



Smart Start Update --- May 2014

www.SmartStartAlabama.org

Child Care: Keeps Alabama Working Video Series

Last summer, the Alabama Partnership for Children commissioned M. Keivan Deravi, Ph.D. and Professor of Economics at Auburn University at Montgomery, to determine the economic impact of the early care and education industry on the economy of the state of Alabama. Findings from the report and the implications for the state are being detailed in a series of informational videos. Below is the third video in the series, featuring Liz Huntley, an attorney with Lightfoot, Franklin & White, LLC. Liz Huntley also serves on Auburn University's Board of Trustees. To read the full report and view other videos in the series [click here](#).



Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health: It Is Critical We Address the Most Vulnerable Population Now

Jane Duer, Early Intervention Coordinator
Alabama Department of Mental Health

Zero to Five Matters

*~A newsletter
focused on our most
valuable
investment~*

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Don't Forget
to follow us on [Facebook](#) and
[Twitter](#). The APC launched a
social media campaign in
November that targets
parents, early childhood
professionals, business
leaders and our partners in
the state. 'A Tweet a Day for
Learning and Play' provides
early education tips and
research, including
information on our initiatives
and partners.
Check it out today!

May FOCUS
Check out this month's Smart
Start FOCUS [Packet](#) on Mental
Health Matters!

Mark Your Calendars:

[Provider Appreciation Day](#)
May 9, 2014

[NAEYC 2014 National
Institute for Early Childhood
Professional Development](#)

June 8-11, 2014
Minneapolis, MN

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We would like to thank:



The Friday before Mother's Day, May 9, 2014, is **[Provider Appreciation Day](#)**, a special day to recognize child care providers, teachers, school-age program staff, child care center directors and staff, and all those who work with children and are responsible for their education and care. It is estimated that nearly 11 million children under age 5 are cared for by 2.8 million child care providers in the United States. The Alabama Partnership for Children would like to recognize and honor all the child care providers throughout Alabama who make a difference each day in the life of a child. Thank you for all you do!

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When most people think of mental health they don't think about babies, toddlers and preschoolers, but infant and early childhood mental health is an important topic we need to be discussing.

Early childhood mental health is most commonly defined as healthy social and emotional development of young children birth to 5 years. It includes the ability to experience, regulate and express emotions, form close and secure interpersonal relationships, and explore the environment ([Zero to Three Infant Mental Health Task Force](#)).

Addressing early social-emotional development through prevention and early intervention is important to a child's future mental health and well-being. According to Dr. Jack Shonkoff, Professor of Child Health and Development and Director of [Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child](#), "nurturing and responsive interactions build healthy brain architecture that provides a strong foundation for later learning, behavior, and health." When these positive relationships and interactions are missing due to such circumstances as extreme poverty in conjunction with continuous family chaos, physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, severe maternal depression, substance abuse, or family/community violence, there is interference in the way the brain's neural circuits mature and form. This affects the brain's stress management systems, which in turn often leads to difficulties in school, relationships, jobs, and may lead to criminal activities.

How can our communities help with prevention and early intervention related to early childhood mental health? We should build and strengthen communities and homes that promote and facilitate:

- Nurturing/ protective relationships
- Extending family support
- Access to resources/ learning
- Safety of neighborhoods
- Early learning opportunities/ vocabulary
- Parent training and support
- Quality child care
- Health care (including early screening)

We already have systems, agencies, and initiatives in place, such as [Help Me Grow](#) and others, to address child development and family support. By being attentive to the area of social/emotional development in infants and young children just as we are to their speech and motor development and medical health, and being vigilant in our efforts to support the child's relationships and environments, we can give our youngest, most vulnerable children a better chance to grow up to be emotionally healthy.



The Alabama Partnership for Children is the state lead for Help Me Grow (HMG)

Alabama, a member of the [Help Me Grow National Network](#). HMG is a proven model operating in 19 states that connects children and families to resources they need to ensure all children have the best possible start in life. HMG is currently being implemented in Blount, Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, and Walker counties through United Way of Central Alabama/Success By 6.

The four program components of Help Me Grow are:

- Making the Connection - Receive confidential calls from family members regarding a child's developmental or behavioral concerns, assess the child's needs and available resources, and refer families to developmental services.
- Building the Network - Develop ongoing relationships with programs in the community and support the maintenance of an updated resource inventory.
- Educating Providers - Educate professionals about the importance of developmental surveillance and screening while promoting access to developmental services.
- Identifying Gaps and Barriers - Collect data and analyze to document and identify needs to more effectively connect families to community resources.

Anyone in Central Alabama can call Help Me Grow (simply dial 2-1-1) if they are:

- Wondering about a child's development, behavior or learning
- Needing support to access services
- Assisting a client, family member, or friend obtain information about developmental services

14th Annual T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Symposium



On April 1-2, 2014, Child Care Services Association (CCSA), licenser of T.E.A.C.H., held the 14th annual T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® and Child Care WAGES National Professional Development Symposium, in Chapel Hill, NC. Joyce Greer, T.E.A.C.H. MS Program Coordinator, attended the conference and co-presented a session entitled: *National Board Certification for Early Educators: A Concept Whose Time Has Come*. During the opening session of the symposium, MISSISSIPPI was recognized as one of two new T.E.A.C.H. states, and T.E.A.C.H. MS was added to

the beloved National T.E.A.C.H. quilt. The Alabama Partnership for Children assisted the start-up of T.E.A.C.H. MISSISSIPPI in September with the hiring of Joyce Greer, a Nationally Board Certified teacher. This year, T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® celebrates 25 years, with T.E.A.C.H. programs in 25 states, including the District of Columbia.

T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood®

ALABAMA & MISSISSIPPI are comprehensive scholarship programs linking education and compensation. The goal of the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarship program is to increase education, increase compensation and reduce turnover of the childcare workforce while making educational opportunities more accessible and affordable.



Our Mission: To work in partnership with other public and private entities to maintain an effective state and local system of resources and support that enables parents, families, and others who care for young children to ensure that they are healthy, protected, nurtured, and offered every opportunity to succeed in life.

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