# 2020-21 IMPACT REPORT

# **BETTER ACCESS FOR BETTER OUTCOMES**

**BUILDING COMPETENCY, CONFIDENCE AND CAPACITY FOR A STRONGER CANADA** 





A program of





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# **OPENING MESSAGES**



# Director of Infant and Early Mental Health Promotion (IEMHP)

Like so many other organizations, our first reflection of the past year is "what a year!", and like so many organizations, there was no choice but to see how we could continue our work in new ways. Engaging more

than ever with technology, the IEMHP team rapidly pivoted to continue nurturing existing relationships and build new ones through online platforms. We recognized that practitioners in communities were themselves also trying to understand and learn how to engage with families with young children, how to access new knowledge and continue to build their skills and practice. For IEMHP, all of this was a call to action. The change in how we engage with practitioners meant we could actually reach more practitioners and in parts of the country we were less familiar with. It gave us confidence that we could use technology to increase access to our training, resources and research. This past year, while challenging on many levels - personally and professionally, was a year during which we learned new ways of doing things. We are still looking forward to the days we can again visit communities and practitioners face-to-face. But those same communities and practitioners have also taught us about how we can best support them through technology. The year ahead will present opportunities for IEMHP to develop a blended model of engagement – faceto-face and online. It will be an exciting year building on the foundation put in place over the decades. At the end of the day, some things don't change even during a pandemic: the relationships we have, the new ones we create, are central to all that we do, and we look forward to meeting more and more practitioners as dedicated as us to promoting positive infant and early mental health.

Chaya Kulkarni

Chaya Luekarni



# Vice-President of Education and Academic Practice, Chief of International Nursing

I wish to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to all members of the IEMHP team and their partners across Canada. What a truly unprecedented year we've had, and I am so grateful to the many individuals who have been

so engaged and available to advance the important work of IEMHP. Without the dedication and amazing commitment of all involved, managing through the pandemic would have been so much harder and I am delighted that access to early mental health services has actually expanded. As the newest program in our constellation of Learning Institute program teams, I am inspired by the way IEMHP advanced the use of technologies and created new approaches that enabled more young families to be supported and nurtured especially during this challenging pandemic time. The ingenuity and creativity that sprang from the need to keep going and stay connected has opened new opportunities for the future too. I am so excited to see what will continue to blossom within the context of these new relationships and innovations. With education and capacity building as an underlying driver in all that you do, the Learning Institute is a natural home for IEMHP. Together we will continue to strength our networks, advocate for early mental health, and build capacity among communities devoted to caring for infants and young children, our future citizens and leaders. Congratulations on accomplishing so much this year. I look forward to a bright future.

Pam Hubley

P. Hubleg



# WHAT IS INFANT AND EARLY MENTAL HEALTH?

Infant and early mental health is the social, emotional, and cognitive wellbeing of infants and young children.

Infant and early mental health practice refers to the promotion of optimal development and wellbeing in infants and young children (prenatal to age 5), the prevention of difficulties, and intervention when children are at risk of or have identified problems. The goal of infant and early mental health services is to ensure optimal child outcomes in terms of a sense of security and self-esteem, and the ability to form satisfying relationships, to engage with the world, to learn, to cope and problem-solve, and to continue positive development throughout life. Infant and early mental health practice strives to promote stable and supportive families and communities.

# **ABOUT IEMHP**

Infant and Early Mental Health Promotion (IEMHP) was established in 1988 by Dr. Susan Bradley within the Department of Psychiatry at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) in Toronto. Now housed within the SickKids Learning Institute, IEMHP is an independently-run, self-funded organization governed by a national Leadership Team of experts from across disciplines and sectors.



Healthy minds from the beginning.



# MISSION

To improve outcomes across the lifespan, we translate and promote the science of early mental health into practice with families during pregnancy, infancy and early childhood.



# VALUES

- **Sharing knowledge** to build capacity and promote scientific inquiry
- Leadership through advocacy, resource development, and informing promising practices
- **Understanding** guided by science and the experience and wisdom of others
- Equity, diversity and inclusivity as cornerstones for building upon community strengths
- **Relationships and collaboration** as the foundation for all that we do

IEMHP offers a relationship-based, evidence-informed approach to strengthening best practices in infant and early mental health (prenatal to 5), for practitioners and decision makers.





# **LEARNING CENTRE**

IEMHP is a leader in the development and delivery of training on infant and early mental health across Canada. Known for its capacity to create customized training for a wide range of practitioners, IEMHP offers trainings attended by thousands of professionals each year. We have been meeting the needs of a wide range of parties, such as provinces requiring training for a sector, agencies requiring training for a particular department, and individuals looking for education to strengthen their capacity specific to infant and early mental health. In 2020, IEMHP launched the <u>Competency Framework</u> (see Resources section below) to guide the building of knowledge and skills among those working with young children and their families.

# **OUR WORK**



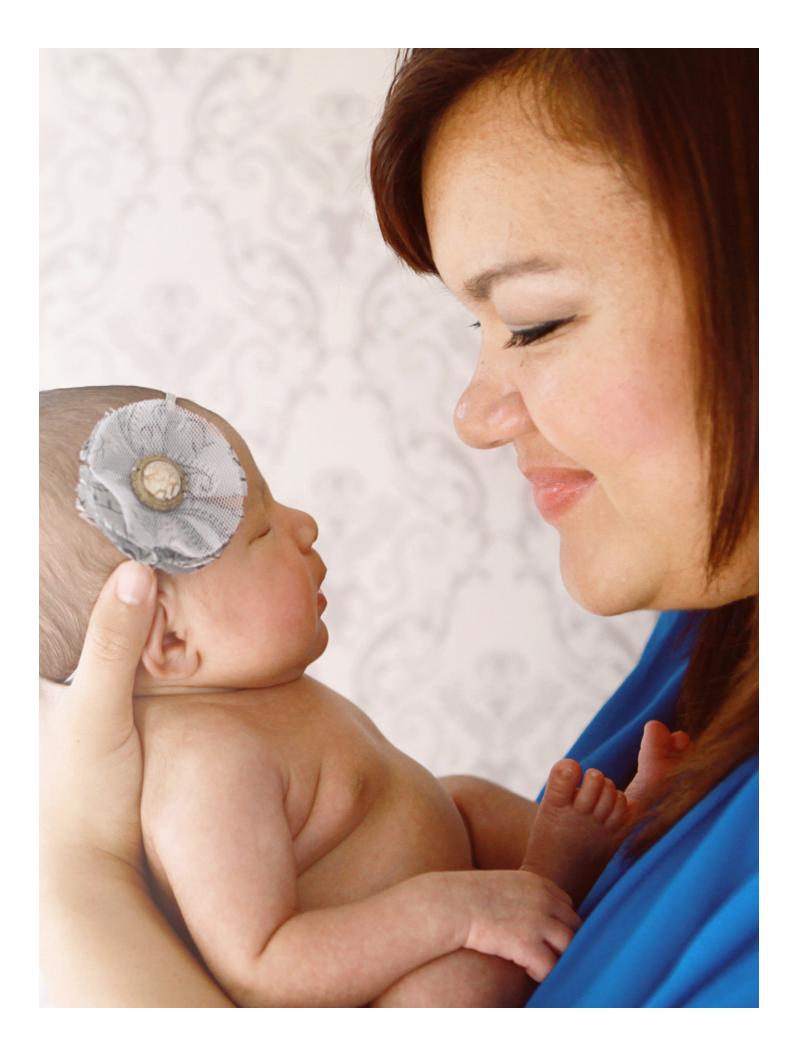
## **RESEARCH & INNOVATION**

The science of infant and early mental health is expanding at a rapid rate, and IEMHP is adding to that collection. We are actively engaged with communities across Canada to evaluate and inform how practitioners can best support the mental health of very young children, and to collect Canadian data to guide future policies and programming.



### **RESOURCES & TOOLS**

IEMHP is known for the creation of resources for both practitioners and parents/caregivers. Developed to reflect the most current science, best practices, and a Canadian context, IEMHP's range of resources include discussion guides, topic briefs, advocacy tools, and developmental milestones guidelines and activities.



# WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED IN 2020-21

### **COVID-19: Pivot**

For years, IEMHP has worked on building relationships with practitioners across the country. This was done largely through training events and speaking engagements – face to face. The pandemic meant that we had to rethink how to maintain and nurture existing relationships, and also, how to create new ones. The team moved quickly to adapt all training to an online model and to create a brand new coaching model. IEMHP also invested in a learning management system – to have its soft launch in September 2021 and its official launch in January 2022 – ensuring a smooth user experience and a stronger approach to data tracking to better understand our impact on practitioners' knowledge, attitudes and practice. Overall, IEMHP has experienced growth in terms of reach, accessibility and partnerships.

### **Forging a New Path**

In 2020-21, we had the opportunity to restructure IEMHP and how it fits within SickKids, how it engages policy makers, researchers and practitioners in Canada, and how it can best support those working most closely with young children and their families. We aim to change the conversation about mental health in Canada to include our youngest – babies, toddlers and preschoolers - and to ensure their cause has a stronger presence in policy, research and practice efforts. To that effect, IEMHP is responding to the need for a 'go-to hub' to provide accessible and evidence-based Canadian infant and early mental health training and information. With funding from Kids Brain Health Network, our goal is to improve the outcomes of young children, prenatal to age 5, by enhancing the knowledge and skill of practitioners whose roles include any of the following aspects of infant and early mental health: promotion, prevention and/or reduction of vulnerability, early intervention, and treatment.

In this endeavour, IEMHP is guided by a multi-disciplinary Leadership Team of experts from multiple sectors across the country. To further enhance this work, IEMHP has recruited four working groups which focus on the following: creating a Certificate program and a Fellowship program, learning more about the needs of Indigenous families and practitioners (and providing appropriate supports), engaging and educating primary care practitioners, and ensuring IEMHP's long-term sustainability.

"The Kids Brain Health Network has worked with IEMHP since 2015. KBHN is currently a funding partner in the national expansion of IEMHP's training and coaching model to increase capacity and accessibility of supports for infants and toddlers at-risk for developmental delay. Building on the foundation created by the Nurturing the Seed program, the IEMH Hub is improving the developmental outcomes of young children by enhancing the knowledge and skill of practitioners by providing training, coaching, access to tools and resources and regular access to new and cutting-edge practices specific to infant and early mental health."

#### **James Reynolds**

Chief Scientific Officer, Kids Brain Health Network Professor, Department of Biomedical and Molecular Sciences, Queen's University Adjunct Professor, Department of Biomedical Physiology & Kinesiology, Simon Fraser University

### **Nurturing the Seed**

Nurturing the Seed (NtS) is a resource any practitioner can use to create a developmental support plan (DSP) for an Indigenous child who is waiting for more intensive services. An intervention involving the use of the NtS resource is being studied and evaluated in several indigenous communities across Canada. Initially, the project was funded by Kids Brain Health Network and, since 2019, it has been funded by Public Health Agency of Canada.





In many ways, Indigenous communities are leading Canadian research on infant and early mental health, and NtS is one of the pioneering projects. With community partners, IEMHP has gathered new data on training – are practitioners increasing knowledge; what mode best supports their learning (online or face-to-face); which children benefit the most from NtS – these are just some of the examples of what is being learned. In 2020, the research program was being offered in 7 Indigenous communities: Bent Arrow Healing Society, Edmonton (AB), La Ronge (SK), Timiskaming First Nation (QC), Aamjiwnaang First Nation (ON), Timiskaming District (ON), Simcoe Region (ON), and Pikangikum (ON). At least 3 more sites are coming on board in the 2021-22 fiscal year.

Since the inception of the NtS model, IEMHP has trained 264 practitioners working with Indigenous children (45 of them this year). The training usually consists of three components – IEMH Basics, Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ), and developmental support planning using the NtS toolkit. In 2020, IEMHP created a coaching model that was integrated into an online training model to better support professionals in the application of knowledge to their practice. Throughout the project, IEMHP has worked with communities to develop additional resources to support their work. Familyfriendly brochures, information packages, and discussion guides are just some examples of tools we have created in response to needs that project sites have identified. "This project has allowed me to support families in connecting, bonding and growing together. By providing each participant a culturally safe space for their family and children to feel heard, I have witnessed firsthand the benefits of supporting the family unit with regards to early mental health. Each of the families I have worked with seems eager to participate in the project and to celebrate the milestones and overall wellbeing of their child. As an Indigenous Anishinaabe Kwe who has grown up in an urban setting, I know how important it is for Indigenous people to have an opportunity to access programs that are culturally sensitive and attainable without barriers."

#### **Amber King-Robitaille**

Shki Biinoojii Wellbeing Worker, Georgian Bay Native Women's Association

"Receiving training from IEMHP gave our community the tools and confidence to ensure our children receive early and timely intervention. The IEMHP team has been so accommodating and willing to work with our individual community needs."

# Rachael Simon

Children/Youth Services Supervisor, E'Mino Bmaad-Zijig Gamig – Health Centre

"I can't wait to start using this new knowledge for my work. Thank you for this opportunity to further help the children and families I interact with on a daily basis." – Training participant "The Hand in Hand and Nurturing the Seed Support Planning Resource Kits are very user-friendly and such wonderful resources to use with families. Thank you for this well-presented and supportive learning opportunity." – Training participant

"I really enjoyed all of the information and the learning level it was facilitated at! My favourite part was relationship building and having tough conservations with families! So great!" – Training participant

"What I will use and share with my coworkers are the great strategy ideas in the manuals! WOW a game changer. While we make suggestions to families all the time, this is a great way to create more options and individualize activities for so many more! Keep up the great work you are all doing!"

- Training participant



### Nurturing the Seed Web-Based Application

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is funding the conversion of NtS into a web-based application for ease of use, efficiency and sustainability (paperless). A collaborative, user-informed process went into designing this app whose soft launch is scheduled for early 2022.

### **IEMH Care Pathways: Pilot project**

IEMHP has partnered with The Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health to act on key recommendations out of the Beyond Building Blocks: Investing in the lifelong mental health of Ontario's three- to six-year-olds paper developed in 2019 – namely, creating accessible care pathways for infants, young children and their families seeking mental health support. The Care Pathways pilot project has been launched in 3 Ontario communities, across 7 sectors (e.g. early learning and care, education, health care, child welfare, etc.), and aims to guide children and families to, through and out of care ensuring that they are matched with the best service, at the right time, and in the most appropriate format for the family. This is done by strengthening partnerships across sectors to ensure effective communication, clear and efficient care pathways and accountability that will lead to timely and appropriate mental health services.

Staff from all 7 sectors in each community have been invited to participate in training offered by IEMHP. As of March 2021, **275 practitioners have been trained** in IEMH: The Basics, Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ), and Developmental Support Plans (DSP). Upon successful completion of the training, participants are supported in using the ASQs as well as the DSPs to assist infants, young children and families while they wait for more intensive services.

This is groundbreaking work that focuses on how families navigate the services within their community to support their child's optimal development and wellbeing. The pilot bridges communication and processes between sectors in an effort to break down silos. A current map and an ideal map of IEMHP pathways were created for each sector in each community, gaps and opportunities were identified, and each community agreed on shared values, goals, and objectives.



"Good mental health in the early years provides a solid foundation for positive growth and development throughout a person's life. All too often, however, families can't access timely, appropriate mental health care for their children in these early years. Together with the team at Infant and Early Mental Health Promotion, we are working with three communities to develop and implement pathways to care for children under age 6. The expertise and leadership provided by Chaya and Nicole have been a critical element in the success of this work, and will help us to scale these processes up in other communities across the province."

#### **Purnima Sundar**

Executive Director, Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health

"Despite the challenges of COVID, our community has persevered, and 16 community partners have been trained in the ASQ. We are dedicated to improving outcomes for the children within Hastings and Prince Edward counties and, with the continued support of the IEMHP team, I am confident that we will make a significant difference within our community, for the future."

#### Susan Sweetman

CEO, Children's Mental Health Services HPE

"Working with Chaya and the IEMHP team to begin the development of our local pathway has been a positive and productive experience. We are encouraged by the significant progress we have made to date and are so grateful for the opportunity to work together throughout this process."

#### **Bonnie King**

Program Manager, Home Visiting Services, City of Hamilton

"The Pathways training for staff at SMFC has been an essential training opportunity; not only to assist with building capacity with respect to assessment in individual practice, but also to create an opportunity for staff to enhance partnerships with other organizations that provide services to young children and their care providers. It has been effective to the care plan for these families when agencies providing like-services can speak the same language and be equally attuned to the social, emotional and mental health needs of these children."

#### **Kristina Polson**

Service Manager, Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions



## Building Capacity in Communities: A Certificate Program in Infant and Early Mental Health

IEMHP has been contracted by Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) to develop a training program for natural helpers – those without formal training but wanting to support children and families in their community. The work is guided by a local advisory committee. This training will be available to all of NAN's 49 communities and will pilot in 2021 as a virtual program. It is our hope that it can then transition to an in-person format and be replicated in other Indigenous communities across the country.

"Over the past few years, NAN and IEMHP have worked collaboratively on developing a NAN-focused early mental health program to remote, Northern First Nations. Chaya and her team have provided their expertise and knowledge in a good, supportive way that has given communities the space to have their voices heard and to lead and develop their own vision of infant and early mental health promotion, integrating the traditional practices, values, language, and culture."

#### Wendy Arseneault

Manager, Childhood Development and Planning, Nishnawbe Aski Nation

### **Other Training**

#### Infant Mental Health 101: The Basics Workshop

This 6-hour course has been made available for free online since April 2020. So far, there have been **3,685 participants** While **70% of participants had been working with young** children for over **5 years**, **95% of them found the training** thought-provoking, **91% found some of the information** presented to them was new, and **95% were planning to** use what they had learned in their practice. **86% felt more** information on this topic would be welcome.

"Watching the IMH Basics webcasts have changed my life! Thank you so very much for the groundbreaking work that you are all doing." – Training participant

"I have enjoyed the webcasts immensely – infant mental health is fascinating and these will definitely help in my work." – Training participant

#### **Certificate Lecture Series**

This is IEMHP's signature online certificate training – the 2020-21 series, called *Foundations in Infant and Early Mental Health Practice,* is the 4th iteration and a new one comes out every two years. The series consists of an average of 14 two-hour expert lectures which can be watched live or archived. As of March 2021, **5,273 individuals from over 10 sectors had participated in** *Foundations.* **86% found the sessions relevant to their practice and 84% were intending to use what they had learned in their work with families. 84% felt the sessions met or exceeded their expectations.** 

"Thanks again for such an amazing training! It has benefited my personal and professional development as well as the children and families I work and will work with. This series has definitely created ripples towards positive outcomes for our society, and I look forward to future training opportunities!"

- Training participant

"These webinars are amazing and life-altering in terms of my work in schools – such incredible in-depth learning around attachment and thinking about impact on school environment, social-emotional learning, and academics, in particular."

- Training participant

"I promise to advocate for early mental health wherever I need to, and to use it in my classroom. I appreciate what you and your team are doing for educators and caregivers. All teachers should have this under their belt." – Training participant

"I believe all RECEs and anyone working with babies and young children should participate in this program. In fact, it's information that everyone should know about, period." – Training participant

"Thanks so much for providing such a relevant series! It has given me so much to be mindful of when working with families and children!" – Training participant

"The series was very well done – fascinating, in fact – and very useful to my work. Thank you for helping me help the babies I work with." – Training participant

"This was a fantastic opportunity and I enjoyed every second of learning. Always learn lots jumping on to IEMHP webinars. Keep teaching!" – Training participant

#### Resources

### Supporting Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers through COVID-19-Induced Stress

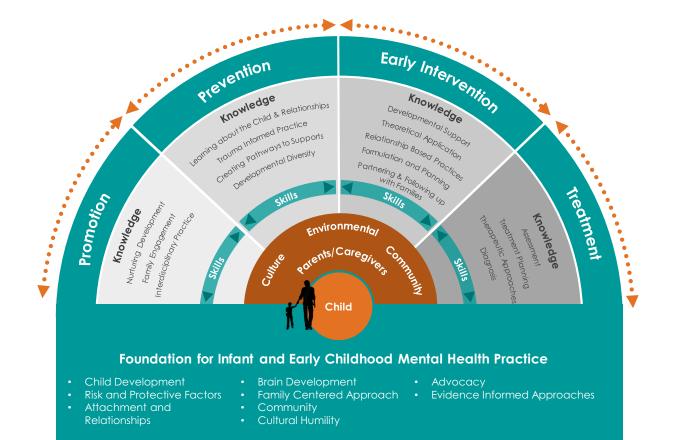
The COVID-19 pandemic has been stressful for everyone and has impacted families in a variety of ways. Since infants, toddlers and preschoolers can be quite aware of the feelings and emotions around them, the pandemic has created a new kind of stress and anxiety even for little ones, despite the best effort of caregivers. The way young children experience and express their stress can look quite different from older children and teens, and IEMHP has created a brief bilingual resource on supporting the littlest ones. The resource was developed as a result of a national survey of over 2,000 parents with children under the age of six, conducted by IEMHP to better understand how the pandemic was impacting families. The survey revealed that caregivers were finding it challenging to support their children's wellbeing as well as their own mental health, and that accessing information about their child's development had become very difficult.

### Understanding Infant Sleep in the First Year: A Guide to Inform Conversations with Expectant and New Parents

IEMHP created this resource to clarify what science tells us about sleep during the early years, and to provide consistent messaging for practitioners to use with the families they support when discussing the topic of sleep.

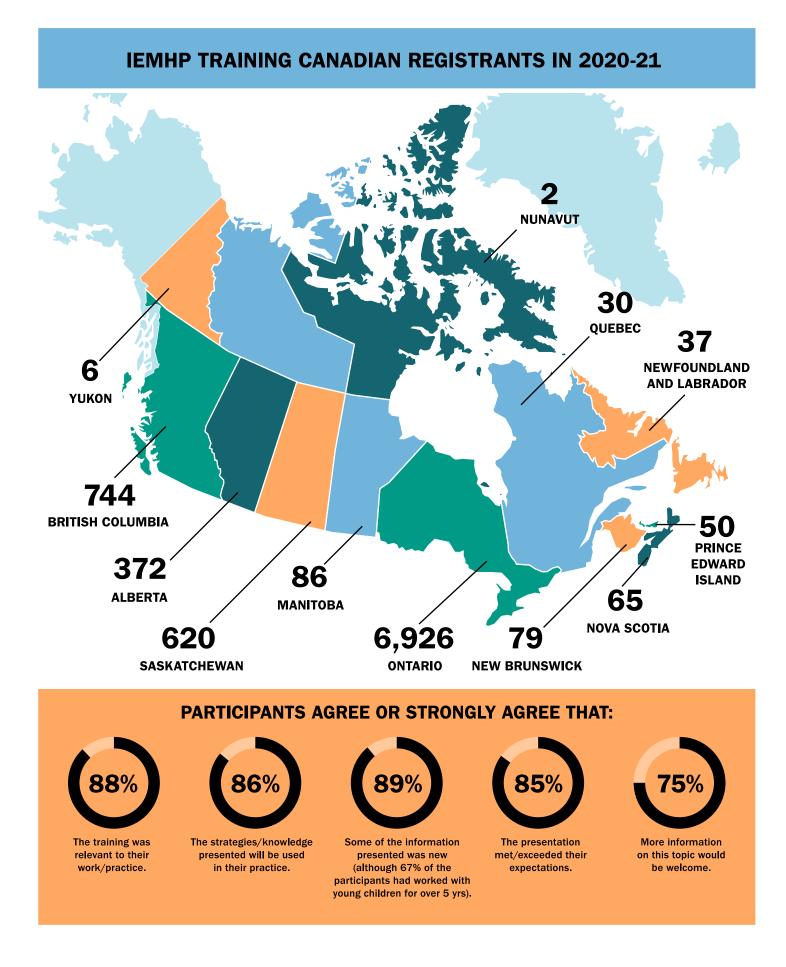
### Infant and Early Mental Health Competencies Checklist

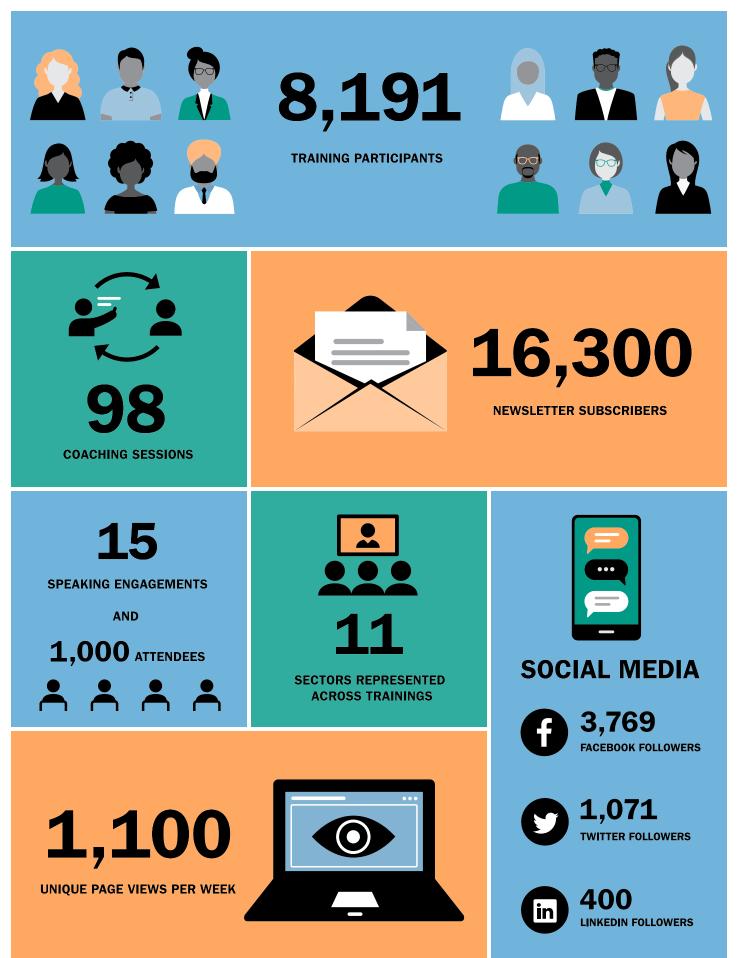
IEMHP has developed a series of documents and practice guidelines relevant for program managers, childcare and frontline service providers, and organizational staff **to support high-quality services in the field of infant and early mental health.** These guidelines are applicable to a wide range of services and disciplines where young children and families are concerned, and are meant to be incorporated into staff training and policy. See below.





# **IEMHP IN NUMBERS**



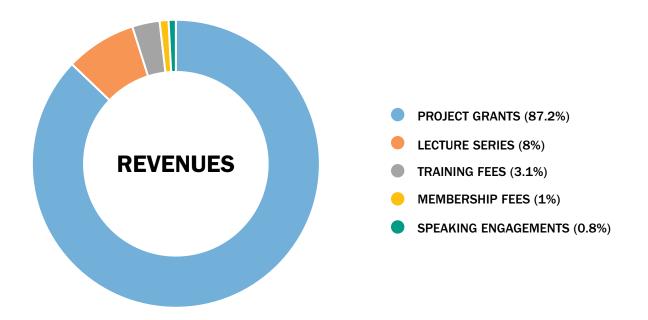


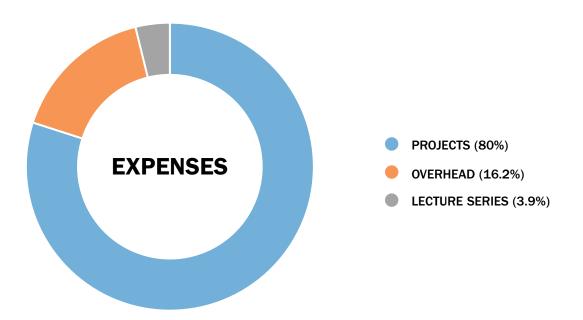


# THE YEAR AHEAD

As you read this, IEMHP persists with our focus on building capacity among practitioners and within organizations, and expand the scope of our work both horizontally and vertically. We look forward to working on our latest projects with partners such as the Alberta Government and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. IEMHP will continue to create training for learners at various levels of need and has invested in a learning management system which will allow for a seamless and user-friendly experience. The 2022-23 iteration of our signature lecture series will be hosted on this new platform. In addition, **IEMHP will launch a tool for individuals, agencies and communities to use to measure their own strength in infant and early mental health.** Through these efforts and more, we trust that infant and early mental health will increasingly become part of the mental health dialogue in Canada, and we invite the readers of this report to join us and our partners on the journey.

# **IEMHP FINANCIALS (2020-21)**





# **STAFF & LEADERSHIP**

### **STAFF**

Chaya Kulkarni, Director Donna Hill, Communications Coordinator Annie Gelibolyan, Business Administrator Nicole Tuzi, Training and Education Manager Rup Patel, Administrative Coordinator Magali Bouhours, Bilingual Project Coordinator Lesley Watts, Project Manager Corey Dong, Technical Project Coordinator Yvonne Zhang, Technical Project Coordinator (maternity leave) John Zheng, Technical Project Support Henry Hu, Technical Project Support Lexi Ewing, Student Emma Petrelli, Student

### **LEADERSHIP**

**Kelly McMillen**, Director, SickKids Learning Institute, The Hospital for Sick Children (ON)

Angelique Jenney, Wood's Homes Research Chair in Children's Mental Health, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary (AB)

Arlene Hache, Elder, Community Advocate (NT/ON)

**Beedahbin Desmoulin**, Special Needs Coordinator, Childhood Development and Planning, Nishnawbe Aski Nation (ON)

**Deborah Pawar**, Provincial Director, Child & Youth Mental Health Policy Branch, BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (BC)

**Diane Philipp**, Acting Medical Director, SickKids Centre for Community Mental Health (ON)

**Dione Kennedy**, Executive Director, Children's Services, Prevention, Early Intervention and Youth Branch, Government of Alberta (AB)

**Gillian Thompson**, Nurse Practitioner, Pediatrics; The Young Families Program, Adolescent Medicine, The Hospital for Sick Children (ON)

Heather Bartlett, Executive Director, Daybreak Parent Child Centre (NL)

**Hollie Hix-Small**, Associate Professor, Portland State University; Senior Fellow, Institute for Reconstruction and International Security; Core Member, Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities Task Force (OR, The US) James Reynolds, Chief Scientific Officer, Kids Brain Health Network; Associate Dean, School of Graduate Studies, Queen's University; Professor, Department of Biomedical and Molecular Sciences, Queen's University (ON)

Jean Clinton, Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences, McMaster University (ON)

**Kory Kroft**, Associate Professor of Economics and Public Policy, University of Toronto (ON)

Lara Peters, Manager, Mental Health Promotion Unit, Centre for Health Promotion, Public Health Agency of Canada (Canada/ON)

**Lee Hinton**, Program Manager and Development Lead, Saskatchewan Prevention Institute (SK)

Margaret Leslie, Director, Child and Family Services, Mothercraft (ON)

Melissa Nollski, Director, Aboriginal Head Start (AB)

Michele Moser, Director, Centre of Excellence for Children in State Custody; Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Sciences, Quillen College of Medicine, East Tennessee State University (TN, The US)

Nora Spinks, CEO, The Vanier Institute of the Family (ON)

**Normand Carrey**, Infant, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, IWK Health Centre (NS)

**Purnima Sundar**, Executive Director, Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health (ON)

**Rebecca Pillai Riddell**, Associate Vice-President Research, York University (ON)

**Rob Santos**, Retired Assistant Deputy Minister, Healthy Child Manitoba Office and K-12 Education, Government of Manitoba; Assistant Professor, Department of Community Health Sciences, University of Manitoba; Research Scientist, Manitoba Centre for Health Policy (MB)

**Sheri Madigan**, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Owerko Centre at the Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute, University of Calgary (AB)

**Stephanie Priest**, Executive Director, Division of Mental Health and Wellbeing, Centre for Health Promotion, Public Health Agency of Canada (Canada/ON)

Wendy Trylinski, Manager, Childhood Development and Planning, Nishnawbe Aski Nation (ON)

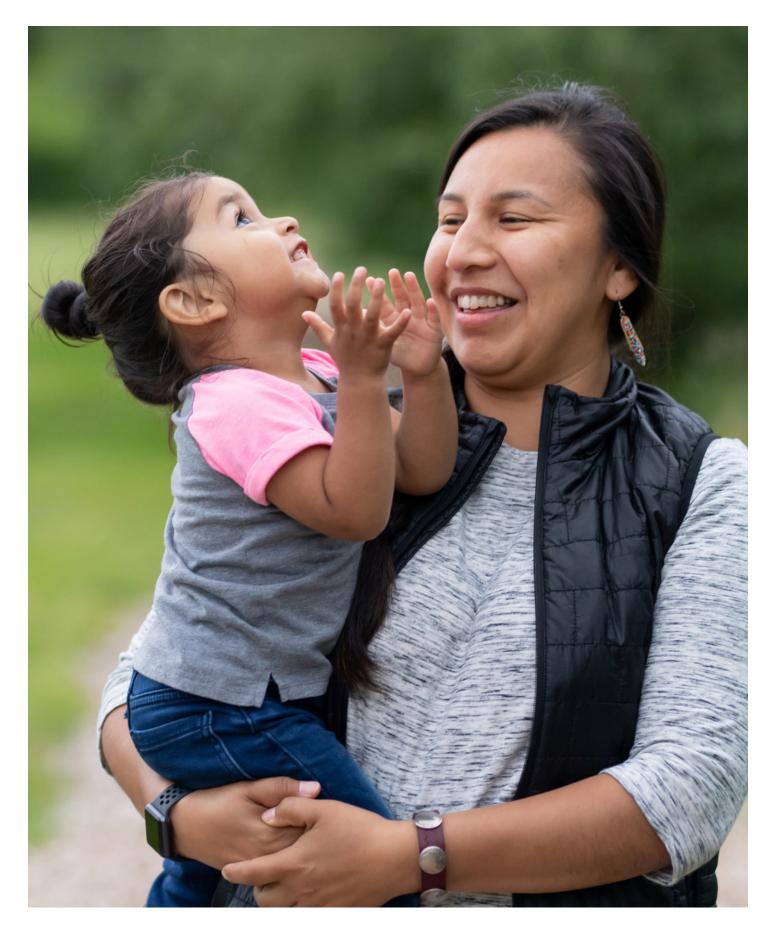
# THANK YOU TO OUR COLLABORATORS

**CITY OF HAMILTON** 

# HASTING AND PRINCE EDWARD COUNTIES

**SIMCOE COUNTY** 







Infant and Early Mental Health Promotion

A program of **SickKid**s