



Mental health in infancy and early childhood affects every aspect of individuals' lives throughout their lifetime, including social functioning, psychological well-being, and physical health.

The Saskatchewan Early Childhood Mental Health Provincial Network provides an opportunity for professionals working or interested in the area of early childhood mental health to network, share information about services, collaborate, and keep up-to-date with current research. The network will provide opportunities for individuals to have input into the provision of professional development opportunities in the province.

The Saskatchewan Prevention Institute hosts this network. Opportunities for communication are provided through the Prevention Institute's website ([www.skprevention.ca](http://www.skprevention.ca)), professional development opportunities, and a quarterly newsletter.

#### Referral Information:

Regional referral information for clinical assessments and interventions for children between the ages of 0-4 and 5-6 has been gathered. This can be found on the Prevention Institute's website.

#### Information about Programming in Saskatchewan:

With the help of members of the network, this section of the website will focus on prevention and intervention programming that is happening throughout the province.

**Conferences and Training Opportunities:** Events, conferences and training opportunities will be kept up-to-date on the website. Members are also encouraged to share local events with the Prevention Institute and they will be posted on-line.

#### Networking Opportunities:

Opportunities will be provided to network with others using a variety of mechanisms.

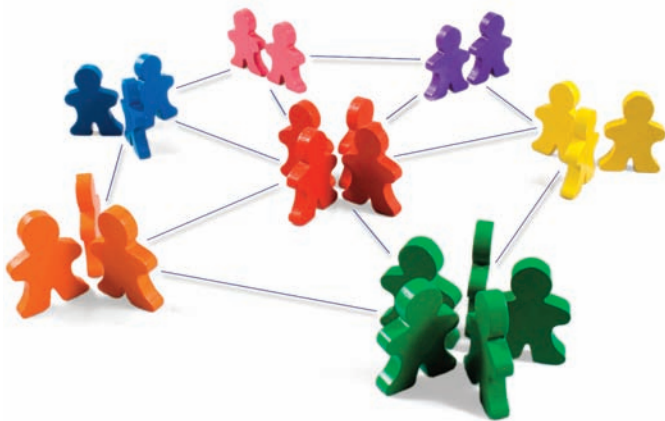
### How can you contribute?

Network members are invited to share information about programs, both clinical and prevention, that they are offering in the area of early childhood mental health.

The best way to increase awareness of the importance of early childhood mental health, develop more programming addressing this area, and advocate for clinical and preventative services is through communication with one another.

The Prevention Institute also invites members of the network to tell us about events, conferences and training opportunities that are happening throughout the province with a focus on the area of early childhood mental health. If appropriate, these will be posted on the Prevention Institute's website.

If you would like to share information, please complete the fillable form located on the Prevention Institute's website (<http://www.skprevention.ca>) or you can email information to: [lhinton@skprevention.ca](mailto:lhinton@skprevention.ca)



## What Can the Network Offer You?

### NETWORK BENEFITS

#### Research Updates:

Research updates will be provided monthly. These will include, but are not limited to, the topics of attachment, best practices in prevention and intervention, brain development, resiliency, impact of stress and trauma, parental mental health, and intimate partner violence.



## What's the big deal? Helping children now and in the future.

Parents and caregivers of infants and young children are generally attentive to the physical health of those in their care. Attention is given to runny noses, fevers and other ailments whether minor or very serious in nature. Many serious conversations are held about the contents of the baby's diaper. Another topic of great importance, but not one that is often talked about, is the mental health of the young person in our care. There has been a lot of discussion about the importance of early brain development but often the context is around academic achievement. The development of mental wellness is of considerable importance and has a lifelong impact on the child.

During fetal development, infancy and early childhood, the brain develops and organizes itself. In fact, by the time an individual is three years old, 85% of the core structures in the brain are organized.<sup>1</sup> We can see this development in action when we observe babies and small children. When children are first born, the more primary parts of their brain are developed. These are the parts that help the body to regulate itself; both

physiologically and emotionally. Newborns do not yet have the knowledge or skills to soothe themselves and need external help in order to do so. For example, babies may cry because they are hungry, but they may not know that is why they are crying and they have no means of satisfying that hunger by themselves.

As young children grow, higher functioning parts of their brain begin to organize and develop. These are the parts that help with thinking, rationalizing, making decisions, and regulating our emotions. Often toddlers will be able to express to their caregivers that they are hungry, happy or angry. They also have developed better skills to be able to think through some actions. For example, a toddler may make a choice between two toys offered for playtime. However, he often needs help to regulate his emotions and behaviours. Sometimes toddlers get overwhelmed by sensations that they are unable to process and a caregiver must help to process the experience, regulate emotions and meet the needs of their children in that moment. The more often children experience this assistance, the better they are able to

self-regulate as they develop.

Early organization and development of the brain is influenced by the external environment. Dr. Bruce Perry, a Senior Consultant for the Alberta Ministry of Children's Services, states, "*During the first three years of life, the brain organizes in a 'user-dependent' way, mirroring the pattern, quality and quantity of the experiences of the infant.*"<sup>2</sup> Experiences that are consistent, safe, predictable, and include enriching opportunities provide an external environment that will lead to optimal development. When early experiences are unsafe, unpredictable, chaotic and non-nurturing, neurobiological pathways are not organized or developed in healthy ways.

When we support early childhood mental health, we are helping children develop optimally. Prevention and intervention programming in early childhood mental health will help children (and their families) in all realms of their life...now and in the future.

<sup>1</sup> Perry, B. (2005). *The Power of Early Childhood*. Retrieved on August 1, 2009 from [www.ChildTraumaAcademy.org](http://www.ChildTraumaAcademy.org).

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

## Ongoing Training Opportunities from the Prevention Institute

**Reaching IN...Reaching OUT (RIRO)** is an evidence-based skills training program designed to help adults help young children develop a resilient view about life's inevitable bumps in the road.

This training uses a cognitive-behavioural and social problem-solving approach based on an adaptation of the world-renowned Penn Resilience Project (PRP) to prevent depression and promote resilience.

Research shows that children as young as two years begin to copy how adults in their lives think about and handle daily stress, frustrations, change, and challenges. Once adults begin to use the skills in their own lives, they become role models for children by demonstrating resilience in everyday situations.

### Part 1

Introduces adults to key resiliency research and skills that promote a resilient perspective and flexible approach to handling conflict, problems, and everyday challenges.

### Part 2

Helps adults apply the resiliency skills directly with children by:

- increasing their understanding of children's thinking and behaviour
- supporting children's development of seven critical abilities associated with resilience
- introducing child-friendly approaches using children's literature, puppets, and resilience-building activities



The Saskatchewan Prevention Institute is pleased to offer RIRO workshops for professionals throughout the province.

RIRO workshops are two days in length. The first day is required as a prerequisite for attending the second day.

Interested communities or organizations will be asked to cover trainer expenses (travel) as well as provide space and food (if applicable) for the workshop.

Who will benefit: teachers, early childhood educators, child protection workers, recreation leaders, child care providers, children's mental health workers, and others who work with children.

If interested, please contact Lee Hinton at (306) 651-4318.

## Nobody's Perfect Facilitator Training

Trainings are offered throughout the year in a variety of locations. For more information, please contact Connie Herman at: [cherman@skprevention.ca](mailto:cherman@skprevention.ca).

The Prevention Institute offers workshops in the following areas: **Young Children and Intimate Partner Violence, Early Childhood Mental Health, Attachment, and Trauma and Young Children.** For more information on these presentations, please contact Lee Hinton at [lhinton@skprevention.ca](mailto:lhinton@skprevention.ca) or (306) 651-4318.

## Early Childhood Mental Health Resources

To order or download resources, please visit our website at: [www.skprevention.ca](http://www.skprevention.ca)

*Please note: information cards are available in print, while supplies last.*

### 8-801 ATTACHMENT - INFORMATION CARD

*Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2011*

Written in plain language, this information card provides basic information about attachment ... the connection that a baby forms with his caregivers that helps him to feel loved, secure, and safe.

### 8-001 ECMH - INFORMATION CARD

*Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2010*

This information card explains the importance of good mental health in children and what role the parent or caregiver has in the development. It also talks about why early childhood mental health is important.

### 8-002 ECMH - FACT SHEET

*Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2010*

This fact sheet talks about nurturing early childhood mental health for children ages birth to six years. Not only does it explain what it is and why it is important, but the fact sheet also includes a detailed chart on the impact of good mental health biologically and in relationships and the environment.

### 8-101 POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION AND MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS: THE IMPACT ON YOUNG CHILDREN - FACT SHEET

*Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2011*

Approximately 10% of mothers experience postpartum depression. Postpartum depression and mental health concerns impact every aspect of a person's life, including the body, mind and spirit, the extended family, friends, partner, and the baby. This fact sheet not only discusses the impact that maternal mental health can have on young children, but also ways in which professionals can support families where this is a concern.

### 8-201 CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH AND YOUNG CHILDREN - FACT SHEET

*Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2010*

Just like everyone else, caregivers can experience mental health concerns. Caregivers' mental health concerns, whether in their past or present, can impact their young child(ren) in a number of ways. This fact sheet discusses general mental health concerns and does not deal with maternal mental health concerns, e.g., post partum depression. For more information about the impact of this on children, please refer to the fact sheet entitled Postpartum Depression and Mental Health Concerns.

### **8-301 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND YOUNG CHILDREN - INFO. CARD**

*Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2010*

Written in plain language, this information card provides basic information about the impact of witnessing domestic violence during early childhood. Caregivers are given practical tips for helping children who have had this experience.

### **8-302 INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE) AND YOUNG CHILDREN - FACT SHEET**

*Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2011*

Intimate partner violence (domestic violence, partner abuse) refers to abuse that occurs within an intimate relationship. Intimate partner violence can happen in any intimate relationship regardless of income, length, living arrangements, marital status, or social status. This fact sheet discusses the impact of witnessing intimate partner violence on young children.

### **8-501 TRAUMA, STRESS AND YOUNG CHILDREN - INFO. CARD**

*Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2010*

Written in plain language, this information card helps parents to understand that stress is not always negative and that children should not be sheltered from mild stressors. The information card also includes information about harmful stress and trauma and its impact on young children. Parents are given practical tips for helping their children who have experienced stress or trauma.

### **8-502 STRESS, TRAUMA AND YOUNG CHILDREN - FACT SHEET**

*Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2010*

Many people believe that young children are not affected by stress and trauma. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Brain development, attachment and emotional regulation can all be impacted by stress and trauma. This fact sheet outlines the differences between positive and negative stress as well as tolerable and toxic trauma. Professionals are given practical tips for working with children who have been traumatized.

### **8-601 HELPING YOUNG CHILDREN COPE WITH STRESS: DEVELOPING RESILIENCY - INFO. CARD**

*Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2010*

Stress is inevitable. Every child and adult will experience stress at some time in their lives. Written in plain language, this information card provides practical information for caregivers to help their young children develop resiliency; coping skills to handle stressful events.

### **8-602 HELPING YOUNG CHILDREN COPE WITH STRESS: DEVELOPING RESILIENCY - FACT SHEET**

*Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2010*

This fact sheet helps professionals and communities understand their role in helping young children to develop resiliency.

Resilience is the ability to cope with and recover from stressful situations, changes or problems.

### **8-701 YOUR YOUNG CHILD'S BRAIN: HOW DOES IT DEVELOP? - INFO. CARD**

*Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2010*

Written in plain language, this information card provides basic information about the importance of brain development during the early years. Caregivers are given practical tips to help them increase opportunities for their children's healthy development.

### **8-702 BRAIN DEVELOPMENT AND YOUNG CHILDREN - FACT SHEET**

*Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, 2010*

This fact sheet provides an overview of early childhood brain development and stresses the influences that experience and the environment have on optimal development. Early childhood is a time when there is rapid growth and development of the brain. At this time, parents and caregivers have an opportunity to impact brain development. This is also a time when the brain is the most vulnerable.

### **RESILIENCY AND YOUNG CHILDREN. PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD SKILLS - FACT SHEET SERIES**

There are three main abilities that people who are resilient have: relax, reflect, and respond. These can be further broken down into seven resiliency skills. Each skill forms the basis on which others can be built. These include emotional regulation, impulse control, causal analysis, empathy, realistic optimism, self-efficacy, and reaching out. This fact sheet series focuses on practical ways that caregivers and front line workers can help children build skills in each of these areas.

### **8-603 RESILIENCY AND YOUNG CHILDREN. PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD SKILLS: SELF EFFICACY**

### **8-604 RESILIENCY AND YOUNG CHILDREN. PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD SKILLS: IMPULSE CONTROL**

### **8-605 RESILIENCY AND YOUNG CHILDREN. PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD SKILLS: EMPATHY**

### **8-606 RESILIENCY AND YOUNG CHILDREN. PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD SKILLS: EMOTIONAL REGULATION**

### **8-607 RESILIENCY AND YOUNG CHILDREN. PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD SKILLS: REALISTIC OPTIMISM**

### **8-608 RESILIENCY AND YOUNG CHILDREN. PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD SKILLS: CAUSAL ANALYSIS**

### **8-609 RESILIENCY AND YOUNG CHILDREN. PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD SKILLS: REACHING OUT**

**Please feel free to distribute this information to others. If you or someone you know is interested in participating in the network, please contact Lee Hinton at [lhinton@skprevention.ca](mailto:lhinton@skprevention.ca)**

saskatchewan  
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our goal is **healthy** children

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