

### **Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Guide for Professionals: Sense of Agency**

Here is what we know about **Sense of Agency** (“I can do it!”):

- It is the child’s ability to make choices and decisions that will influence and have an impact on their life.
- Children need to develop a strong sense of belonging and self-identity. As they do, they begin to see themselves as capable, competent and valued contributors.

**Within your professional role and considering the social determinants of health, how do you:**

- Explore with the parent or caregiver opportunities to support a child to:
  - Make age appropriate choices and decisions in their everyday life.
  - Have opportunities to develop autonomy in safe, nurturing environments and take graduated risks according to their own readiness, abilities and interests.
  - Engage in meaningful interactions, tasks, solving problems, play and exploration.
- Discuss how the parent or caregiver is coping and their support system.
- Explore opportunities for connecting to informal and formal supports (community, neighbourhood, resources, groups).
- Support the parent or caregiver to have realistic age-appropriate expectations for their child.
- Administer an appropriate screening tool to ensure that the child is meeting their expected developmental milestones and refer if applicable.

**Where can you find more information?**

- [Parenting in Ottawa](#)
- [Parent Resource Centre](#)
- [211 Ontario](#)
- [Community Navigation of Eastern Ontario](#)
- [Early Childhood Australia, Promoting Independence and Agency](#)
- [Talking about Practice Series Video: 'I can do it!' Supporting Babies' Sense of Agency](#)
- [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#)
- [Reaching IN ... Reaching OUT: Road to Resiliency Factsheet and Video](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada: Social Determinants of Health](#)

**References:**

- [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#)