

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health & Support Systems

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Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

“an infant’s capacity to experience, manage, and express a full range of positive and negative emotions; develop close, satisfying relationships with others; and actively explore environments and learn. All this takes place in the context of family, community, and culture”

- ZERO TO THREE, 2009

Key Concepts
for
understanding
mental health
needs in very
young
children

Social Development

Emotional Development

Family Relationships

Attachment

Trauma and Resilience

Promotion of Social Emotional Development

- Family ↔ Child
- Listen to parents and other caregivers
- Observe child interactions in multiple settings
- Regularly discuss developmental milestones
- Consider multiple interacting factors
(*biology, temperament, developmental stage, environment, family culture, expectations & interaction style, and relationships*)
- Identify and share observations of strengths in the child's relationships





Six Capacities for Social and Emotional Functioning

- Attention and Regulation (birth – 3 months)
- Forming relationships or mutual engagement (3-6 months)
- Intentional 2-way communication (4-10 months)
- Complex gestures and problem-solving (10-18 months)
- Use of symbols to express thoughts, ideas, and feelings (18 – 30 months)
- Connecting symbols logically and abstract thinking (30-48 months)

[Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood (DC: 0-5)]





Questions to consider to aid one's understanding of behaviors

01

Is this a developmental stage?

02

Is this an individual or temperamental difference

03

Is the environment causing the behavior?

04

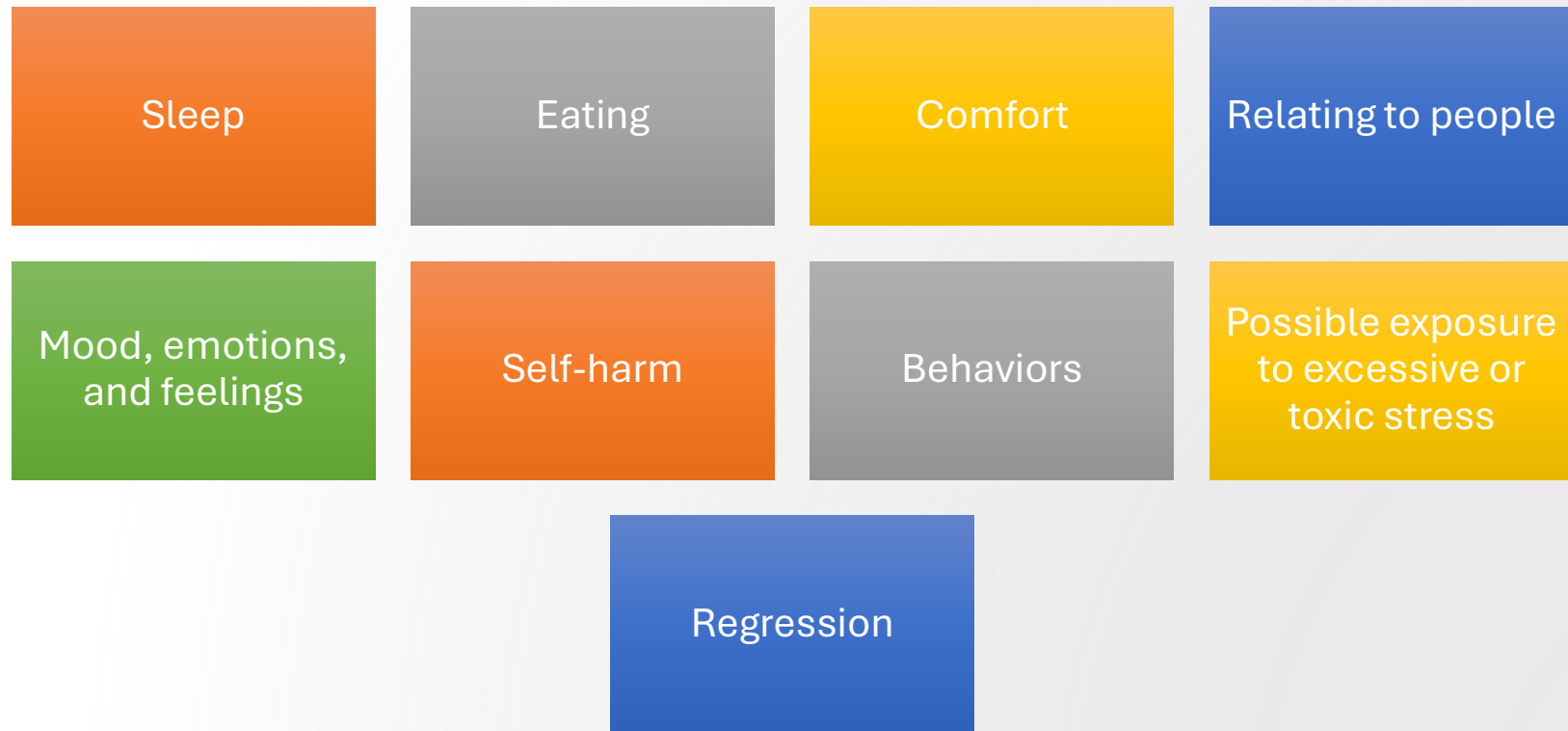
Is the young child facing a new problem or in a new/unfamiliar situation?

05

Are there unmet relational and emotional needs?



Clinical Cues for Delays and SE concerns



Early Childhood Intervention Services

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- Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
 - *Foundational to special education*
 - *Protects rights of children from birth through age 21*
 - Part C services is one of the four sections under IDEA
 - Provides free or low-cost support for infants and toddlers (birth to age 3) with developmental delays or disabilities
 - Utilizes a Family-Centered Model
 - Goal: Maximize early development, teach parents strategies to support their children, and prepare children for school

Texas ECI



Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/providers/assistive-services-providers/early-childhood-intervention-programs>



Children are eligible for services if they are under 36 months, reside in Texas & meet one of criteria:

A medically diagnosed condition likely to cause a developmental delay and demonstrate a need for services

Delay of 25% in one or more areas of development OR a 33% delay only in communication

Vision or Hearing Impairment as defined by the Texas Education Agency

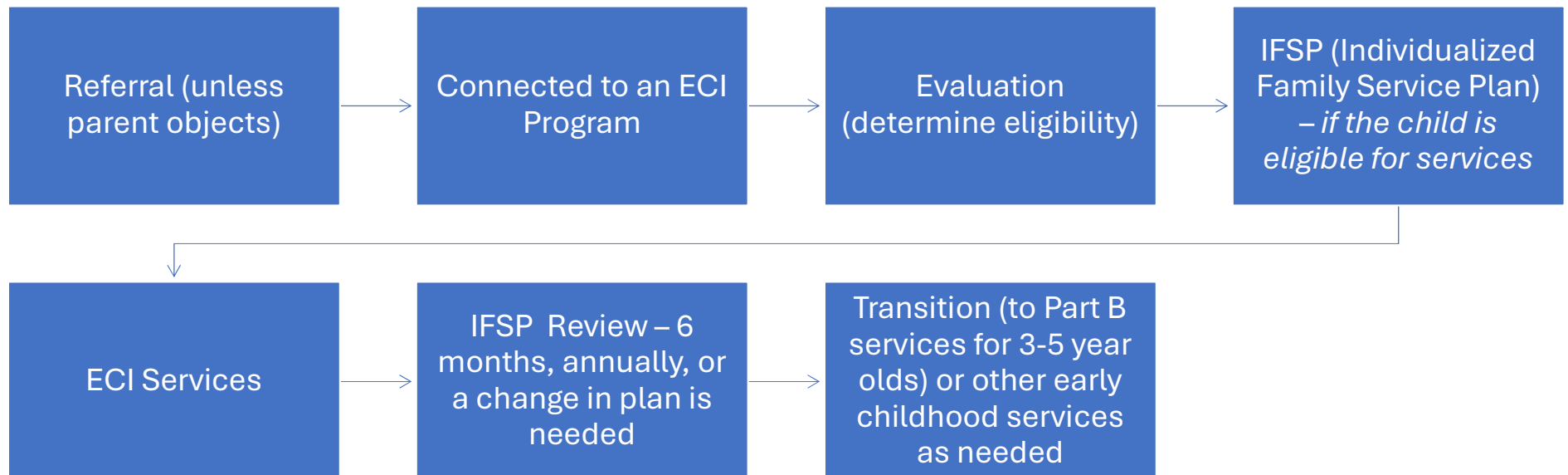


Who and How - referral?

Parent, Doctor, Daycare provider

Visit hhs.texas.gov/eci to find an ECI program in your area.

ECI Steps



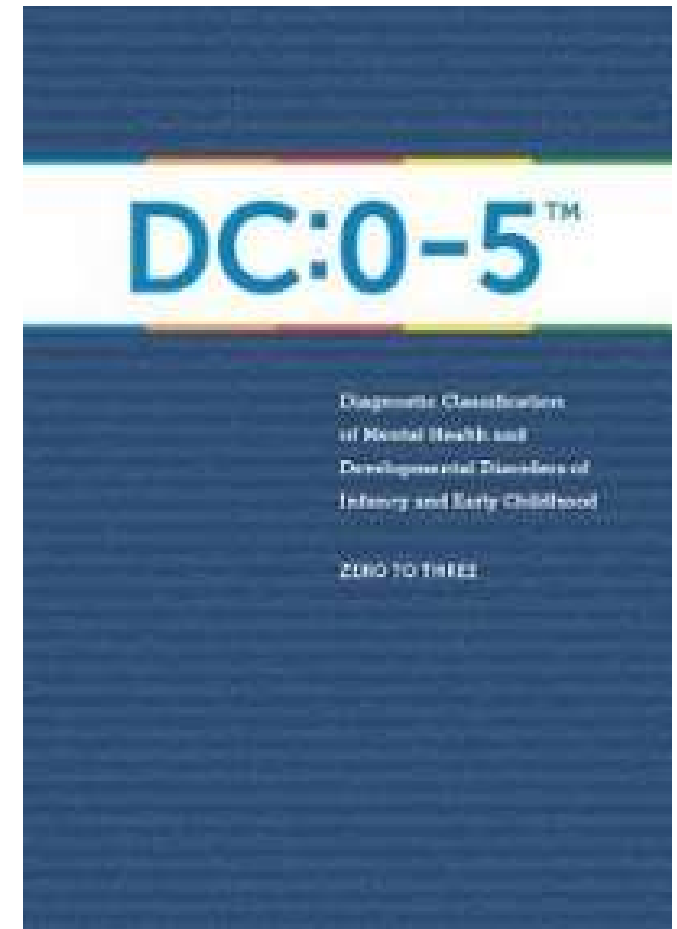


Other Collaborations and Supports

- [Home Visiting Programs](#)
- [Family Resource Centers](#)
- Parent Education Programs
- Libraries
- Clinical Services
- Adult Mental Health System
- PCP Consults

What can you do to evaluate

- Early Identification and Screening
 - Supporting and monitoring healthy development
 - Screen and Assess for relational health
- Informed Clinical Opinions
 - Biopsychosocial Hx
 - Observation of child
 - Observation of relational sample
 - Data from screening and assessment tools



Strategies & Principles when working with families of young children

- Involve parents/ caregivers from the start
 - Shared Understanding and Decision Making
 - Cultural –Familial Consideration
 - Supporting Families: Psychoeducation, Skills building, connecting to resources, care coordination, and relational work
 - Developmentally Informed
 - All Families have strengths
 - Parenting is a process built on trial and error
 - Parents are experts on their children
 - Parents have ambivalent feelings
 - Parents want you to like and appreciate their children
 - Parents want to be heard
 - Parents want respect
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Ethical Considerations

- “Patient”
- Diagnostic Classification
- Medication vs relational treatment
- Confidentiality
- Rights of the Infant



Case Discussion
