

# Promoting Infant Mental Health through the Nurse-Family Partnership

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## Overview of Nurse-Family Partnership (see handouts for details):

An evidenced-based, voluntary, home visitation program for low-income, first-time mothers, providing home visitation by registered nurses from early pregnancy through the child's second birthday

## Impact of Poverty on Mental Health

- 1 Stress associated with poverty may severely tax and limit parents' emotional and coping resources when interacting with their infants
- 2 Poor parents are overburdened – they struggle with making ends meet, finding child care, transportation, and adequate housing, and they have higher rates of mental health problems and interpersonal conflicts
- 3 Maternal depression co-occurs with poverty at elevated rates and is a powerful predictor of a child's lower cognitive attainment and attachment security
- 4 In Colorado, 31% of children under age 6 live in low-income families, and services for these families have diminished over the past ten years

## Role of Nurse-Family Partnership:

- 1 Helps families access community resources to meet their needs
- 2 Helps parents understand child development and make accurate interpretations of their infant's/toddler's behavior
- 3 Helps parents learn how to enjoy parenting and to provide the emotional nurture children need for optimal development
- 4 Honors parent strengths and helps foster self-confidence in the parenting role

## Food for Thought:

The Carnegie report (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1994) charged that despite our extensive knowledge about the importance of the first 3 years of life and about the requirements for optimal development in this period, *the care and nurturance of young children are deteriorating in America.*

## What Else is Needed?

- 1 Wage supplements and/or guaranteed public service jobs for poor families
- 2 Paid parental leave for childbirth (we lag far behind other developed nations)
- 3 Child care benefits and more *quality* child care services
- 4 Better health care benefits and increased enrollment in existing programs
- 5 Increased funding for and availability of mental health services
- 6 Family support networks in every community
- 7 Your ideas?

## References/Resources on Infant Mental Health and Poverty

Jan Lewis, Invest in Kids (www.iik.org), 719-251-8243, [bjlewis@daeo.net](mailto:bjlewis@daeo.net)

## Books

*Handbook of Infant Mental Health*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed (2000)

Edited by Charles H. Zeanah, Jr.

[www.guilford.com](http://www.guilford.com)

*A scholarly and comprehensive reference*

*Infants, Toddlers, and Families: A Framework for Support and Intervention* (1999)

Martha Farrell Erikson and Karen Kurz-Riemer

[www.guilford.com](http://www.guilford.com)

*Has an excellent chapter on strengthening family support networks and a helpful resource bibliography*

*Enhancing Early Emotional Development: Guiding Parents of Young Children* (2002)

Jean Wixson Gowen and Judith Brennam Nebrig

[www.brookespublishing.com](http://www.brookespublishing.com)

*A practical and easy-to-read resource*

*American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids, and a Nation's Drive to End Welfare* (2004)

Jason DeParle

[www.penguin.com](http://www.penguin.com)

*A fascinating and moving look at how welfare reform has impacted the poor*

## **Organizations**

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (education: *Facts for Families*)

Washington, DC

800-333-7636

[www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

Colorado Association for Infant Mental Health (education, networking meetings)

c/o Lorraine Kubicek, PhD, at University of Colorado Health Sciences Center

303-315-8546

[lorraine.kubicek@uchsc.edu](mailto:lorraine.kubicek@uchsc.edu)

Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health (advocacy, education, support)

Colorado Chapter: Englewood, CO

303-572-0302 or Toll-Free 888-569-7500

[www.coloradofederation.org](http://www.coloradofederation.org)

Irving Harris Program in Child Development and Infant Mental Health (education, consultation)

University of Colorado Health Sciences Center

303-315-5505

[www.uchsc.edu/sm/psych/dept/training/description1.htm](http://www.uchsc.edu/sm/psych/dept/training/description1.htm)

National Center for Children in Poverty (research, policy)

Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health

646-284-9600

[www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org)

Nurse-Family Partnership National (education and consultation on NFP program replication)

Denver, CO

303-327-4240 or Toll-Free 866-864-5226

[www.nursefamilypartnership.org](http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org)