



Media Release

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New Halton Early Years Mental Health Toolkit gets us talking about mental health in the early years

Online resource introduces “8 Areas of Focus” to deepen knowledge and understanding of healthy social-emotional development in infants and young children

Halton Region, Ontario –The Halton-based [Early Years Mental Health Toolkit](#) is a new online resource for service providers who work with and support families with infants and young children. A comprehensive resource on social-emotional development in the first six years of a child's life, the toolkit was developed by the Our Kids Network (OKN) Early Years Mental Health (EYMH) Committee.

Catherine Wills, of the Halton Region Health Department and chair of the OKN EYMH Committee, said research shows that early experiences shape the developing brain and provide the foundation for an individual's mental health and well-being. Yet, mental health in the earliest (and most important) years of a child's life is not something we often hear or talk about.

“Since 2004, the OKN EYMH Committee has been working hard to advance the importance of mental health in the early years. Over the last few years, our committee has focused on developing an easy-to-access “toolkit” of evidence-informed information and resources. The goal is that all Halton service providers who work with young children and their families – the librarian, the swimming instructor, the early childhood educator, or the mental health therapist – can positively influence the mental well-being of children.”

The toolkit makes it easier to use the knowledge in daily practice by simplifying and organizing complex information into 8 Areas of Focus that provide key learning, plus talking points and links to specific resources.

8 Areas of Focus for Healthy Social-Emotional Development of Infants and Young Children

<https://www.ourkidsnetwork.ca/Public/Early-Years-8-Areas-of-Focus>

- Brain Development & the Environment
 - Stress & Brain Development
 - Executive Function & Self-regulation
 - Temperament
 - Resiliency
 - Positive Caring Relationships
 - Attachment
 - Play
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“We’ll also use the toolkit to get people talking and encourage collaboration,” Wills said. “It will help connect service providers and their agencies across Halton to share challenges and ideas and have discussions. We all have a role to play in promoting and protecting the mental well-being of infants, young children and their families.”

For more information about the Halton Early Years Mental Health Toolkit, visit [ourkidsnetwork.ca/EYMHToolkit](https://www.ourkidsnetwork.ca/EYMHToolkit)

Our Kids Network is a Halton-wide partnership of organizations and agencies serving children and youth that embraces the vision “All children thrive.” For more information about Our Kids Network, visit [ourkidsnetwork.ca](https://www.ourkidsnetwork.ca).

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