



center for
CHILDREN & YOUTH
JUSTICE

News from Supporting Early Connections

Winter 2009 ~~2009~~



Upcoming Trainings with
**The National Child Traumatic
Stress Network**

A series of FREE online seminars focused on community partnerships to promote the behavioral health and emotional development of very young children affected by trauma.

For information on how to participate please visit the NCTSN

[Learning Center Web Site](#)

Welcome to the first Supporting Early Connections e-newsletter.

The Center for Children & Youth Justice created this quarterly publication to share the exciting things we're learning from Supporting Early Connections (SEC), our infant mental health dependency court project.

SEC truly has the potential to change lives. It does so by insuring that babies who have experienced abuse or neglect are given an opportunity to establish stable, nurturing relationships with their parents. And parents, many of whom did not have good role models in their own lives, learn to recognize and respond appropriately to their infants' needs. Through strengthening child-parent relationships, SEC hopes to help children meet critical developmental milestones and keep families from re-entering the child welfare system for generations to come.

I hope you find this resource informative and helpful to your work with children and families.

Very truly yours,

Justice Bobbe J. Bridge (ret.)
Founding President/CEO
Center for Children & Youth Justice

Supporting Early Connections Update

Infants and toddlers are the largest group of children to enter, remain in and re-enter foster care, and the least likely to reunify with their biological families. These children experience multiple placements that put them at great risk both for immediate and long-term mental health challenges. Unfortunately, courts, child welfare systems and families are often unaware of the unique mental health and relationship needs of young children who experience significant trauma, loss and separation.

Supporting Early Connections (SEC) seeks to change that experience. Funded by a grant from the Stuart Foundation, SEC provides early intervention mental health services to families with dependency cases in south King County, Washington. Our community mental health partner, Navos, provides approximately 10 months of Child-Parent Therapy to infants, toddlers and their biological parents. A Family Support Specialist helps keep

families engaged in treatment. Since September 2008, Navos has treated 19 children and their parents (12 mothers and 10 fathers). SEC is working with the child welfare and court systems to gather data on these families' dependency case outcomes.

In addition to serving families, SEC is dedicated to improving professionals' knowledge and understanding of how to better meet the needs of very young children. Cross-disciplinary training is regularly provided to the project partners and others working with families involved in the child welfare system. Partnering with the Court Improvement Training Academy at the University of Washington Law School, SEC has offered training in infant mental health, brain development, attachment and the court's role in supporting resilience for very young children. Training topics for 2010 include infants and trauma, and the appropriate use of infant mental health information in dependency cases.

Another key component of SEC is the development of an effective, multi-system partnership that is sustainable and can be replicated in other locales. SEC has the full participation of the King County Superior Court, defense counsel, the Attorney General's Office, Children's Administration Region IV, King County Dependency CASA and community mental health agencies. Infant mental health expertise is provided by project consultants, Dr. Sheri L. Hill and Dr. JoAnne Solchany. SEC Team members meet regularly to share information and address implementation issues. The team has also presented on the SEC project to state and national audiences.

For more information about SEC, please contact Kelly Warner-King, Project Manager, Center for Children & Youth Justice. You can email Kelly at kwarnar-king@ccyj.org or call 206-696-7503, ext. 19.

Resources

- **"Healthy Beginnings, Healthy Futures - A Judge's Guide"** Researchers have shown that very young children develop within the context of their primary relationships. This guide summarizes the science of early childhood development to help judicial officers, attorneys, social workers and CASAs make decisions that support the health and emotional well-being of infants in dependency court. Download this new resource, and other excellent publications, from the American Bar Association's Improving the Understanding of Maternal and Child Health (IUMCH) Project -- <http://www.abanet.org/child/baby-health.shtml>
- Check out the website for the **ZERO TO THREE National Policy Center** at www.zerotothree.org/policy. In addition to important, cutting-edge research, there are helpful resources for child abuse and neglect professionals working with very young children at http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=key_childabuse
- **Dr. Sheri L. Hill** provides training and consultation on early childhood policy and program development to the Supporting Early Connections project. To view copies of Dr. Hill's comprehensive training and policy reform materials, please see her website www.earlychildhoodpolicy.com.

Helping Babies Transition

Babies are unable to tell us about their experiences and we can't provide them with a story around transitions they make. However, babies know the world through their senses and interactions with caregivers. Keeping familiar things around for infants can help ease necessary transitions. Here are transition tips from SEC Child-Parent Therapist, Meghan Kroll.

People

- Make any transitions (placement, day care provider, etc.) gradual.
- Overlap contact with primary caregivers (e.g., foster parent sitting in on visitation with biological mother) and maintain contact after a change in placement.

Smells

- Find out what laundry detergent was used to wash the baby's things.
- Ask if there is a particular perfume or lotion worn by the caregiver.

Stuff

- As much as possible, keep clothes, blankets and other familiar things through the transition. This is especially important for anything used to soothe or put the baby to sleep.
- Maintain diaper brand, if possible.
- Use the same formula, bottles, nipple, and temperature for food.
- If possible, take pictures and collect things for a memory book/box for the child to have as a reminder when he/she gets older. Document as much as you can in the case files for future reference.

Sounds

- Find out what works to soothe the baby, like singing songs or a white noise machine.
- Consider what noise level (busy street, big family or quiet home) will be "normal" for baby.

Routines

- Maintain feeding routines including timing, positioning and location.
- Maintain diapering routines including where and how baby is changed.
- Maintain sleep/wake cycles including nap times, sleeping places and going to sleep routine.

Transitions are stressful for babies. Expect behavioral disorganization, such as regression, difficulty self-soothing and fussiness. Increase time and contact with the baby if he/she is having a hard time. Meet the child's needs on demand.

Compiled by: Meghan A Kroll, LICSW and IMH-E (III)

Featured Service for Infants and Toddlers

Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP)

For children under three who are part of a substantiated case of abuse or neglect, federal law requires screening to identify developmental delays. If developmental delay is found, a child is eligible for a wide range of services authorized by Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) - often referred to as "Part C Services."

In Washington State, the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP) provides early intervention services to children, birth to age three, with disabilities and/or developmental delays. ITEIP provides services to meet the developmental needs of each child, and the needs of each family, related to enhancing the child's development. The following is provided at no cost to the family:

- evaluation to determine eligibility
- development of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and
- coordination of family resources.

Eligibility for services is based on the results of evaluation and assessments addressing five areas of development:

- Cognitive
- Physical
- Communication
- Social or emotional
- Adaptive skills

To be eligible for services, a child must have a 25% delay or show a 1.5 standard deviation below his or her age in one or more of the developmental areas. A child may also be eligible if he or she has an established physical or mental condition, such as Down Syndrome, that is known to cause a delay in development.

Participation in ITEIP is voluntary. Funding for ITEIP services comes from public and private sources, including private insurance. No family is turned away from services because of inability to pay.

Call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 for the name of the Lead Family Resources Coordinator (FRC) in the county where a family lives. A call to the FRC will get a family started in the process of eligibility determination and services. For more information on ITEIP, please see www.dshs.wa.gov/iteip

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