

# Supporting Conversations about Early Childhood Mental Health: Tackling Stigma and Increasing Public Awareness

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# Training Objectives

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**When you leave here today, you will:**

- Have a deeper understanding of and how to communicate about early childhood social emotional development
- Know which messages to use and how to use them effectively
- Have access to new printed materials that support provider and parent education and how to support use of materials



# How Prepared Are You Now?

## Questions to consider

**Do I understand** social-emotional development in young children?

**Can I explain it** to a professional or a parent in language they will understand?

**Do I know** why it's important?





# Activity #1

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Turn to the person next to you  
Describe what social-emotional development  
is for young children and why it is important





# Early Childhood and Social Emotional Health





# Project LAUNCH

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The 5 required strategies **builds** off current work:

1. Screening and assessments in a range of child-serving settings (*developmental, mental health, PRD*)
2. Integration of behavioral health into primary care settings
3. Mental health consultation in early care and education
4. Enhanced home visiting through increased focus on social and emotional well-being
5. Family strengthening and parent skills training

Plan to serve over **16,000** children over the 5 years



## How Communication Materials were Developed

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### The materials build off of the:

- Early Learning Developmental Guidelines:  
<http://earlylearningco.org/>
- Shared Message bank through the Early Childhood Colorado Partnership (ECCP):  
<http://eccp.civiccanopy.org/message-platform/>
- Strengthening Families
- Zero to Three:  
<https://www.zerotothree.org/parenting>

- Discovery Sessions
- Communications Committee and Statewide input – Office of Early Childhood and Early Milestones
- Early Childhood Leadership Commission – Communication Survey:
  - Communication must be high quality
  - Include the use of effective content
  - Training for “trusted messengers” who can connect with parents and caregivers
  - Heightened focus on effective tactics

**– Materials were created by SE2**





## Why

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### ***Parent survey from Zero to Three (2016) shows:***

- 69% of families say if they knew more positive parenting strategies they would use them (especially dads)
- Parents overall consistently underestimate just how early children can be affected by some critical experiences
- There is an expectation gap when it comes to understanding children's capabilities



## Messages 101

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SE2



# Why Do Messages Matter?

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Ensure **consistency** across various spokespeople

**Targeted** to audience values / what they care about

Help you with the **essential point** you want to get across



# How Do You Use Messages?

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- **Don't have to be delivered verbatim**
  - Tailor messages for your audience
  - Deliver them in a way that is comfortable for you
- **Shouldn't be jam-packed into communications**
  - People can only remember 2-3 main points



# Where Do We Use Messages?

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- Face-to-face conversations
- Website
- Social media
- Brochures, handouts, etc.
- Emails
- Presentations
- Press releases / media interviews
- **Everywhere!**



## Understanding Your Audience

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SE2



# Audiences

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To use messages effectively, **you must understand your audience** and what they care about.



## Primary Audiences

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People who spend the most time with young children...

- **Parents and caregivers**
- **Child care providers**
- **Other early childhood professionals**



# Framing with Values





## What Do Early Childhood Professionals Value?

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- Providing **excellent care and service** to the children and families in their program
- Having **information, skills and knowledge** that help them be more effective professionals
- Promoting the **health and well-being of the children** in their care
- Preventing and managing **challenging behavior**
- Having access to **trusted community resources** they can reach out to when they are concerned about a child



## What Do Parents/Caregivers Value?

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- **Health, safety and well-being** of their children/grandchildren
- **Community resources for help** with parenting – especially during challenging times
- Opportunities to **build parenting skills**
- **Easy-to-understand, culturally relevant information** that helps them support their children’s healthy development
- **Personal conversations** and opportunities to ask questions and voice concerns about their child’s development
- Preventing and **managing challenging behavior**



## Put Your Audience First -- Always

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Early childhood professionals and parents can feel **overwhelmed by the amount of information** they receive.

Tailoring communications to be relevant to what they care about – and **explaining how we can make their lives easier – will help cut through the clutter.**



# Metaphors

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Compares something familiar to something less familiar to increase understanding:

<http://eccp.civiccanopy.org/message-platform/>

- See handout



## About Social-emotional Development

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# What Are Social-emotional Skills?

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Video 1: An Important but sensitive topic



# Social-emotional Development

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The process of learning social and emotional skills begins at birth, as infants build attachments and **trust with caregivers**, learn how to calm themselves down, and later, to recognize emotions.

Like any skill, children develop social and **emotional abilities gradually** – with lots of support from caregivers as they learn.





# What Is the Communications Toolkit?

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- **Brochure/One pager for early childhood professionals**
  - *Overview of early childhood SE development*
  - *Supporting healthy development in the program*
  - *Community resources for support*
- **Brochures/Materials for parents/families**
  - *Importance of SE development*
  - *How to support healthy development at home*
  - *Community Resources*
- **Social Media**
- **Posters**
- **Videos**

[www.EarlyChildhoodMentalHealthCo.org](http://www.EarlyChildhoodMentalHealthCo.org)

# Relationships Are Key to Healthy Development

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Starting at birth, **caring and consistent relationships** give children a foundation of safety and encouragement to explore the world around them.

**Supportive relationships teach children to express their feelings in a healthy way**, have compassion for others, and learn the difference between right and wrong.

Positive relationships support **healthy social-emotional development, which supports good mental health throughout life.**

**Video 3**: Tips for Professionals



## Understanding Mental Health, Reducing Stigma

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**Just as we all have physical health, we all have mental health** – and that includes very young children, even babies.

Children's **mental health is every bit as important** as their physical health.

**In the same way that we nurture children's physical health we must also nurture their mental health** with positive experiences, loving, stable relationships and support to help develop social-emotional skills.



# Understanding Mental Health, Reducing Stigma

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Physical health is the foundation that provides us with the energy and strength we need to go about our daily lives.

**Mental health gives us the ability to make friends, cope with life's hardships, and be successful in school, work and community life.**

**Video 6**: Key Messages for Parents and Caregivers



# Community Resource Available

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## For Families

Doctor/Medical Home

Mental Health Center

Parent Classes

Zero to Three or Center on Social Emotional Foundations  
for Early Learning

- <https://www.zerotothree.org/>
- <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>
- Video 5: Conversations about Children's Mental Health



# Trauma Informed Care

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Simple and easy to implement

Zero to Three

Seek Professional Development

Strengthening Families Protective Factors

- Concrete Supports in Times of Need

- Parental Resilience

- Social Emotional Competence

- Knowledge of Child Development

- Social Connections



## Next Steps

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# **Feeling Prepared**

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## **Questions to consider**

**Do I understand** social-emotional development?

**Can I explain it** to a professional or a parent in language they will understand?

**What action do I want** the professional or parent to take as a result of our conversation?

**What messages** do I feel confident delivering?

**What questions** might I be asked?

**What more do I need** to feel prepared?







## Activity #2

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With more information we will practice again –  
practice makes perfect!

Turn to the person next to you

Describe what social-emotional development is  
for young children and why it is important





## Next Steps

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- ✓ Familiarize yourself with the messages and toolkit materials
- ✓ Make a plan to distribute **intentionally**
- ✓ Reach out to your Early Childhood Council to collaborate around distribution/call to action
- ✓ <https://ecclacolorado.org/find-an-early-childhood-council>
- ✓ Share information with your co-workers and strongly encourage them to take training if available or at least watch all 6 videos (increase their level of understanding)

**Questions?**





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**Thank You**