Infant and Early Mental Health Promotion | SickKids

KFL&A Infant and Early Mental Health Care Pathway (0 – 6 Years of Age)

This equitable Pathway provides guidance for practitioners and professionals on how to support families with children from birth to age six who have mental health and/or developmental health concerns. By following this Pathway, practitioners can help ensure that every child receives appropriate developmental and social-emotional screenings and is referred promptly to the right community supports and services leading to better health outcomes.

Did you know?

- There is no other period of brain development that is as critical to setting the stage for human growth, development and positive or negative mental health as the first 6 years of a child's life.
- When infants and young children do not meet typical developmental milestones as expected, this could indicate potential mental health concerns.
- When early mental health difficulties are not identified and treated, they can become more serious and complex, impacting childhood and lifelong physical and mental health.
- Screening and early identification of infant mental health concerns is necessary in reducing family distress and impairment.

*Source: Clinton, J., 2014. *Supporting Ontario's youngest minds: Investing in the mental health of children and youth under 6*, Canadian Electronic Library. Ottawa, Ontario. Retrieved from https://coilink.org/20.500.12592/44xtzb on 10 Feb 2025. COI: 20.500.12592/44xtzb.

What can I, as a practitioner or professional supporting children from birth to six years of age, do if I have concerns about a child's development or social emotional health?

- Use the KFL&A Infant and Early Mental Health Care Pathway to guide families in the region to access developmental screenings, services, and supports as needed.
- If your agency operates in KFL&A, or the family resides in the area, please refer to one of the screening agencies listed on the map.
- For more information regarding the Pathway or contact details for any agencies or organizations listed on the Pathway, refer to the Supplementary Document.

Terminology

- **Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQs):** A set of reliable and valid developmental (ASQ-3) and social-emotional (ASQ:SE-2) screening tools developed by Brookes Publishing for children between birth to 6 years of age. These tools are used to track children's development, identify risk for developmental delays, and help identify next steps for support and/or follow-up actions. Caregivers respond to the questions, and trained practitioners score the responses to identify areas of developmental and/or social-emotional need. ASQs are not diagnostic tools.
- **Developmental Support Plans (DSPs):** A strength-based resource developed by Infant and Early Mental Health Promotion, a program of The Hospital for Sick Children that identifies a developmental goal for the child according to the five developmental domains identified in the ASQ-3, provides multiple tailored strategies caregivers can implement in their day-to-day life with their child, and an explanation as to the significance of achieving the developmental goal. DSPs can only be created by individuals who are trained in DSP development and administration; it is not a treatment plan or a replacement for intensive services or supports.

To access the Infant and Early Mental Health Care Pathway for KFL&A, please visit:
https://maltbycentre.ca/iemh-care-pathway/.