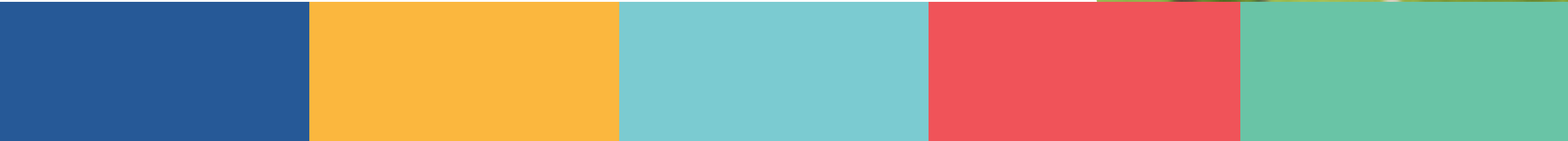




PENFIELD
CHILDREN'S CENTER

Early Autism Intervention and Mental Health Programs

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Meet the Presenters



Katie Ambrosio, ECSE



Jayne Emerson, OTR/L



Tamara Limbach, MS, LPC



Kim Marcin, MA, LPC

Objectives

Participants will be able to identify early symptoms of autism.

Participants will be able to identify Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health symptoms.

Participants will be able to identify when additional support systems are beneficial.

Participants will be able to provide a brief overview of how Early Pathways supports positive mental health in young children.

Participants will be able to provide a brief overview of how First Connections aids in the development of social attunement.



Commonly Observed Characteristics of Autism in Children

Common

- Child does not turn when you call their name
- Limited or no eye contact
- Significant focus on objects
- Limited attention to people (appear in their own world)
- Unusual use of toys
- Repetitive movements
- Unconventional activities -e.g.- playing with hangers, repetitively watching a door opening and closing
- Restricted imitation skills
- Delayed expressive language

Subtle

- Insistence on sameness (transitions, routines, etc)
- Limited joint attention –inconsistent use of eye contact during shared experiences vs may see eye contact but not during shared experiences.
- Limited use or understanding of facial expressions and body language
- Significantly advanced in recognizing letters, numbers, counting, and reading (hyperlexia)
- One sided interactions vs. reciprocal
- Rote social interactions
- Sensory challenges

Communication Challenges

- Pulling caregiver to what they want
- Limited use or understanding of gestures -pointing, waving,etc
- Monotone voice quality
- Communicating through repeated phrases (echolalia, gestalts)
- Lacking expected eye contact such as when praised or needing help

Books offer opportunities to build social interaction and communication skills. By observing specific interactions we may be able to determine deficits in development.

Potential observations include:

- Interactions with parent-, desire to stay face to face, vocal back and forth play, eye contact, following a point
- Interactions with the book-hyperfocus on alphabet letters or other unexpected areas, non purposeful page flipping, withdrawal from book

What are some ways we can promote social interaction?

- Read face to face
- Follow the child's lead/interests
- Point out pictures on the page
- Use interesting and varying sounds, pitches and rhythm



Early Autism Screening & Intervention

- Autism is diagnosed by a professional through observation, data gathering, and standardized testing.
- At this time treating interventionists are not able to diagnose.
- AAP recommends universal screenings at 18 and 24 month appointment using the MCHAT -R.
- If the child is under 3, a referral to Birth to Three will jump start intervention.
- Specific autism intervention can take place before diagnosing. Diagnosis is necessary for most formal interventions and funding.
- ABA therapy is usually recommended for all children diagnosed but there are other options out there including Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Intervention (NDBI)

Penfield's First Connections Autism Services

- Parent coaching program with a goal of increasing social attunement and communication skills in children who have been diagnosed or show characteristics of Autism.
- Utilizes the Pathways Early Autism Intervention (NDBI)
 - 1:1 in home/18-20 weeks/1 hour per week
 - Parent/caregiver follow through drives successful changes
 - Activities and strategies easily embed into daily routines.
 - 12 unit manual including Autism education and strategy/activity development.
 - Combines developmental and behavioral sciences
 - Follows the lead of the child

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

- Preventative and early intervention mental health services provide children with the foundation for positive social emotional health throughout the lifespan.
- Focus on building positive attachments
- Providing caregivers with information and skills necessary to support their child's mental health



Mental Health Symptoms in Children

Behavioral Concerns

Temper tantrums

Aggression

Self-injurious behaviors

Hyperactivity

Destructive behaviors

Noncompliance

Emotional Concerns

Sleep problems

Trouble with separation

Difficulties with relationships

Anxiety



Trauma in Young Children

Stressful events

Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse

Witnessing violence in the home or community

Child neglect

Severe illness or injury

Significant life transitions:

Divorce

Death

Frequent moving

Homelessness

Trauma Symptoms

Sleep difficulty or nightmares

Avoidance

Play reenactment

Blank stares

Difficulty regulating emotions

Increase in challenging behaviors

Sexualized behaviors

Difficulty focusing

Separation anxiety/clingy behaviors

Is Additional Support Needed?

- Assess frequency, intensity, and duration of a young child's behavior
 - Multiple settings
 - Extreme behaviors
 - Occurs more than other children the same age
- Does the behavior impact child and/or family's daily functioning?
 - Caregiver avoids taking child in public
 - Family or friends refuse to care for the child
 - Other children avoid playing with the child
- Does the caregiver express a need for help?

Early Pathways

- Evidence -based treatment model
- Caregiver education
- Strengthening the caregiver/child relationship
- Implementing limit setting strategies
- Implementing positive reinforcement strategies
- Discussing child development
- Addressing behavioral/emotional concerns related to trauma
- Providing advocacy and connection to community services

Reading and Mental Health

- Reading promotes social and emotional development
 - Nurturing activity
 - Builds attachment
 - Teaches empathy
 - Identification of emotions
 - Increase attention span and concentration
 - Increases patience
 - Improves listening skills
 - Facilitates calming and regulation
 - Social stories and narratives



Questions?

