

## **5Ws: The Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH): Education and Awareness Task Group**

### **What**

The [Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health](#) (IECMH) Education and Awareness Task Group was developed to raise awareness about the importance of and to promote and protect infant and early childhood mental health. The IECMH Education and Awareness Task Group is part of the [Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative](#) (OCYI). The OCYI is a collaborative of over 80 community organizations and agencies supporting children and youth to reach their full potential and grow up great! Learn more about OCYI's mission, vision, and values on the [website](#).

### **How**

The Ottawa Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative brings together service providers from across sectors interested in building a system of care for infant and early childhood mental health through collective impact in the greater Ottawa community. Research clearly demonstrates the importance of optimal early mental health, and the lifelong impacts of the early years. The work of the Ottawa Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative continues to evolve and change as we grow the system of care for infants, young children and their families in Ottawa.

### **Who / When / Where**

The IECMH Education and Awareness Task Group includes representation from various organizations throughout all of Ottawa and is made up of a Chair, the OCYI project coordinator and the various community members.

The group meets monthly to establish objectives, project plans, create education and awareness campaigns, monitor progress, and plan information dissemination to stakeholders and target audiences. The OCYI project coordinator also shares updates with the OCYI Steering Committee to consult on all important decisions. The OCYI Steering Committee is comprised of 20 community members including but not limited to senior executive leaders from the public, private and non-profit sectors, as well as the chairs of each OCYI Task Group. Each year OCYI will report to the community and funders on its collective impact and outcomes including those from the IECMH Education and Awareness Task Group.

### **Why**

A baby's brain starts to grow during pregnancy. The first 2000 days after baby is born are the most critical time for brain development. The ability to develop close and secure relationships with their caregivers is key to the mental health of infants and young children. Mental health for infants and young children also means they are able to experience, manage and express a full range of emotions. Children learn about their world with the help of their family, community, and culture.

Together we can direct attention toward infant and early childhood mental health and share resources to promote and support positive mental health as well as facilitate access to information and referrals to local community resources.

### **Key Contact**

OCYI Project Coordinator: Karen Kennedy, [KaKennedy@cheo.on.ca](mailto:KaKennedy@cheo.on.ca)

OCYI general inbox: [info@growingupgreat.ca](mailto:info@growingupgreat.ca)

### **Websites**

- Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health: [www.iecmh.ca](http://www.iecmh.ca)
- Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative: [www.growingupgreat.ca](http://www.growingupgreat.ca)