Stages Questionniare

Surveillance vs Screening

9 Months   18 Months   24 Months   30 Months

Approach to Surveillance

Ask about and attend to parent concerns

Observe parent-child interactions

Record findings and plans

Maintain a developmental history

Identify risk and protective factors

Collaborate with other professionals

•"What changes have you seen in your child's development since our last visit?"

•Ask about age-specific skills in the various domains of development

Barger et al. 2021

Developmental Screening

- Algorithm for **screening** at **9**, **18** and **30 months** (24 months if expected difficulty with 30 month visit attendance)

- Recommend developmental **surveillance** at **every** well child visit

AAP *Pediatrics* 2006

Why Screen Development

- Screening is effective
- Mental illness and developmental delays may lead to multiple negative outcomes
- Meets criteria for US Preventive Services Task Force:
  - Common,
  - Significant morbidity,
  - Effective screening and treatments

The Case for Behavioral and Emotional Screening: Evidence of Efficacy

- Prospective cohort analysis of ASQ-SE completed on 3169 children 6-36 months

- 711 (22.4%) scored above risk cut off

- 170 were re-screened and those who had intervention from a psychologist had significant (p=0.01) improvement in ASQ-SE scores than did peers who declined intervention

Briggs, et al. Pediatrics 2012

The Case for Routine Behavioral and Emotional Screening

Estimates report that

1 in 8 children

with identified mental health problems receive treatment

Fewer than 50%

of those with clinically significant behavioral and emotional problems are detected

Weitzman et al. *Pediatrics* 2015

Clinical ability to identify B/E problems in primary care setting by judgment alone **range from 14% to 54%** sensitivity
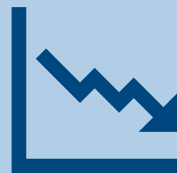
Clinicians are **less likely** to identify problems in **minority or non-English speaking** children

Weitzman et al. *Pediatrics* 2015

Developmental Screeners

- What are practices using?
  - *Ages and Stages Questionnaires ASQ
  - *Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status PEDS
  - Preschool Developmental Questionnaire (PDQ)
  - Bayley Infant Neurodevelopmental Screener (BINS)
  - The Survey of Well-Being for Young Children (SWYC)

Behavioral and Emotional Screens

Tool	Age	Items	Completed by	Public
Baby Pediatric Syptom Checklist	2-17 mo	12	parent	√
Preschool Pediatric Symptom Checklist	18-60 mo	18	parent	√
Pediatric Symptom Checklist	4-17 y	17 or 35	Parent/youth	√
Strengths and Difficulties Question	3-17 y	25	parent/teacher	√
Survey of Wellbeing in Young Children		9	parent	√
Bright Futures Questionnaire	0-21		parent	√
Ages and Stages Social/Emotional	6-60 mo	19-33	parent	

Anticipatory Guidance

- Providers in pediatric settings anticipate emerging issues that a child and family may face and provide guidance

- To be effective, anticipatory guidance must be:

Timely   **Appropriate**   **Relevant**

Parents Universal Worries

- Is my baby alright?

- Am I a good enough parent?

T. Berry Brazelton, M.D.

# Seeing the Child and Family

- What ha it been like to be ___'s parent?

- Is there anything you would like to think about together?

- Are we getting to what is most on your mind today?

Early Intervention Works!

- Early detection and prevention is **critical** to improving outcomes

- Supporting healthy early childhood development produces substantial educational, social and financial benefits
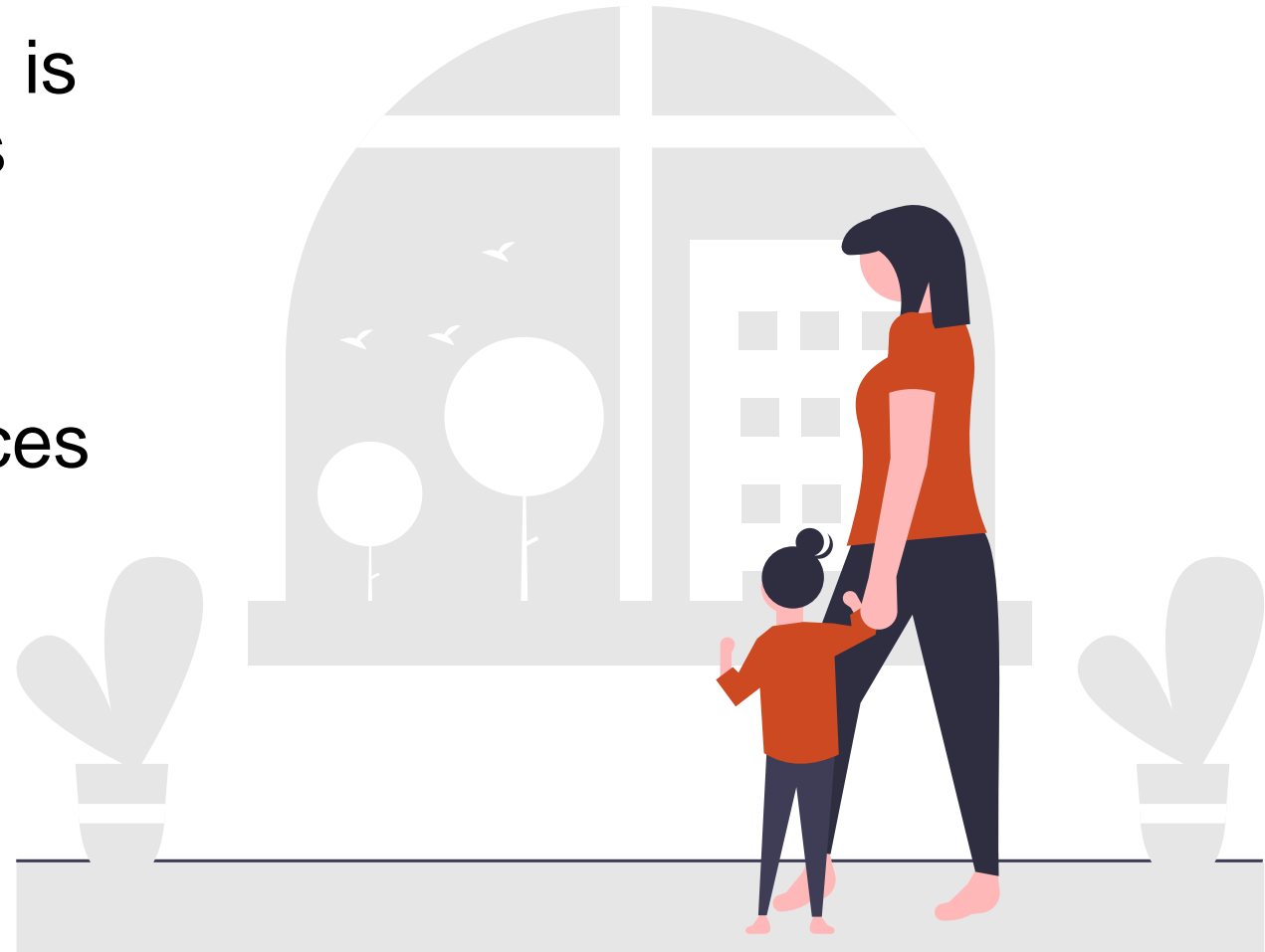
Take Home Points

- Foundation for health and human capacity
- Long period to grow and program the brain for successful adaptation to the environment and culture
- Exceptional capacity to learn and critical period for relational, social and emotional development

"No health without mental health"
-*World Health Organization*

Early Childhood Resources

- **"Learn the Signs. Act Early"** www.cdc.gov/actearly

- This website provides information and free resources on developmental milestones, developmental monitoring, and acting early on concerns

- Provides information on when infant and toddler behaviors are developmentally appropriate and when they are not

Resources

- [Bright Futures (aap.org)](#)
- [Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive! | The Administration for Children and Families (hhs.gov)](#)
- [Developmental Surveillance Resources for Healthcare Providers | CDC](#)
- [CDC's Developmental Milestones | CDC](#)
- [Watch Me! Celebrating Milestones and Sharing Concerns | CDC](#)

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Our Team

- **Sarah Edwards**, DO, Assistant Professor, Division Director/Medical Director, Taghi Modarressi Center for Infant Study, /Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

- Antonia Girard, PsyD, Associate Professor, Psychologist

- **Kay Connors**, LCSW-C, Instructor, Executive Director, Taghi Modarressi Center for Infant Study, Director, Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

- **Brijan Fellows**, LCSW-C, Clinical Program Director

- **Carole Norris Shortle**, LCSW-C, Clinical Assistant Professor, Master Clinician/Trainer

- **Shanique Rogers**, LCSW, **Sailor Holobaugh,** LCSW-C, **Rhonda Jackson**, LCPC, **Sabrina Malachi**, LGPC, **Ashley Nelson**, LMSW ECMH Consultant, HealthySteps Specialists and Clinicians

- **Ola Ibraheem**, BA, Community Health Worker

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