



center for  
**CHILDREN & YOUTH**  
JUSTICE

## News from Supporting Early Connections

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### In This Issue

**SEC Highlighted in National Policy Call to Action**

**What SEC Has Meant to Me - Diana Farrow (CASA)**

**SEC Presents at the Children's Justice Conference**

**Resources You Can Use**

**SEC Featured Organization - Childhaven**

### Spreading the Word

**SEC's partners have been busy telling the community about our work.**

#### Recent Events

\* Children's Justice Conference (May 11)

### Dear Friend,

It is hard to believe that it has been almost four years now since I first sat down with Judges Clark and DuBuque and Justice Bridge to map out the launch of the community collaboration that grew into Supporting Early Connections. Thanks to the tremendous support of the Stuart Foundation and the excellent leadership provided by CCYJ, we were able to ground this work in a strong partnership that has developed a life of its own. It has been powerful to see how many partners are still joining us at the table to ensure this cooperative effort continues after the grant ends.

When this project began, one of the largest concerns raised by the community was their reluctance to take on yet another 'pilot' project. Many partners were willing to engage simply because the needs of infants and toddlers and their families were so stark. However, some entered this collaboration with trepidation and, like many of the families we work with - less than secure connections.

Mirroring work with families, SEC had to consider day-to-day practicalities and concrete needs in addition to cultivating relationships. For both families and programs, it is hard to attend to relationships when you are worried about paying the rent. I am therefore extremely pleased that the collaboration has determined how to continue providing the basic components of SEC throughout much of King County for the foreseeable future. Up-to-date SEC referral forms and brochures can be found on my website: [www.earlychildhoodpolicy.com/resources.html](http://www.earlychildhoodpolicy.com/resources.html).

Our success was recently recognized on a national level, when SEC was featured in "A Call to Action on Behalf of Maltreated Infants and Toddlers", a new policy agenda for young children in child welfare. (See more about SEC and the call to action in the article below.) If you are interested in more current details on SEC and early outcomes, the collaborative recently presented at the Washington State Children's Justice Conference. The powerpoint and handouts from that presentation are available on the court training section of my website: [www.earlychildhoodpolicy.com/courttrain.html](http://www.earlychildhoodpolicy.com/courttrain.html).

Thank you for joining together to make a real difference for very

\* Reasonable Efforts Symposium  
(May 19)

Upcoming Events

\* National Association of Counsel  
for Children Conference (August)

young children and their families.

Sheri L. Hill, PhD, SEC Infant Mental Health Systems Consultant

Early Childhood Policy Specialist

## SEC Highlighted in National Call to Action Agenda

SEC was recently recognized by a coalition of influential advocates for young children in a new national policy agenda. "A Call to Action on Behalf of Maltreated Infants and Toddlers" was developed by the American Humane Association, Center for the Study of Social Policy, Child Welfare League of America, Children's Defense Fund, and ZERO TO THREE. SEC's provision of Child Parent Psychotherapy was highlighted as one of the innovative programs, policies and practices needed to address the developmental needs of maltreated infants and toddlers in the child welfare system. [Click here to read the Call to Action.](#) SEC appears on page 19 of the agenda.

## What SEC Has Meant to Me

*Diana Farrow, Court Appointed Special Advocate*

As a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for the past eight years, I have had the opportunity to learn about services available for children and families involved in dependency proceedings. Two of the children I have been the CASA for have been enrolled in the SEC program. Many more could have benefited from it. Here are some of the things I particularly value about SEC, and wish could be available to every young child we serve:

The SEC therapist works together with the parent(s) to set explicit goals for their work. Goals may be focused on understanding specific needs for the child, parenting issues or relationship issues - often incorporating the parents' description of how they would like to strengthen their relationship with their child. This can be much more helpful than an open-ended service whose purpose may not be necessarily clear to the parent.

The therapist models skills for the parents, rather than just discussing those skills in the abstract. The parents have the opportunity to practice these skills with their infant or toddler during the session and to then talk with the therapist about the experience for both the parent and the child. The opportunity for the parent and therapist to observe and discuss the child's unique needs is significant, with time devoted to noticing and understanding the child's actions, feelings, cues, temperament and the kind of care giving needed. This can be especially crucial when parents and children have had limited time together.

Therapists are able to go to the child and parent so that families can more readily participate. They can also help families overcome barriers such as transportation, lack of housing or difficulty accessing other services.

Therapists provide regular and detailed written feedback to the parents and parties in the case, with specific suggestions about where progress is being made and where more work is needed. These reports document many hours of skilled observation of the family by the therapist, and provide very useful information to supplement my own observations. Reports also include a discussion of family strengths, needs and current barriers to progress.

Most importantly, SEC gets to the core of what's needed for families being served- helping parents understand and meet the child's needs. This can only be done in the context of the ongoing relationship between parent and child. Can parents arrive at an understanding of their child as a human being whose experience of the world is unique and of value? Do they understand how to meet the child's needs and how to support the child's development? More than any other service that I see being made available, Supporting Early Connections can

fundamentally alter and strengthen that relationship.

## SEC Presents at the Children's Justice Conference

Members of Supporting Early Connections (SEC) presented at the Children's Justice Conference on May, 10th in Seattle. The presenters included:

- Cate Brewe, Child Parent Psychotherapist, Navos
- Dr. Sheri Hill, Early Childhood Policy Specialist, SEC Consultant
- Helen Redman, Parents' Attorney, The Defender Association
- Teresa Sach, Social Worker Supervisor, DCFS

SEC partners provided the multi-disciplinary audience with information on early childhood development and the effects of trauma on young brains. They also discussed how the SEC model supports the healthy development of infants and toddlers exposed to trauma and maltreatment. Attendees received an overview of Child Parent Psychotherapy as an evidence-based practice, SEC's early outcomes and the collaboration required to implement and sustain a court-community partnership. For those interested in starting a program similar to SEC, the team provided copies of SEC forms and documents. [Click here](#) to view these handouts online. [Click here](#) for a copy of the presentation power point.

### Quote of the Month

"For most dyads, even those that are extremely troubled, there are strong positive forces on each side of the relationship. The work of the psychotherapy is to uncover, discover, and support these strengths, recognize and work with the weaknesses, and build a stronger, more positive relationship."

Osofsky, J (2004). *Young Children and Trauma: Intervention and Treatment*, New York: Guilford Press. Pg 8.

## Resources You Can Use

### **For Advocates: Birth Parents with Trauma History and the Child Welfare System - NCTSN**

The Birth Parent Subcommittee of the Child Welfare Committee is releasing the first of five factsheets. This factsheet highlights the importance of understanding the serious consequences that trauma histories can have for birth parents and the subsequent potential impact on their parenting. [Click here to read.](#)

### **For Advocates: The Importance of Early Interventions for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities and Their Families**

This is a fact sheet from NECTAC that provides a brief overview of the Part C program and quick facts from the research on early brain development, the importance of intervening early, the benefits of early intervention, and current unmet needs. It is meant to be used as a tool to communicate with policymakers, pediatricians, families, and community leaders about the importance of high quality services for infants and toddlers with or at risk for developmental delays and their families. [Click here to read.](#)

### **For Therapists: Clinical Work with Traumatized Young Children - Joy Osofsky and Lieberman**

The book presents crucial knowledge and state-of-the-art treatment approaches for working with young children affected by trauma. An essential resource for mental health professionals and child welfare advocates, readers will gain an understanding of how trauma affects the developing brain, its impact on attachment processes, and how to effectively help young children and their families from diverse backgrounds. [Click here to purchase.](#)

### **For Policy Makers: Evidence Based Practices for Children Exposed to Violence**

The publication summarizes findings from federal reviews of research studies and program evaluations to help communities improve outcomes for children exposed to violence. It cites evidence-based practices, including child-parent psychotherapy, that practitioners and policymakers can use to implement prevention services and activities for these children. [Click here to read.](#)

## You Can Keep Babies Healthy

It is easy to agree babies need to be kept safe and have loving, supportive relationships with those around them. You know this is true, and you are familiar with the research and proof supporting these statements. You can make a difference in the lives of the infants and their families by making a commitment to support the innovative work of SEC. Join your fellow community members and show your support today by making a contribution. Click here to donate; put "SEC" in the "In Honor of" box. Thank you for your dedication to healthy babies and families.

## SEC Featured Agency for Infants and Toddlers

### **Childhaven**



In SEC, we're fond of saying that our work is all about relationships. And we're fortunate to have a great relationship with Childhaven. Many of the children we serve are also enrolled in therapeutic childcare with Childhaven. This has been a real plus for many of our families, as SEC therapists and Childhaven staff work together to help parents practice new relationship skills and forge strong bonds with their babies and toddlers.

It's comes as no surprise to Childhaven that responding to the mental health needs of vulnerable infants and toddlers requires involving their parents, too. Childhaven has been doing just that for more than 100 years.

Founded as Seattle Day Nursery in 1909, Childhaven works today to help children under the age of six heal from abuse and neglect. While providing intensive therapeutic child care five days a week to children, Childhaven also provides intensive parenting programs for their mothers, fathers, foster parents and kinship caregivers.

One of Childhaven's parenting programs is called Promoting First Relationships, a research-based program that uses "reflective practice" to help parents examine and understand their child's behavior and their own reactions to it. The 10-week program uses video recording and positive feedback to strengthen the nurturing bond between the parent and child.

In addition, Childhaven case managers and home visitors visit every child's home once a month to work one-on-one with parents to provide support and encouragement to help parents meet their children's needs. A Parent Advisory Committee made up of Childhaven parents helps ensure that the agency's services are relevant and sensitive to the needs of vulnerable families.

*Learn more about Childhaven and its four King County branches at [www.childhaven.org](http://www.childhaven.org)*

If you'd like to view earlier issues of the SEC e-newsletter, you can find them on the Center for Children & Youth Justice's website by clicking [here](#).

## STUART FOUNDATION

SEC is made possible by a grant from the Stuart Foundation.

[Stuart Foundation Website](#)

### Quick Links

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