

# CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS DAY MAY 6, 2010

## INFANT MENTAL HEALTH: THE FIRST YEARS LAST FOREVER

Babies can show signs of depression (inconsolable crying, slow growth, sleep problems, etc.).

1 in 5 children has a diagnosable mental disorder but factors that predict mental health problems can be identified in the early years.

75% to 80% of children and youth in need of mental health services do not receive them.

Maternal depression, anxiety disorders, and other forms of chronic depression affect approximately 10% of mothers with young children.

Maternal depression threatens two core parental functions: fostering healthy relationships and carrying out the management functions of parenting. The result, long tracked in child development research, has been linked to demonstrable reductions in young children's behavioral, cognitive, and social and emotional functioning (Knitzer et al., 2008, NCCP).

When an infant or toddler's social and emotional development suffers significantly, they can, and do, experience mental health problems as well.

### Supporting Healthy Development

Healthy social and emotional development refers to a child's capacity to experience, manage, and express a full range of positive and negative emotions; develop close, satisfying relationships with others; and actively explore environments and learn.

**Get Involved!** Opportunities to promote resiliency among infants:

- Skilled providers can accurately screen, diagnose and treat mental health disorders in infancy and early childhood before they impact other areas of development.
- Policymakers can strengthen the foundation being built for infants and toddlers by improving the continuum of services for the promotion and prevention of infant and early childhood mental health problems, as well as the provision of early intervention services for at-risk infants and toddlers.



### For more information ...

<http://www.nmaimh.org>

<http://www.zerotothree.org>

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu>

<http://www.infant-parent.com>

<http://gucchd.georgetown.edu>

<http://aia.berkeley.edu>