



North Carolina Institute of Medicine: Task Force on the Mental Health, Social, and Emotional Needs of Young Children and Their Families

Presented to the North Carolina General
Assembly, Health and Human Services Joint
Oversight Committee

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Overview

- Background on the North Carolina Institute of Medicine
- Charge to the Task Force
- Background on the Issue
- Vision
- Gaps in the Current System
- Preliminary Task Force Recommendations



North Carolina Institute of Medicine

- Quasi-state agency chartered in 1983 by the NC General Assembly to:
 - Be concerned with the health of the people of North Carolina
 - Monitor and study health matters
 - Respond authoritatively when found advisable
 - Respond to requests from outside sources for analysis and advice when this will aid in forming a basis for health policy decisions

NCGS 90-470



NCIOM Task Force on the Mental Health, Social, and Emotional Needs of Young Children and Their Families

- In 2010 the North Carolina General Assembly asked the NCIOM to convene a Task Force to study:
 - The needs of young children with mental health problems and their families.
 - Section 16.1 of Session Law 2010-152.
- The Task Force has met twelve times since March 2011
- Task Force funded through the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant



Task Force Membership

- **Co-Chairs**

- **Marian F. Earls, MD, FAAP**

- Medical Director, Guilford Child Health, Inc.

- **Beth Melcher, PhD**

- Assistant Secretary for Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services Development, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

- **John Thorp, MD**

- Division Director and Distinguished Professor
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, UNC Health Care

- There were 35 additional Task Force Members



● ● ● | **Background on the Issue**

- Experiences in the earliest years literally shape the brain's architecture.
- The social-emotional well-being of a child is what enables him or her to function and provides the foundation for all future development
- If a child's social-emotional development is impaired, all other domains—cognitive, language, motor skills—are impacted.



Background on the Issue

- Social-emotional milestones in the first five years include developing:
 - Trusting relationships
 - Ability to signal needs
 - The full range of feelings and emotions and the ability to express and control these emotions
 - Strategies for dealing with separation
 - Self-regulation of biological needs
 - Capacity for social interaction with peers
 - Ability to explore their environment independently

● ● ● | **Background on the Issue**

- We know what children need to develop the foundation needed to support healthy development
 - Strong, supportive relationships with caregivers
 - Stimulating, safe environments
 - Adequate nutrition
- This is true for mental health, physical health, cognitive development—these are the building blocks that children need to thrive

● ● ● | **Background on the Issue**

- There is extensive evidence that effective investments during the early years can change the trajectory of children's lives and can generate savings and benefits to society
 - Programs, policies, and services to strengthen the relationships young children have with their caregivers
 - Improve the environments of young children
 - Teach young children social and emotional skills
 - Provide treatment for young children and their families



Task Force Vision

- North Carolina will promote young children's mental health by positively shaping and strengthening children's environments and will provide a full continuum of services and supports to address the mental health needs of young children and their families



Gaps in the Current System

- Patchwork of systems so that no one system has leadership responsibility for children's mental health
- Treatment system is fragmented
- Payment structure does not support evidence-based treatments
- Lack of funding for prevention
- Need for broad-based understanding of young children's mental health by parents, caregivers, health professionals and others who interact with young children

Preliminary

Recommendation Topics: Leadership

- The North Carolina Child Advocacy Advisory Council should
 - Lead the way to a more coordinated family-friendly system to meet the needs of North Carolina's young children
 - Raise awareness of the importance of young children's mental, social, and emotional health
 - Provide support for evidence-based strategies

Preliminary

Recommendation Topics: Treatment System

- Expand the treatment array for pregnant women and mothers with substance use problems and depression
 - Substance use during pregnancy impairs fetal development; depression during pregnancy associated with adverse fetal outcomes
 - Substance use and postpartum depression both have a negative impact on parenting skills and the mother-infant relationship

Preliminary

Recommendation Topics: Treatment System

- LME-MCO's should provide mental health promotion and prevention services for children ages 0-5
 - Children 0-2 with documented social-emotional delay are served by CDSAs
 - Children 3-5 with social-emotional delay that affects learning served by school system
 - Children 3-5 with social-emotional problems that do not affect learning served by LME-MCO

Preliminary

Recommendation Topics: Evidence-Based Treatments

- DMA, DMHDDSAS, and DPH should develop protocols for and incentivize the use of evidence-based or evidence-informed screening, triage, assessment, referral to treatment, and clinical treatments
 - Current system and recommendations are confusing to providers and families
 - Evidence-based tools are used by some providers, but not all

Preliminary

Recommendation Topics: Prevention, Caregivers, and Workforce

- Continue pilots of Triple P and, if successful, explore expansion across the state.
 - Triple P is an evidence-based system of services including promoting positive parenting practices community-wide, parenting seminars, parent skills-training sessions, and individual consultations
 - Includes training service providers who interact with children and a families

Preliminary

Recommendation Topics: Workforce

- As part of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, North Carolina will be engaged in workforce development efforts
 - Build on this by embedding the new Early Learning Development Standards into childhood education programs
 - Increase trainings around young children's social-emotional development



Highlights

- Young children's social-emotional development is critical for healthy development and learning
- We know what works, but current systems and programs are not aligned to support what works
- With the current infrastructure and resources, could go a long way toward meeting the needs



For More Information

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