



## 2013 Annual Report

### Leading the Way: Building a Workforce Skilled in Infant Mental Health

*“It has made me re think about how infants and toddlers are affected by their parents and for us, as DCF, to look for more non-verbal cues about the baby and parent relationship. It was very intense, positively, the training and the information I learned.”- program participant*

- ❖ CT AIMH provided the Connecticut Department of Children and Family in regional offices 4 and 6 with 10 intensive training days focused on **“Unresolved Trauma and Its Impact on Early Relationships.”** These sessions for state social workers, supervisors, managers, and their affiliated agencies train for the Competencies in Culturally Sensitive, Relationship Focused Practice Promoting Infant Mental Health®.

*“I have changed the way I observed toddler and infants during home visits with clients as well as when I'm supervising their weekly visits with bio-parents. My observation is more enriched and I feel the babies and toddlers cues are more obviously and apparent to me now.”-program participant*

The keynote presenter for this series on unresolved trauma and infant mental health for the CT child welfare staff and their community partners is Janet Dean.



Janet Dean, L.C.S.W. is the clinical director of the Community Infant Program, a preventive-intervention service for infants and their parents in Boulder, Colorado. Infant mental health psychotherapists and maternal child health nurses provide the home-based services.

She has over 30 years of experience working in child welfare with an infant mental health framework. Janet will continue

her 3-days presentations as we move to other DCF Regions in CT.

*“I have had the opportunity to share new findings with the parents I work with. The IMH trainings allowed me to observe babies more effectively and show the parents how to do the same.”- program participant*

- ❖ In a survey assessing CT’s ECCW grant activities designed to create a shared body of foundational knowledge for staff, to promote a unified approach for working with families with complex needs, and to enhance working relationships among staff from the various disciplines...



**90%** reported that the experience *enriched the way*

*I was already working and was very valuable for my work,*

**80%** said it *provided information that was new to me and was applicable to my work*

**70%** reported it *gave me new ideas and ways to practice and helped me to understand better how to read babies’ cues for their needs*

**56%** reported that *more or additional training in infant mental health* would be helpful.

Participants concluded:

*“I now strongly advocate for the right placements for kids from the beginning”*

*“...the bottom line is that there was a tremendous amount of information gained through this workshop series and the sharing of so many experts”*

- ❖ The State of CT Head Start Collaboration Office sponsored **meetings with Early Head Start** providers and their community partners lead by Anne Giordano, MA, IMH-E® in two regional communities to promote infant mental health and workforce development. This work continues in 2014. Anne is a consultant with Education Connection and holds Endorsement® in infant mental health. She was also the training coordinator for the DCF workshops.
- ❖ Five groups totaling twenty people from the CT Department of Children and Family, Birth to Three, Early Head Start and Family Based Recovery, reaching cross sector groups that include Connecticut providers working directly with families of infants and toddlers, participated in **reflective supervision/consultation**.

Reflective Consultation/Supervision is one of the infant mental health competencies and is recommended for all persons working with infants/toddlers and their families. This opportunity to meet regularly in a cooperative setting to explore feelings and emotions that impact one's work is critical to the success of work that is difficult and relationship focused. The outcome is what we call the "parallel" process, that is, the way the supervisor/consultant interacts with the provider is how the provider will be with the caregiver, and thus how the caregiver will treat their infant or toddler.

CT AIMH facilitators for reflective consultation/supervision were: Tanika Simpson, MSW, IMH-E, CT-AIMH Endorsement Coordinator; Kim Shepardson Watson, LCSW, IMH-E; Heather Bonitz-Moore, IMH-E; Christiana Mills, LCSW, IMH-E and Nancy Close, PhD, IMH-E.

- ❖ A total of 18 people hold "Endorsement in Culturally Sensitive, Relationship-Focused Practice Promoting Infant Mental Health"® in Connecticut and are listed in the **endorsement registry** on our web site (ct-aimh.org). They include:

*5 Infant Family Specialists*

*2 Infant Mental Health Specialists*

*11 Infant Mental Health Mentors (clinicians or policy related).*

These professionals are recognized for having achieved the Competencies® in infant mental health and are helping move the field and practice forward in Connecticut. For more information about the Competencies® and Endorsement® process please see our [web site](#).

**Fostering Best Services: Promoting the Importance of Early Relationships**

- ❖ [Written testimony](#) for **Mental Health Services Working Group to improve Connecticut's capacity to address children's mental health needs, Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety.** Submitted by: Margaret Holmberg, PhD, IMH-E®, and Melissa Mendez, LCSW, IMH-E® for the Connecticut Association for Infant Mental Health, Inc.

*Those working with at risk families and families with unresolved trauma have a very hard job. These people need to be competent in the knowledge and practice of infant mental health and they need support so they can, in turn, support and enhance responsive caregiving at a sensitive period of the children's development.*

- ❖ **[In support of Senate Bill 652: An Act Concerning Referrals from the Department of Children and Families to the Birth to Three Program \(Part C\) Select Committee on Children](#)**, February 14, 2013 Presented by Marianne Barton, Ph.D., Director, Psychological Service Clinic, UCONN for the Connecticut Association of Infant Mental Health (CT-AIMH).

*Research has clearly demonstrated that brain development is altered when there is chronic stress caused by risk factors such as poverty, family violence, substance abuse, child neglect and abuse, or incarceration ([www.developingchild.org](http://www.developingchild.org)), all factors that impede early relationship development.*

### **Growing the Field: Developing IMH Knowledge and Best Practice**

- ❖ CT-AIMH is one of 17 states to offer the Competencies and Endorsement in Infant Mental Health. Leaders from these states meet annually. At the **2013 states meeting in San Antonio** Margaret Holmberg, PhD, IMH-E presented CT-AIMH's work with the DCF/Head Start Partnership. Sharing information with others to promote professional development and relationship-focused practice leads to a consistent approach across the country and assists each state in moving their agendas forward. Attending the 2013 League Retreat were Margaret Holmberg, PhD, IMH-E®, Catherine O'Brien, MS, IMH-E®, Tanika Simpson, MSW, IMH-E®, Kim Shepardson Watson, LCSW, IMH-E®.
- ❖ The **2013 Stakeholder meeting** was held on June 6<sup>th</sup> in Hamden at the Women's Consortium. Deborah Weatherston, PhD, IMH-E® from the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health was the keynote speaker and described the powerful evolution and impact of the competencies across states. MI-AIMH originated the Competencies® and Endorsement® in Infant Mental Health. Forty people representing state agencies, provider agencies and programs heard the exciting news of how growth in the field of infant mental health is impacting the workforce in CT.
- ❖ The **2013 Annual Fall Infant Mental Health Conference** was held November 21, 2013 at the WoodWinds in Branford. Mary Dozier, PhD University of Delaware, and Brenda Jones Harden, PhD, University of Maryland discussed "Attachment and Bio-Behavioral Catch-Up: An Intervention with Families at Risk". Over 170 infant/toddler and family providers, policy makers, and higher education leaders attended, our largest attendance to date.

## CT AIMH Jane C. Bourns Award

- ❖ The Connecticut Association for Infant Mental Health created the Jane C. Bourns Award in 2006 to honor a key member of the group that founded the association. Jane Bourns was a professionally-trained social worker, who devoted most of her career to the development of mental health services for children as Director of Children's Services at Wheeler Clinic for 23 years. Jane was a passionate leader, remarkable in her energy and commitment to improving the lives of children and families. She championed prevention initiatives, including the healthy families America program unique in its recognition of the strengths in children and families. Sadly, Jane passed away before this association, for which she had worked so hard, came into full fruition. CT-AIMH has [annually recognized](#) someone active in the field of infant mental health since 2007.

The CT-AIMH 2013 Bourns Award went to [Margaret Briggs Gowan](#), PhD, Assistant Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of Connecticut Health Center. Dr. Briggs Gowan was recognized for her work in infant/early childhood mental health through her faithful work as an officer and member of the CT-AIMH Board of Directors for 10 years and for her professional development and research that has resulted in a nationally recognized evaluation of social-emotional development of infants and toddlers: the ITSEA and BITSEA.



The **2013 Annual meeting** was held on April 25, 2013 at the Lyceum in Hartford. Dr. Kyle Pruett spoke passionately on "How Violence Can Impact Infants and Toddlers." Dr. Pruett, MD, is Clinical Professor of Child Psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine, author, international lecturer, media personality and pioneering researcher. The nurturing father of our field, Dr. Pruett was the 2010 recipient of the Jane C. Bourn award.

## INSIDE CT-AIMH

### **Strengthening our organization's financial and communications infrastructure by:**

- Completing first audit through the firm of Guilmartin DiPiro & Sokolowski, LLC
- Hired first bookkeeper, Laura Poquett
- Established a finance committee and funding committee
- Kept web page updated with web manager, Samantha Goodrich.

### **It takes a village to build a reflective, relationship-based focus on babies and their families ...**

- Continued to have administrative work housed in New Haven at 230 S. Frontage Rd with thanks to Dr. Linda Mayes at the Yale Child Study Center. And many thanks to Minding the Baby staff for being such good office mates.
- We express gratitude and thanks to Newton Woodward at CREC Birth to Three for his work as our Accountant for many years.
- We welcomed new officer, Rob Riley, Senior Consultant, Ernst & Young, as our treasurer. Thank you to Nancy Canata for over 10 years of serving as our treasurer. Nancy remains an active Board member.
- CT-AIMH wishes to express deep appreciation for the volunteer work by Lynn Rider in organizing and helping to prepare our Annual Report.

### **Thank you to these key resources who recognize the impact of early relationships on our future:**

Child Health and Development Institute  
Children's Fund  
State Head Start Collaboration Office  
Department of Children and Families  
Casey Family Programs  
Birth to Three System

## **Additional Support**

- Promising Start LAUNCH, a project out of Wheeler Clinic and led by Melissa Mendez, LCSW, IMH-E®, who sponsored our conference speakers
- Catherine O'Brien, MS, IMH-E® from LEARN who helped with stakeholder arrangements and end of conference details.

### **Board of Directors**

Margaret C. Holmberg, PhD, IMH-E®, President

Melissa Mendez, LCSW, IMH-E®, Vice President, Project LAUNCH Coordinator, Child FIRST Clinical Director

Kareena Duplessis, Director, Child Development Infoline

Robert Riley, Senior Consultant, Ernst & Young, LLP, Treasurer

Marianne Barton, PhD, Clinical Associate Professor and Director, Psychological Services, University of Connecticut

Nancy Canata, LCSW, Director CREC Child and Family Development Services

Lois Davis, PhD, IMH-E®, Developmental Educator, LEARN

Darcy Lowell, MD, Executive Director, Child FIRST, Section Chief, Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics Bridgeport Hospital, Associate Clinical Professor Department of Pediatrics and Child Study Center, Yale University School of Medicine

Aileen McKenna, PhD, IMH-E®, Family Liaison Manager, CT Birth to Three System

JoAnn Robinson, PhD, Director of Early Education and Early Intervention, Department of Human Development & Family Studies, University of Connecticut

Susan Vater, Senior Advisor for Early Childhood Planning and Development, Village for Children and Families in Hartford

Tanika Simpson, MSW, IMH-E®, Clinical Social Worker, Minding the Baby, Yale Child Study Center and Endorsement Coordinator for CT-AIMH

#### **Non-Voting Agency Representatives:**

*Head Start Collaboration Office:* Grace Ann Whitney, PhD, IMH-E®

*Department of Children and Families:* Wendy Kwalwasser

*Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Young Adult Services:* Elaine Flynn York

*Children's Trust Fund:* Deborah Watson