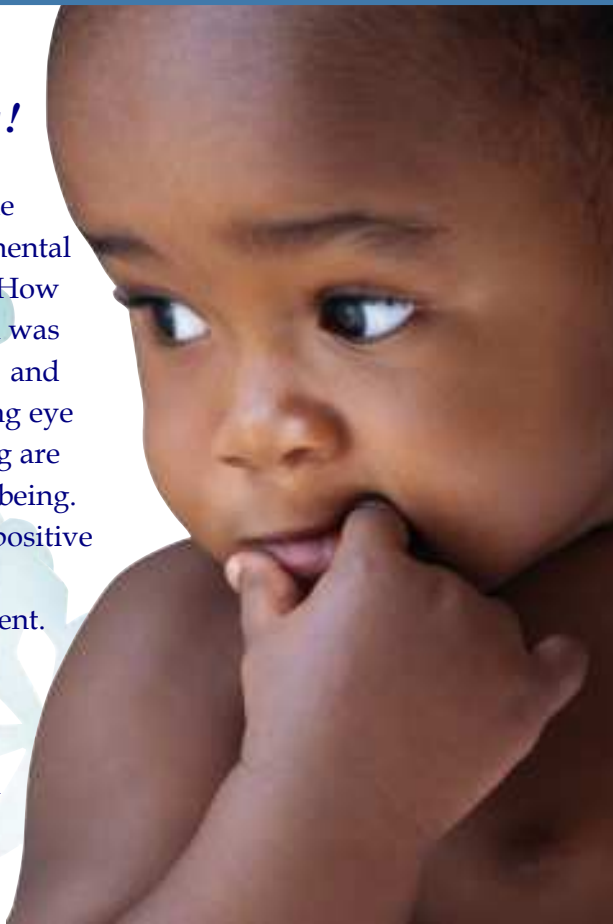




Welcome to Building Blocks!

Gather with any group of parents and the conversation is sure to include developmental milestones. "Is Johnny sitting up yet?" "How old was Jane when she walked?" "When was Suzie potty trained?" What about social and emotional milestones? Things like making eye contact, smiling, and responding to a hug are indications of social and emotional well being. Learning to communicate and building positive relationships should be considered an important part of your child's development. The website www.zerotothree.org has a wealth of information on the social and emotional well being of young children. When developmental questions arise, an early screening is a good way to assess your child's strengths and skills and identify resources to help you address any concerns. Building Blocks is a community resource available to you. Contact us if you have questions about your child's development.



Happy Parenting!

Susan A. Radway, EdD
Project Director

What is Building Blocks?

Building Blocks, as a system of care, is a coordinated network of comprehensive services that meet the mental health needs of children and families.

April 30th and May 1st 2009

Building Blocks Spring 2009 Conference

Early Relationships Matter:

Spreading the word about the importance of social and emotional wellness for young children and their families

Conference and registration information available at www.BuildingBlocksCT.org

new at BB

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You and Your Baby are Forming a Relationship that Lasts a Lifetime

Announcements - pg. 2

~ Play & Support Groups

~ Training Opportunities

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The Importance of Screening for Social and Emotional Development

Evaluation - pg. 4

Presenting Problems of Young Children with Social and Emotional Challenges



www.BuildingBlocksCT.org
or call 860-434-4275

Monthly Play Groups and Support Groups

1st Tuesday - FREE
Play Group ages 2-5
Catholic Charities, Norwich
10:00 -11:00 a.m.

2nd Thursday - FREE
Play Group ages 2-5
Madonna Place, Norwich
10:15 -11:15 a.m.

3rd Monday - FREE
Play Group ages 2-5
Thames River Apartments, New London
4:30 - 5:30 p.m.

4th Friday - FREE
Play Group ages 2-5
Groton Public Library, Groton
10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

2nd and 4th Tuesday
Support Group
Riverfront Children's Center, Groton
Free, limited childcare & dinner
5:00 - 6:45 p.m.

1st Monday and 3rd Wednesday
Support Group
Thames River Apartment, New London
Free, limited childcare & dinner
5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

If you are interested in attending, please
contact Rachel Smolenski
860~434~4890 Ext. 311
rsmolenski@learn.k12.ct.us

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:

Building Blocks is co-sponsoring three trainings with Birth-3, offered through the Special Education Resource Center (SERC).

All are invited!

To register, go to the Building Blocks website training calendar at www.buildingblocksct.org or to the SERC website at www.ctserc.org and look under Professional Development. The trainings are listed in the Early Childhood Booklet.

1. Looking at Children with New Eyes: **Sensory Processing and the Theory of Sensory Integration**

Presenter: Jennifer Rosinia, PhD, Jan. 13, 2009, 9-3:30pm
Cost: \$35.00 Location: Cromwell, Connecticut

2. Infant Toddler Mental Health: **Temperament and Brain Development**

Presenter: JoAnn Robinson, PhD, March 20, 2009, 9-3:30pm
Cost: \$40.00 Location: Meriden, Connecticut

3. **Attachment Theory and Research** as a Framework for Understanding and Supporting Infant Mental Health

Presenter: Martha Farwell Erickson, PhD, April 16, 2009, 9-3:30pm
Cost: \$40.00 Location: Cromwell, Connecticut



EXPLORE: YOU AND YOUR BABY ARE FORMING A RELATIONSHIP THAT LASTS A LIFETIME

The social and emotional development of a young child begins as soon as they encounter their social environment. For most children, from the time they are born, this interaction involves daily contact with parents, family members and other caregivers. The quality of this interaction is very important to a child's healthy development. From birth until around the fifth year, children grow at a faster rate than any other period of life. Because of this, it is important that any unusual or problematic behaviors or emotional distress be identified and addressed as early as possible. Without such early identification and intervention, these problems may have a negative

impact on future stages of your child's development. As a parent, you are the primary individual to assist in the identification of any challenges your child may be having. Bring your concerns to the attention of a qualified professional. They can assist you in identifying resources that will best meet your needs.

SPEAK OUT: The Importance of Screening for Social and Emotional Development



Over the past two decades, studies in child research have indicated that well-designed early intervention improves the chances of positive developmental outcomes for young children who are at developmental risk due to biological or environmental risk factors. Such research has also suggested that early intervention can improve social and emotional functioning and reduce later violence and antisocial behavior in school-age children. It has become increasingly apparent that early identification of young children is an important step towards preventing a wide range of problems in later social and emotional development. Early intervention programs and services have been found to be highly successful in improving relationships and reduce the need for intervention at a later age.



Even very young children can demonstrate signs of social and emotional difficulties and challenges. Because of this, screening is an effective way to identify those children who may benefit from early intervention services. Screening can be a quick evaluation of a child's current behavior. Screening is the first step in determining whether or not a child may benefit from a more in-depth professional assessment. It is important to understand that the primary purpose of screening is not to diagnose a child or to directly qualify them for specific services. Screening usually includes the use of a widely accepted assessment tool that is intended to distinguish those children in need of further evaluation from those who do not have such a need.



In addition, the screening process involves the gathering of information from individuals directly involved with the child, such as parents, family members and teachers. If concerns arise as a result of this initial process, the referral to professional resources is another important function of the screening experience. Having appropriate and well-managed screening programs available in places where young children and their families typically go, such as health care, child care and education settings, can assist in the identification of children with social and emotional challenges and with providing support and services for the entire family.

There are many resources available to parents with concerns about their child's development. If you wish to obtain more information, you may visit the Collaborating Partners website at: www.collaboratingpartners.com/EarlyID/myrole.htm



Building Blocks Evaluation Highlights: Presenting Problems of Young Children with Social and Emotional Challenges

By Amy Griffin and Joy Kaufman, Yale Consultation Center

Why is Building Blocks Evaluated?

Because of our Federal funding, Building Blocks participates in a national evaluation that includes the collection of descriptive information for all enrolled families. In addition, some families choose to participate in an outcome study that investigates how children and families are impacted by Building Blocks. These families are interviewed every six months for three years.

What are the Presenting Problems for Building Blocks Children?

The most frequent presenting problems reported by caregivers as the reasons why they contacted Building Blocks are listed in Figure 1. The information presented is based on caregiver responses regarding the 84 children that have been served by Building Blocks from 2006 to the present.

From Figure 1, it can be noted that the top concern (86.7%) reported during the intake process is that the child is exhibiting *disruptive behaviors* which include aggression, severe defiance, acting out, impulsivity, recklessness, and an excessively high level of activity. Slightly more than one third (36.1%) of the reported concerns were related to *excessive crying and tantrums*, followed by *persistent non-compliance* (not listening to the caregiver's requests of the child) 21.7%, *sleeping problems* 10.8%, *change in household* (such as loss of a family member or parent deployment) 8.4%, *separation problems* (being separated from primary caregiver) 7.2%, and *exclusion from preschool or childcare* due to the child's social and emotional challenges 7.2%.

What are the Benefits of Early Identification?

Early identification and intervention are necessary steps in the prevention of more serious difficulties, as well as opportunities to enhance family functioning and child development. **Responses given during the outcome study interviews demonstrate that after receiving six months of services, caregivers report substantially less strain, improved family functioning, and improved child outcomes.** Statistically meaningful differences in caregiver report from baseline to six month follow-up interview reveals:

- ~ A reduction in many of the presenting problems at intake, such as sleeping problems, withdrawal, anxiousness/depression, attention problems, aggressive behavior, and internalizing and externalizing problems.
- ~ A reduction in child difficulties.
- ~ A reduction in behavioral concerns noted by the caregiver.
- ~ An increase in the child's ability to exhibit self control.

Figure 1: Top Presenting Problems Reported at Intake (n=84)

