



Nurturing Early Childhood Mental Health

Birth to Age 6

What is early childhood mental health?

Young children's mental health includes the ability to:

- form close and secure relationships with others
- understand and manage their emotions
- feel safe to learn and explore their environment

Why is early childhood mental health important?

A child with good mental health develops skills that support overall well-being and help prepare them for school.

saskatchewan
preventioninstitute
our goal is **healthy** children

**1319 Colony Street,
Saskatoon, SK S7N 2Z1
Bus. 306-651-4300
Fax. 306-651-4301
www.skprevention.ca**

RESOURCE 8-001
Updated 05/2026

The Saskatchewan Prevention Institute provides services to all those living on Treaty Lands 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10, and the homeland of the Métis. The Saskatchewan Prevention Institute is dedicated to moving forward on a shared path of reconciliation and partnership. We are all Treaty people.

Early skills for mental health include:

- Making sense of and managing emotions
- Controlling impulses
- Understanding other people's emotions and expressions
- Forming secure attachments to caregivers
- Exploring the environment with curiosity
- Developing social and communication skills
- Coping with changes and new environments
- Understanding and accepting differences among people

As a parent or caregiver, what is your role?

Young children are dependent on their caregivers. Their mental health develops through experiences and relationships. Research shows that caregivers play a key role in shaping this development.

How can you help your young child develop good mental health?

- Be present, positive, and consistent
- Notice and respond appropriately to their cues (e.g., voice and body language)
- Comfort them when they are upset
- Play together and let them lead
- Connect through eye contact and curiosity about their thoughts and feelings
- Protect them and take charge when necessary
- Show affection through appropriate physical touch
- Encourage them to explore their environment
- Teach them about their emotions
- Help them build healthy relationships with other safe adults