

Infant and Early Childhood

Mental Health

Early childhood mental health — also referred to as social-emotional health or behavioral health, as defined by Zero To Three is:

The developing capacity of a child from birth through age five to:

- Experience, regulate and express emotions
- Form close and secure interpersonal relationships
- Explore the environment and learn

... all in the context of family, community and cultural expectations for young children.

Positive social-emotional development in young children is supported by:

- Responsive relationships with primary caregivers
- Understanding/adapting to individual temperaments
- Encouraging social-emotional learning in every day routines (e.g. sensory play, exploring interests)
- Teaching words to understand emotions
- Recognizing culture/family traditions to shape identity

Potential mental health concerns in young children include:

- Changes in feeding, toileting, sleeping habits
- Externalizing behavior, like excessive crying, biting, tantrums, and aggression
- Internalizing behavior, like social withdrawal, and fearfulness
- Regressions to earlier stages of development



1) How does Illinois promote social-emotional health for children under six?

State-wide programs that support social-emotional development



Birthing Parents and Newborns

- Moms & Babies (Medicaid)
- Family Case Management
- Better Birth Outcomes
- High Risk Infant Follow Up
- Perinatal Depression Hotline (Northshore)
- Illinois Helpline for Opioids and Other Substances



Families and Children Prenatal-5

- All Kids Healthcare (Medicaid)
- IDHS Home Visiting
- Child Care Assistance Program
- Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC)
- Caregiver Connections



Children Prenatal-3

- Prevention Initiative
- Early Head Start
- Migrant & Seasonal Head Start
- Early Intervention



Children 3-5

- Preschool for All
- Preschool for All Expansion
- Head Start (HS)
- Migrant & Seasonal HS
- Special Education

2) Who can help identify or confirm a mental health concern?

Screening for mental health concerns



Primary Care Physician (PCP)

- Medicaid covers Primary Care Providers (PCP) to screen children for mental health concerns during well-child visits or when a concern is raised.
- PCPs can also call DocAssist at [1-866-986-2778](tel:1-866-986-2778), a physician-to-physician consultation line, for questions on pediatric mental health.



Early Childhood Workforce

- Professionals in voluntary home visiting programs and early care and education programs, are trained to recognize, screen, and support the social-emotional needs of young children.
- They also have access to Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation to advise them on specific concerns.



I/ECMHC

- Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC) supports early childhood professionals to prevent, identify, and reduce the impact of mental health concerns of young children in their care.
- In some cases, families can request I/ECMHC services for a concern.

3) How does Illinois assist young children that need additional support?

Mental health assessment, intervention, and treatment*



Early Intervention (EI) (age 0-3)

- For children birth through three, EI providers coach families to help their child meet social and emotional developmental milestones if they have a medical condition, delay of 30% or more, or eligible risk factors.
- Medicaid/All Kids healthcare plan covers mental health assessments and services for children under age 6 with a diagnosis or if at risk of a mental health diagnosis.



Special Education (age 3-5)

- For children age three through five, the local school district provides services to help children with social and emotional delays or disabilities that adversely affect educational performance.
- Services are delivered through local school districts.



Clinical Services (age 0-5)

- Medicaid/All Kids healthcare plan covers mental health assessments and services for children under six with a diagnosis or if at risk of a diagnosis.
- Services are available in health centers, hospitals, Community Mental Health Centers, and Behavioral Health Clinics.
- For crisis response, call CARES Line at [1-800-345-9049](tel:1-800-345-9049)