

# Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Referrals

---

The mission of the Department of Health and Welfare is to promote and protect the health and safety of Idahoans. The provision of Infant Mental Health services supports the Department's mission, and the following goals:

- Goal 1: Improve the health status of Idahoans, and
- Goal 3: Enhance the delivery of health and human services.

A key component of the promotion of the health and safety of Idahoans is the provision of services to ensure the healthy social-emotional growth of all children.

## Infant Mental Health

Mental health for this population is defined as the capacity of infants and toddlers to experience, regulate, and express emotions; form close, stable and secure interpersonal relationships; and explore the environment and learn.

The Zero to Three Fact Sheet dated May 2003 states that, "Mental health within this age group is synonymous with healthy social and emotional development".

Children's mental health and social-emotional skills develop within the parent-child relationship and the family constellation of supports. In identifying social, emotional and behavioral difficulties it is necessary to address the parent/child dyad in screening, assessment and the development and implementation of intervention/therapeutic plans.

## Background Information

The Infant Toddler Program in Family and Community Services is the Lead Agency for children birth to three years old who qualify for early intervention services under federal education law, (Part C of IDEA). As lead agency, the Infant Toddler Program coordinates a comprehensive, interagency, interdisciplinary system that enables eligible children and their families to receive needed services and supports in a timely and family-centered manner. Early intervention services to infants and toddlers are delivered through the provisions outlined in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Some services are provided by other partner agencies.

Through the Infant Toddler Program, multiple agencies and programs, both public and private, coordinate activities and resources to ensure that appropriate referrals, screening, assessment, and treatment of children with developmental delays including social, emotional, and behavioral concerns, are made. Developmental difficulties often present complex, interrelated dynamics impacted by parent-child relationships, socioeconomic influences and community supports.

The Division of Behavioral Health, Children's Mental Health Program provides a continuum of public mental health services for children with a Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED) and their families through outpatient and inpatient treatment or in residential settings. Services are delivered primarily through contracts and service agreements with private service providers. Medicaid pays for the majority of public mental health services for children in Idaho.

The children's mental health system is guided by the Children's Mental Health Services Act (CMHSA), which places the right and responsibility to access mental health services on parents and guardians. The Department's children's mental health services are voluntary and provided to eligible children. Children must meet the Department's target population of having an SED to be eligible for services. SED is determined by a child/youth having a mental health diagnosis and impairment in their ability to function successfully in normal life areas, including school, home, and community.

Refer to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Regarding Infant and Toddler Early Childhood Mental Health Services for additional information.