



National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day

Tuesday, May 3, 2011

Focus on building resilience in young children dealing with trauma

Sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day helps to raise awareness about the importance of children's mental health. This year's event specifically calls the nation to:

- Integrate mental health and model resilience skills in every environment that has an impact on child development from birth.
- Enhance resilience and nurture social and emotional skills in young children from birth.
- Provide information to the public and teach them to recognize the signs of traumatic stress.
- Raise awareness that treatment for trauma is critical to achieving the milestones of a child's social and emotional development from birth.
- Promote trauma-informed services and supports in all child-serving settings.

Why:

- Chronic high-level stress—such as abuse, neglect, extreme poverty, and lack of caring relationships—diminishes brain activity and affects brain development.
- Young children exposed to five or more significant adversities in the first three years of childhood face a 76 percent likelihood of having one or more delays in their cognitive, language, or emotional development.
- Early intervention can prevent or help to reverse the consequences of early traumatic and stressful experiences and thus reduce the need for more costly interventions and support later in life.

How:

- Letters to the editor, op-ed pieces, PSAs and interviews for newspapers and radio/TV stations
- City/county/township proclamations for “Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day”
- Community events; for example, resource table at a mall or library, or children’s art activity

Selected Resources:

- Official Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day website: www.samhsa.gov/children
- Information on the impact of trauma and the importance of early intervention:
 - “The Impact of Early Adversity on Children’s Development,” Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University, www.developingchild.net.
 - “Mental Health Problems in Early Childhood Can Impair Learning and Behavior for Life,” National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, Harvard University, www.developingchild.net.
 - “Strengthening Pennsylvania Businesses Through Investment in Early Care and Education,” America’s Edge, <http://cdn.americasedge.org/clips/PAearlyed-economic-analysis-report-2.pdf>.

More information about Early Childhood Mental Health in Pennsylvania:

- www.pakeys.org (Early Childhood Initiatives/EC Mental Health)
- www.parecovery.org (Statewide Initiatives/Early Childhood Mental Health)

Pennsylvania Early Childhood Mental Health Advisory Committee

Ensuring that coordinated and effective mental health services are available for all young children across the commonwealth
Pyramid Model graphic courtesy of the Center for the Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning

