



## Indiana Association for Infant & Toddler Mental Health

Young children are more likely to be abused and neglected, to be in foster care, and to stay longer in foster care than older children (Jones Harden, 2007). Often these babies have complex histories and many problems spanning medical, mental health and developmental areas, leading to an increased risk of developmental delays and behavior problems. In many cases their parents struggle with poverty, domestic violence, mental illness and their own difficult histories of abuse. With national estimates that over 100,000 babies and toddlers are served in the foster care system (Dicker, 2009), it is highly likely early intervention providers will encounter abused and neglected children in their work. It can be hard for early intervention providers to know how to help or even where to start.

**First Steps mental health professionals can help you know how to support these children and their families!**



### **How to Help:**

- \* **Recognize that most parents want to help their children and are doing the best they know how.**
- \* **Model consistency and reliability in your interactions with parents.**
- \* **Identify and support family strengths; help families see their own successes.**
- \* **Encourage parents to obtain needed treatment for themselves .**
- \* **Link families to other resources and supports when needed.**
- \* **Get support from supervisors and other providers so you don't feel overwhelmed.**

### **Suggested Reading:**

Dicker, S. (2009). *Reversing the Odds: Improving Outcomes for Babies in the Child Welfare System*, Baltimore: Brookes.

Jones Harden, B. (2007). *Infants in the Child Welfare System: A Developmental Framework for Policy and Practice*, Washington, DC: Zero to Three.

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