

MITIGATE COVID-19 IMPACTS ON FAMILY ECONOMIC STABILITY & MENTAL HEALTH



Why it Matters: Early childhood mental health is the foundation of all future child development. Positive environments with stable and responsive relationships build a strong foundation which shapes a child’s ability to make friends, cope with adversity, and achieve success in school, work and community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many sources of stress and anxiety for parents of young children across the country and created new barriers for people already suffering from mental illness and substance use disorders. Concerns about health, combined with uncertainty over unemployment and finances, work, and access to food and other resources are all contributing to increasing stress among parents and caregivers. Uncertainties over child care during the pandemic are also contributing to stress for many parents. While there are new opportunities for learning due to both children and parents spending more time together in the home, stress and anxiety may be exacerbated as well.

Decades of neglect and underinvestment in addressing people’s mental health needs have been exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic that must be addressed urgently. The healthier parents and caregivers are, the greater the capacity to stay calm under pressure and support their children’s emotional development. Adults involved in the lives of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers must be provided with the capacity, knowledge, and training to promote optimal social and emotional development by mitigating the pandemic’s impact and strengthening service provision through flexible funding.

LEVEL REQUIRING ACTION > SYSTEM

RECOMMENDATION 1

Mitigate The Health And Economic Effects Of The Pandemic On Families:

- > Extend economic support beyond expiration of CARES Act funds that expire in December.
- > Extend flexibility in eligibility for programs (e.g. Reach Up work requirements) so parents can engage in other activities that help them invest in their future and integral to the health and well-being of their family.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Sustain And Strengthen The Integration Of Mental Health Services For Children And Families Through Flexible Funding For Integrated Mental Health Across Settings:

- > Continue to allow telehealth to be covered by insurance so families can access the care they need.
- > Invest in flexible service delivery and availability.
- > Focus on mental health prevention and staff burnout across many settings.

