



## Indiana Association for Infant & Toddler Mental Health

What do we mean by the terms Infant or Early Childhood Mental Health? The national organization Zero to Three ([zerotothree.org](http://zerotothree.org)) provides a simple answer: **“early childhood mental health means positive social and emotional development.”** Social and emotional development is critical to development in all other areas, including cognition and language. Further, research suggests that social experiences combine with genetic factors to shape and influence brain development. Positive early experiences result in good outcomes later in life, such as a healthy self-image, enhanced ability to solve problems, and better ability to get along with other people. On the other hand, when young children experience loss, separation from parents, domestic violence, significant and repeated medical treatments, and other traumas, the risk for undesirable outcomes is great. Fortunately, through years of clinical interventions and research, mental health strategies to help young children and families develop positive social emotional skills are available, no matter the circumstances.

**For Early Childhood Mental Health support and information, contact a First Steps mental health provider!**

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### Points to Ponder about Early Childhood Mental Health

- \* Sensitive and responsive caregiving gives babies a head start in life - both parents and child care providers can make important contributions.
- \* School success begins with healthy emotional regulation.
- \* Positive relationships in early childhood can provide a buffer against later trauma.
- \* Supporting parents' mental health is a critical part of supporting young children's mental health.
- \* Where to start? Spend time with your baby—talk, sing, laugh and have fun!



Learn More!

<http://www.zerotothree.org>

[http://southeastregionalcenter.org/pdf/Infant\\_Mental\\_Health\\_brochure.pdf](http://southeastregionalcenter.org/pdf/Infant_Mental_Health_brochure.pdf)

<http://www.healthychild.ucla.edu/First5CAReadiness/Conferences/materials/InfantMH.definition.pdf>

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