

# Promoting Social & Emotional Development in Primary Care

An Infant Mental Health Perspective

Sherri L. Alderman, MD, MPH, IMHM-E Clinical & Policy, FAAP  
CDC Act Early Ambassador to Oregon

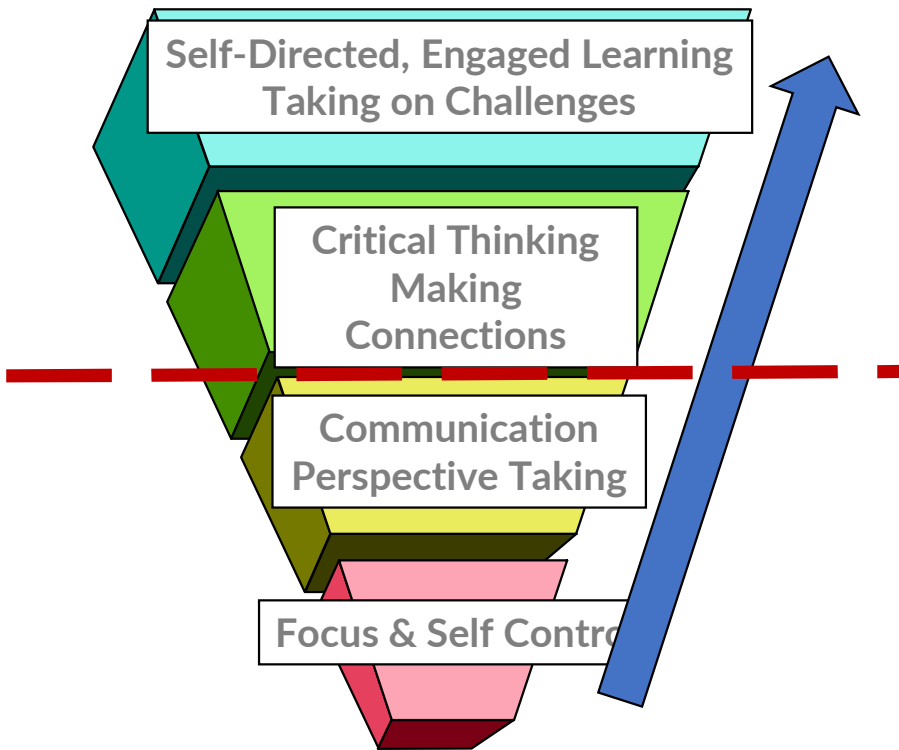
**Act Early Oregon**

# Definition

## **Infant Mental Health**

- An infant's or young child's capacity to
  - experience, regulate, and express *emotions*,
  - form close and secure *relationships*, and
  - explore the environment and learn
- All within the context of biology, relationships, and *culture*

# Social & Emotional Development

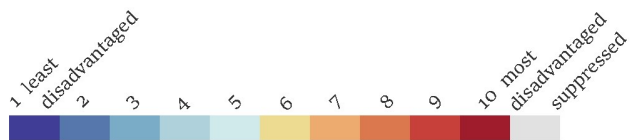
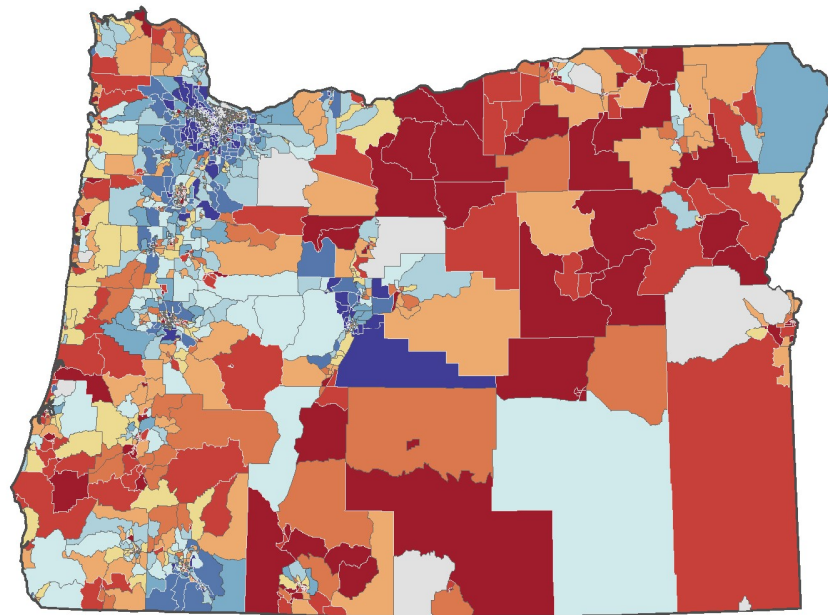


- The foundation for all learning, executive function life skills, and lifelong physical and mental health

**Kindergarten  
Readiness**

# Equity Considerations

Oregon  
ADI State Rankings  
2020



Area Deprivation Index

<https://www.neighborhoodatlas.medicine.wisc.edu/>

Putting Politics Aside

**Infant Mental Health**

**Nonpartisan**

# From Neurons to Neighborhoods, Revised

Family poverty and neighborhood deprivation adversely impact brain development

- **Poverty** is a risk for premature birth (D'Angela et al. AJOG 2018)
- Mothers with **lower social economic advantage** have infants with smaller brain volumes (Triblett R, et al. JAMA 2022)
- Association between **family income** and brain development (Noble et al. Nature Neuroscience 2015)
- Subcortical gray matter volume correlates with **income:needs** (Barch et al. Biology Pathways 2021)
- Higher **areas of deprivation** (neighborhoods) adversely affect multiple regions of the brain associated with emotional regulation and learning (Gard et al. Developmental Science 2020; Tomlinson et al. NeuroImage 2020)
- Children living in states with **better social supports** show less adverse impact of poverty on brain development (Luby et al. JAMA 2013)

# Strategies

- Promotion
- Prevention
- Early Identification
- Diagnostic Evaluation
- Treatment

**FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

# Strategies

- Family Engagement
- Promotion
- Prevention
- Early Identification
- Diagnostic Evaluation
- Treatment

## Family Engaged Developmental Monitoring



# CDC Act Early Developmental Monitoring Parent Resources/Tools

- Free of charge
- Educational
- Parent vetted
- 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading level
- English, Spanish, and other languages
- 12 ages: 2 mo to 5 yrs
- A record and tool for parent engagement with professional
- Can prompt additional screening outside the universal periodicity
- **Can set into motion action leading to earlier diagnosis of developmental delays**

**Your child at 15 months**

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Age \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

Milestones matter! How your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves offers important clues about his or her development. Check the milestones your child has reached by 15 months. Take this with you and talk with your child's doctor at every well-child visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.

**What most children do by this age:**

**Social/Emotional Milestones**

- Copies other children while playing, like taking toys out of a container when another child does
- Shows you an object she likes
- Claps when excited
- Hugs stuffed doll or other toy
- Shows you affection (hugs, cuddles, or kisses you)

**Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)**

- Tries to use things the right way, like a phone, cup, or book
- Stacks at least two small objects, like blocks

**Language/Communication Milestones**

- Tries to say one or two words besides "mama" or "dada," like "ba" for ball or "da" for dog
- Looks at a familiar object when you name it
- Follows directions given with both a gesture and words. For example, he gives you a toy when you hold out your hand and say, "Give me the toy."
- Points to ask for something or to get help

**Movement/Physical Development Milestones**

- Takes a few steps on his own
- Uses fingers to feed herself some food

**Other important things to share with the doctor...**

- What are some things you and your child do together?
- What are some things your child likes to do?
- Is there anything your child does or does not do that concerns you?
- Has your child lost any skills he/she once had?
- Does your child have any special healthcare needs or was he/she born prematurely?

**You know your child best.** Don't wait. If your child is not meeting one or more milestones, has lost skills he or she once had, or you have other concerns, act early. Talk with your child's doctor, share your concerns, and ask about developmental screening. If you or the doctor are still concerned:

1. Ask for a referral to a specialist who can evaluate your child more; and
2. Call your state or territory's early intervention program to find out if your child can get services to help. Learn more and find the number at [cdc.gov/FindEI](http://cdc.gov/FindEI).

For more on how to help your child, visit [cdc.gov/Concerned](http://cdc.gov/Concerned).

Don't wait. Acting early can make a real difference!

Logos: CDC, HHS, American Academy of Pediatrics



**Milestone Moments**

**Milestones Matter!**  
Look inside for milestones to watch for in your child and tips for how you can help your child learn and grow from birth to age 5.

Logos: CDC, HHS, American Academy of Pediatrics

# Development and Culture

- Development happens and is influenced by family culture and heritage
- Families nurture milestones that most resonate with their cultural values
- Opening family conversations about development starting with milestones that are more likely to resonate with the family's cultural values promotes family engagement and trusting professional relationships
- Conversations can then follow with bringing in milestones likely to be less valued

# Cultural Aspects of Developmental Promotion

The goal is NOT to change a family's value system but rather to promote optimal early childhood development by respecting the family's culture and striving for meaningful engagement.

# Spanish Culturally-Informed Developmental Milestone Wheels



For more information:  
[actearlyoregon@gmail.com](mailto:actearlyoregon@gmail.com)  
[actearlyoregon.org](http://actearlyoregon.org)

**Act Early Oregon**