

2015 Jane C Bourns Award
CT-Association for Infant Mental Health
Annual Meeting 2015



Charlie Slaughter, MHP, RD

Early childhood prevention coordinator for the Connecticut Department of Children and Families

Charlie Slaughter is a man on a mission. Charlie has been on a mission for the past several years to spread the news about the importance of attachment for young children in Connecticut and for his passion and dedication to this mission we recognize him today. Charlie is an MPH, RD and a public health expert with over 35 years of experience in working with families in the areas of nutrition education and prevention. He has brilliantly woven his background and experience in nutrition and health education with attachment theory framework to support families in creating relationship-focused mealtimes that promote nurturing and secure attachments for infants and toddlers. Charlie has a profound knowledge and passion for promoting healthy palates and healthy attachments for young children. His work truly exemplifies the public health model that aims to promote children's physical, mental and relational health.

Charlie first became involved in attachment and relationship-based work through his interest in parent-child feeding interactions and early brain development. He began to connect his work on mealtime patterns and behaviors with attachment patterns. He was introduced to Circle of Security through an article he read entitled, *Changing History, One Baby at a Time* by Larry Shook. Charlie reached out to the developers of Circle of Security and forged a relationship that led to the first trainings on Circle of Security in CT in May 2009. Since then, Charlie has championed Circle of Security throughout the state of CT and has worked to cultivate partnerships across the child and family serving system in an effort to bring Circle of Security to scale in CT. Charlie reaches out to the COS community across the globe in an effort to help providers and communities problem-solve and find new and unique ways to bring COS programming to young children and their caregivers. In 2013, Charlie was recognized by Circle of Security International as its first recipient of the COS International Award "in recognition and

appreciation for exceptional dedication to the advancement of early childhood intervention.”

To culminate his work around healthy mealtimes and healthy attachments, in 2014, Charlie completed and published his book, *Hungry for Love: Creating a Mealtime Environment That Builds Connection, Life Skills, and Eating Capabilities*. The book shares developmental context and suggestions for using mealtimes to support healthy relationships and has been very well received by parents and providers.

We are fortunate to have Charlie as a partner in our work promoting infant and toddler mental health. His positive energy and enthusiasm for the work is infectious and motivates all who get a chance to work with him. He is a true collaborator and works tirelessly to build bridges across the child and family serving system. Last year, Charlie took a lead role in developing a group of attachment-focused professionals who aim to promote attachment-focused work across the state for young children and families. The group, CT-Attachment Network, meets regularly to collaborate and develop partners who are working toward the same goals and will be presenting a symposium, led by Charlie, on the Circle of Security work in CT at the International Attachment Conference in NYC in August 2015.