Early educators are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of understanding the impact of trauma on young children and their families and offering trauma-informed care. Children’s responses to trauma can include a child’s difficulty in relationships and social interactions with peers and adults, challenges in emotional regulation and social skill development, and challenging behavior. Practices that are recommended for providing a trauma-informed educational program (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017) consist of:

- Implementing a multi-tiered approach that acknowledges the importance of providing a safe and nurturing environment for all children and more intensive and focused prevention and intervention for children who have social, emotional, or behavioral support needs;
- Prioritizing the establishment of nurturing and responsive relationships with all children and their families;
- Offering children predictable routines;
- Teaching children social, emotional, and behavior regulation skills;
- Responding to challenging behavior by seeking to understand the behavior and use prevention and instructional strategies to address behavior; and
- Eliminating the use of exclusionary or punishment responses to challenging behavior (i.e., time-out, suspension).

The Pyramid Model for Promoting Social and Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children (Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Joseph, & Strain, 2003; Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006) provides a multi-tiered approach that has been designed for implementation within early care and education programs. In programs implementing the Pyramid Model, practitioners are guided in how to: 1) establish nurturing and responsive relationships with children and families; 2) provide predictable and supportive environments; 3) promote the development of social, emotional, and behavioral skills; and 4) address challenging behavior through understanding the behavior and designing interventions that are positive and focused on teaching new skills.

Resources for Implementing Trauma-Informed Care

- Checklist of Early Childhood Practices that Support Social Emotional Development and Trauma-Informed Care
- All Hands on Deck: Partnering with Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants to Implement the Pyramid Model
- Understanding Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation and the Pyramid Model

References

