



FROM CRADLE TO CONNECTION: NURTURING INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH RELATIONSHIP

" Each baby's potential is unlimited. The window of time to provide a child with the foundation for success is not."
(Zero To Three)

WHY IS INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH IMPORTANT?

- 1 Infant and early childhood experiences are the building block for later mental and physical health outcomes.
- 2 Children in their first year of life are at greatest risk for experiencing trauma compared to other age groups
- 3 Bolstering early childhood mental health impacts healthy brain development
- 4 Investing in infant and early childhood initiatives and supporting relational health of Virginia's youngest citizens prevents the need for later interventions and offsets poor behavioral and academic outcomes

Children under 6 years old have the same rates of mental illness as older children (14-20%) However, these needs are largely unmet



Ways to invest in infant and early childhood mental health

Increase access of early childhood mental health programs for families



Adequately fund/pay early childhood providers



Invest in quality early childcare programs



Build capacity of mental health programs to include early childhood populations



Create a public health campaign that stresses the importance of early childhood and relationship building to raise awareness for families



Provide adequate and routine screenings of early childhood mental health needs



Ensure childcare professionals and early childhood providers are trained in trauma-informed principles



PROTECTING OUR MOST VULNERABLE

CHILDREN
BIRTH TO 6
YEARS

INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH IN VIRGINIA IS IMPACTED BY A NUMBER OF SYSTEMIC FACTORS:

11.4%

Experience low or very low food security

30.2%

Of young children received developmental screenings

41.6%

Of a single parent's income goes toward child care costs



287,996 babies
in Virginia in 2023

***Virginia does not require childcare teachers to receive credentials beyond a high school diploma**

NATIONALLY, MATERNAL MORTALITY RATES REMAIN STEADILY INCREASING WITH

32.9 deaths per 100,000

LIVE BIRTHS IN 2021

30.6

percent of babies in Virginia live below the poverty line

18.6

percent of mothers report less than optimal mental health

18.5

percent report one adverse childhood experience

Infant and early childhood relationships and environments lay the foundation for adult outcomes. Young children need nurturing and low stress environments to foster brain development, good health, and positive academic outcomes. Supporting our youngest citizens will create positive impacts today for generations to come.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Data from the State of Babies Yearbook 2023
Zero to Three

www.vaimh.org

2023

VIRGINIA STATE STATISTICS