

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH)

Guide for Professionals: Temperament

Here is what we know about temperament:

- Temperament is an individual's innate way of approaching and responding to the world.
- Some children approach situations with ease while others may experience more challenges.
- Temperament describes a range of character traits which include: activity level, adaptability, approach and withdrawal, distractibility, intensity, persistence, positivity/mood, regularity and sensitivity.
 - A child's temperament can shape their outcomes and influence how others respond to them.
 - Each caregiver has their own unique temperament; how these temperaments interact can impact the quality of the caregiver-child relationship. This is known as the "goodness of fit," which is the ability of the caregiver to adapt their expectations and responses to the child's personal style and abilities.

Within your professional role and considering the [social determinants of health](#), how do you:

- Provide opportunities for a caregiver to learn more about temperament?
- Explore individualized strategies to support the caregiver and the child?
- Discuss coping and support mechanisms with caregivers?
- Explore connection opportunities to informal and formal supports (e.g., professional and peer community-based supports and services).
- Support caregivers in having developmentally appropriate expectations for their child?
- Administer appropriate screening tools that advise on if a child is within the typical developmental milestone range? How do you manage referrals?

Where can you find more information?

- [Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development: Temperament](#)
- [Raising Your Spirited Child by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka](#)
- [City of Hamilton: Parenting with LOVE Video - Temperament](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada: Social Determinants of Health](#)
- [Parents 2 Parents: The Temperament Corner](#)

Where can you find services that support families?

- [Parenting in Ottawa](#)
- [Parent Resource Centre](#)
- [211 Ontario](#)
- [Community Navigation of Eastern Ontario](#)
- [Mental Health and Substance Use Services and Resources](#)

References:

- [Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development: Temperament](#)
- [Parents 2 Parents: The Temperament Corner](#)
- [Georgetown University, Centre for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation](#)