



# Supporting Early Childhood Mental Health

The first six years are critical for human growth, development, and mental health. Promoting healthy interactions, relationships, and mental health from the beginning can help to improve health and well-being later on.

Infant and early childhood mental health, sometimes referred to as social and emotional development, is the developing capacity of the child from birth to five years to form close and secure adult and peer relationships; experience, manage and express a full range of emotions; and explore the environment and learn – all in the context of family, community and culture. Intervention approaches for young children require sensitivity to their developmental needs within their families and communities.

The MHCC is supporting conversations to facilitate a more coordinated, supportive environment that fosters positive development, mental health, and resiliency across the lifespan.

## In our consultations with parents and persons working with young children and families, we have identified key areas of need and opportunity:

- ✓ Improved access to early childhood services, including childcare
- ✓ Increased awareness of early childhood mental health
- ✓ Training and education for all professionals working with young children, families, and caregivers in their communities
- ✓ Community-based prevention and promotion strategies

## Key Facts

- ✓ **70% of young adults** living with a mental health problem or illness report that their symptoms started in childhood.
- ✓ **Prevalence rates** of mental health problems in very young children are difficult to determine – but are estimated to range from **10-20%**.
- ✓ Studies show an **\$8 return on investment** for every dollar spent on early childhood mental health.

Visit Early Childhood Mental Health at [mentalhealthcommission.ca](https://mentalhealthcommission.ca) to learn more.



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