



Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Institute  
Child, Adolescent & Family Behavioral Health



## 2021 VIRTUAL CONFERENCES April 7-9 and 12-13, 2021

### SCHEDULE

#### Day One: Wednesday, April 7

##### 9 to 11 am Plenary

##### **How COVID-19 is Disrupting Family Functioning in Alaska and its Potential Long-Term Impacts, Jared Parrish, PhD, Margaret Young, MPH**

Epidemiologists from the DPH Section of Women's, Children's, and Family Health, Maternal Child Health Epidemiology Unit, will discuss recent research in Alaska related to COVID-19 and family functioning. The MCH Epidemiology Unit conducted a series of four convenience sample surveys in 2020 to measure the impact of the pandemic on Alaskan families, receiving over 7,000 responses to the final survey in November-December 2020. Almost two-thirds of respondents to this survey said their overall emotional health has gotten worse since the pandemic began, and one-third said the amount of alcohol consumed in their household is now more than before the pandemic. Nearly nine out of ten parents (88%) said it was very true or somewhat true that they were concerned about the impact of the pandemic on their child's mental health. Additional results of the survey will be explored, in particular disparities and differences noted related to respondent age, income, and region of residence. Based on data from the Alaska Longitudinal Child Abuse and Neglect Linkage project, households experiencing multiple challenges, including substance use, poor mental health, low SES, and partner violence are strongly associated with increases in risk of child maltreatment and poor school readiness. This session will conclude with a discussion of the potential near- and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on the family in context of these two novel data sources.

##### **Trauma-Engaged Schools—An Introduction to Alaskan Resources, Sharon Fishel, MS**

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development in conjunction with the Association of Alaska School Boards and partners across the state have developed rich resources for schools responding their students' exposure to adversity. This session will cover an introduction to the Framework, accompanying toolkit, eLearning courses and more.

##### **Rapid Assessment of Pandemic Impact on Development, Phil Fisher, PhD**

RAPID-EC is an early childhood family well-being survey designed to gather essential information in a continuous manner regarding the needs, health promoting behaviors, and well-being of children and their families during the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States. The survey focuses on better understanding child development (and parents' concerns about development over time), caregiver mental health and well-being, and caregiver needs and utilization of resources. Every other week the University of Oregon RAPID-EC teams launches a survey to collect this information from a sample of parents from across the country. Dr. Fisher will discuss the findings as well as the practice and policy implications of this important survey.

## Day One: Wednesday, April 7 (continued)

### 1 to 3 pm Workshops

#### **WORKSHOP 1: Drug Use in Pregnancy: The Neurobiology of Maternal/ Infant Attachment, *Dr. Ira Chasnoff***

Children grow, develop and learn in the context of relationships, but the maternal child relationship can be disrupted by substance use in pregnancy. This session will explore the biological and psychosocial factors that impact the development of a nurturing relationship between a woman with a history of substance misuse during pregnancy and her child and will provide an overview of intervention strategies that can promote positive attachment, development, and learning.

#### **WORKSHOP 2: Pathways to Progress: The Developmental, Individual Difference, Relationship-Based Model of Intervention (DIR®), *Serena Weider, PhD***

The DIR® Model by Wieder & Greenspan pioneered a vision of development through the dynamic interactions between individual differences each child brings to the world, the way children and parents connect around regulation and form attachments, and how relationships promote functional emotional and cognitive capacities that escort us through life. When development is uneven, as in ASD, children and parent/caregiver relationships provide the anchor to promote mental health, adaptation, resilience and learning through comprehensive parent mediated approaches. Developmental science shows that children of all ages can progress in relating, communicating, and thinking beyond what has been thought attainable by embracing the complexity of autism. In this presentation, Dr. Wieder will share the journey of DIR's innovative developmental approaches that bridge the gap between practice and science.

#### **WORKSHOP 3: Early Childhood Alaska: A Strategic Direction for 2020-2025, *Tamar Ben-Yosef, BS, Jimael Johnson, MPH, Chelsea Burke, BA, Emily Urlacher, BS, Meghan Johnson, MS, Gail Trujillo, M.Sc., PhD (ABD), IMH-E®, Erin Kinavey Wennerstrom, M.Ed., IMH-E®, Anders K. Wennerstrom, MBA***

Alaska's early childhood system strategic plan outlines a series of bold actions and improvements to benefit children, prenatal through age 8, their families, and communities by 2025 and establishes a ten-year vision for the early childhood system. The plan aims to provide children and families in all Alaska communities with equitable access to resources, quality affordable care and education, and every opportunity for them to succeed. Workshop participants will learn about the work of early childhood stakeholders and the resulting aligned strategic plan. Presenters will discuss the shared goals of the plan and take a deeper dive into strategies currently underway through a panel discussion highlighting IECMH workforce development, implicit bias, child care quality, and related state systems change efforts.

## Day Two: Thursday, April 8

### 9 to 11 am Plenary

#### **The Mystery of Risk: Long-term Outcome of Children Affected by Prenatal Exposure to Alcohol and Drugs, *Dr. Ira Chasnoff***

Substance use in pregnancy continues to be a significant factor in the morbidity and mortality associated with pregnancy and the newborn. However, the impact on the child continues over his or her lifespan. This session will examine the structural and functional changes that occur in the developing fetal brain caused by prenatal substance exposure and demonstrate how these changes ultimately impact learning and behavior in substance-exposed children.

### 1 to 3 pm Workshops

#### **WORKSHOP 1: Drugs, Alcohol, Pregnancy, and Parenting: Implications for Early Childhood, *Dr. Ira Chasnoff***

Early global development often falls into the normal range for young children with a history of prenatal substance exposure. However, regulatory difficulties in these infants and toddlers have significant implications for long term development. This session will present a framework for understanding the development and behavioral difficulties of young children affected by prenatal substance exposure and discuss how this framework can be applied to the development of early childhood interventions.

#### **WORKSHOP 2: The Power of Symbolic Play in Emotional Development, Mental Health and Self-Regulation, *Serena Weider, PhD***

Play is the pivotal pathway to integrating development as it encompasses all aspects of experience simultaneously: sensory, visual spatial, motor, language, cognitive and emotional processes. From playful and joyful interactions that secure attachments and regulation, to sharing the symbolic expression of the child's inner world of emotions, play provides the safety to explore, differentiate self, take perspective, grapple with reality testing, and cope with the anxiety inherent in development and the world around them. Children climbing the symbolic ladder may encounter roadblocks related to comprehension, sensory processing, constrictions, repetitions, and fears. Interactive play provides a pathway through the hierarchy of symbolizing and expressing emotions and the importance of not underestimating a child's emotional life even when processing challenges might obscure their meaning.

#### **WORKSHOP 3: Reflective Practice: Why Mentalize? *Jacqui Van Horn, MPH, IMH-E<sup>®</sup> (IMHM-C)***

Mentalization is the process we use to notice and make sense of our own and others' behaviors by considering the possible thoughts, feelings, intentions, or desires that underlie the behavior. The ability to mentalize helps us better understand ourselves and to interact in more satisfying ways with others. In this session, the presenter will describe how the foundation for the ability to mentalize is developed through the earliest interactions between infants and their parents and other primary caregivers. Using recorded interactions, we will watch the process of mentalization in action between parents and their young children as well as between a service provider and parents. Mentalization will be tied to important infant and early childhood mental health concepts and competencies.

## Day Three: Friday, April 9

### 9 to 11 am Plenary

**Racism Hurts our Alaskan Babies: How to Build Working Relationships to Promote Equity and Social Justice in Early Childhood Service Systems**, *Marva Lewis, PhD, Lisa Wade*

Structural racism hurts children of color in early childhood systems of care. In this presentation Dr. Lewis will review the socioemotional and intergenerational impact of psychological terrorism of racism on families of color, beginning prenatally across the life course. Racial disparities are unrecognized sources of racial wounding, and resilience, creating intergenerational patterns of protective parenting practices and distrust of service providers (Lewis, 2019). Well-meaning early childhood providers struggle to engage families of color in their agency services. The historical traumas of genocide, boarding schools, slavery, historical losses of population, land, family and culture of Native Americans/First Nation peoples, centuries of chattel slavery of African Americans, continue to disproportionately impact the social determinants of health and wellbeing of infants, toddlers and their families. In Alaska 54% of children reported for child maltreatment American Indian or Alaska native. Black male, three-year-olds are disproportionately expelled from day care (Gilliam, & Shahar, 2006). These abstract statistics of racial disparities do not tell the full story of race-based traumatic, psychological experiences of families. Many providers attempt to address racial disparities with culturally responsive interventions and services within a social structure designed to promote white supremacy. Dr. Lewis concludes with a call to action for providers to incorporate the use of an anti-racist, culturally informed approach in the delivery of equitable, strengths-based assessment and intervention services.

### 12 pm to 1 pm Meeting

**Alaska Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (AK-AIMH) Annual General Meeting**

We will highlight our activities over the past year and introduce our new board members. Please attend to find out how you can become an active member and support the mission and core activities of the Association.

## Day Three: Friday, April 9 (continued)

### 1 to 3 pm Workshops

#### **Workshop 1: The Diversity Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Toddlers and Families: Pushing Boundaries and Staying at Our Growing Edge, Karen Frankel, PhD & Carmen Rosa Noroña, LICSW, MSW, MS. Ed., IECMH-E**

Creating social change to recognize and address the impact of systemic racism and oppression in professional circles is very challenging. The Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children & Families (Tenets) are a set of guiding principles that raise awareness of inequities embedded in our society by empowering individuals/practitioners, organizations and systems of care to identify, address and dismantle the systems of oppression intricately intertwined with all work with and on behalf of infants, children and families. We raise awareness of inequities and empower individuals/agencies to promote organizational development. This workshop will provide an overview of the Tenets framework, explore Tenet #1 (Self-Awareness Leads to Better Services for Families) which is the cornerstone of the framework; and encourage participants to develop a plan for Tenet #1 implementation in their workplace.

#### **Workshop 2: Addressing Grief & Loss with Infants, Children and Families, Maria Quintanilla, MSW, LCSW**

Many of the children and families that we serve have experienced losses at different stages in their development impacting their world view and relational health. How can we use neuroscience to guide our clinical practice to ensure positive trajectories? How can providers address child welfare involvement, family integration, perinatal loss, and infertility? How do we implement knowledge and practice to help those we serve find a “state of equilibrium?”

#### **Workshop 3: Enhancing Mentalization through Reflective Supervision, Jacqui Van Horn, MPH, IMH-E® (IMHM-C)**

Mentalization occurs as both an implicit or unconscious process and can be practiced explicitly. When we ground our reflective supervision practices in an understanding of mentalization we can be more intentionally aware of both self and other in our interactions. Reflective supervision offers unique opportunities to explicitly experience and practice mentalizing in a safe and calm environment so that as practitioners, we are better able to engage in this practice when working with families and other clients. In turn, we can learn to support this important capacity in our clients so that they too can have more satisfying interactions with their children and other people in their lives. Using recorded interactions, we will watch supervisors provide intentional opportunities for practitioners to explicitly mentalize about their interactions with clients. We will define challenges to our ability to mentalize and explore some strategies for supporting this process when it is difficult.

## Day Four: Monday, April 12

### 9 to 11 am Plenary

#### **Building a Nimble System of Care, Elizabeth Manley, MSW**

Lessons learned from other States related to an 11115 Waiver Response: The first steps to developing an inclusive system of care for youth and families must include:

- Common definitions and language
- Identification of stakeholders/role identification (who is serving children and families- which systems-school, health, providers, etc.)
- Cultural competency
- Collaborative intervention strategies
- Community engagement

### 1 to 3 pm Workshops

#### **Workshop 1: Youth & Family Voice, Elizabeth Manley, MSW**

This is a child and family driven model that melds systems to efficiently meet family needs – (a paradigm shift from transitional clinic model). Components include:

- Intensive care coordination – how is this developed to prevent silo services?
- Mobile crisis response – a must-have
- Prevention of overlapping services/responses/agendas from service providers

#### **Workshop 2: Mental and Behavioral Health Impacts of COVID and a Review of Crisis Management Skills You Can Offer Families, Robert J. Hilt, MD, FAPA, FAAP**

In this workshop, we will discuss the variety of ways that COVID has influenced the mental health and well-being of children and families, and the unique ways that social isolation directives have impacted children. After this review, we will move on to discuss strategies for helping a family with a behavioral health crisis. This would include discussing general risk assessment, the child's escalation cycle, and safety/de-escalation interventions one can take at different steps along the way.

#### **Workshop 3: Trauma Informed Care for the Frontlines, Tom McRoberts, MSW & Wendi Shackelford, BA**

This training explores how a Trauma Informed Care approach supports the work of Frontline, Emergency, and First Responders during this challenging time in history. Participants will learn concepts associated with Trauma Informed Care, reflect on how to see their work through the lens of Trauma Informed Care, then discuss strategies to improve their work with the people they serve. Complex and historical trauma will be discussed. An in-depth look at the Adverse Childhood Experiences Studies will help participants understand the impact of traumatic events on brain development. Examples of successful trauma informed interventions will be introduced.

## Day Five: Tuesday, April 13

### 9 to 11 am Plenary

***Parent Peer Support Providers: A Critical Component in Every System,***  
*Millie Sweeney, MS, Paul Cornils, BS*

Parent peer support has a role in every child-serving system and can enhance the implementation of more traditional behavioral health services. This workshop will offer a national perspective on the growth and use of the parent peer support provider workforce, including roles across service intensity levels, funding sources, and workforce development. AYFN will provide an on the ground look at how parent peer support has been implemented in AK and share outcomes from this vital service.

### 1 to 3 pm Workshops

***Workshop 1: Organizational Readiness for Parent Peer Support Programs: Effective Strategies for Success,***  
*Millie Sweeney, MS, Paul Cornils, BS*

The parent peer support workforce is growing, and where and how parent peer support providers are employed is expanding. We will explore best practices in hiring, training and supporting this unique workforce, as well as organizational readiness for developing, operating and maintaining parent peer support programming.

***Workshop 2: Ethics and Boundaries,***  
*Renee Georg, MS*

Compared to other places in the US, even Anchorage can be a small town. This ethics workshop will encourage participants to engage in interactive discussion related to boundaries, including differentiating between boundary crossings, boundary violations, and ethical decision-making. Defining boundaries while staying engaged in meaningful interactions can be complicated in communities with small populations and few providers.

***Workshop 3: Innovative Techniques for Anti-Bullying,***  
*Elijah McCauley, MA, CRC, CTP-C, Anchorage Youth Vote*

This workshop explores the dynamics of bullying and the deep impact it has on youth and young adults. We will explore the 7 Interventions to help reduce the negative effects it has on the lives of young people, and build resiliency, self-determination, and self-advocacy.