

CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 2010 INFANT TODDLER MENTAL HEALTH COALITION OF ARIZONA
Member Contribution Edition

BE IN THE KNOW! PROP 302

In 2006, we (the Arizona voters) approved a tax on tobacco for the purpose of creating a fund for Early Childhood “to increase the quality of and access to early childhood development and health services for children up to five years of age”. This funding is now known as First Things First: <http://www.azftf.gov/Pages/default.aspx>



On November 2nd, the legislature is asking the voters to sweep this tobacco tax revenue from early childhood programs and put it into the general fund. The **tobacco tax will still be in place but the money would no longer go to Early Childhood**. There is countless research on the *fiscal benefit of investing in early childhood*.

In the time since First Things First was created, programs all over the state have been working to fill the gap where services have been eradicated due to budget cuts. These programs support families of all income and education levels all over the state. Information on how the money is being spent is very public and accessible on the First Things First website. You can enter your zip code to learn more about what is happening in the



region you live in. In just three years, **First Things First has helped more than 330,000 Arizona children from birth through age five**, and has delivered tens of

millions of dollars to communities across the state. **These activities are completely separate from the state’s general fund**, due to the dedicated tobacco tax.

For more information on First Things First or Proposition 302, please visit: www.no302.com.

For more information on Prop 302 and other propositions on the ballot this November, please visit www.pafcoalition.org.

For more information about the importance of children’s earliest years, view this video from The Ounce of Prevention Fund. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbSp88PBegE>

ENDORSEMENT NEWS

Thinking of Endorsement? Wonder if you are eligible? YES YOU ARE! View the requirements for each of the four levels at our website! www.itmhca.org Next exam for levels 3 & 4 will be January 2011 however **portfolios are due by November 22**. Remember, no exam needed for levels one or two! Show your employer what you know about young children and get endorsed today!



UPCOMING TRAININGS/EVENTS

NTI is coming to Phoenix!!

December 8-11, Zero to Three will host their 25th National Training Institute at JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa. Register today at www.zerotothree.org



MORE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FROM ITMHCA!

Friday, November 5, 2010 at ASU. Please check the website for training details.



ARE YOU UP-TO-DATE or OUT-OF-DATE?

ITMHCA strives to keep the distribution list current, however, recent job changes have caused many interruptions in membership and newsletter privileges. Please verify you are a member and/or join today at www.itmhca.org



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WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

Natalie Anderson, Kim Skrentny, Dawn Yazzie and Rose Wilson! We look forward to your contributions to our Coalition for the next 2 years!



LEAGUE RETREAT

ITMHC is a *member state* of the League of States (a.k.a. 'the League') using the Michigan Endorsement System of Culturally-Sensitive Relationship-Based Practice Promoting Infant Mental Health.

The first League of States was held in Phoenix in 2008 and continues annually, immediately prior to NTI. Representatives from each state that has adopted the endorsement program are invited to attend. The purpose of this gathering is to discuss the growing profession of IMH and develop strategies/supports to help providers.

The League of States is comprised of 16 states and is growing! The national organization, Zero To Three, and other collaborative groups across the country are considering the merits of the Competencies and the use of the Endorsement process.

The December 2010 Retreat, again to be held in Phoenix, will discuss reflection supervision, as well as strategies for capacity building (degree/certification and community-based training programs, funding, access to reflective supervision). This year will additionally explore research design and methodology in support of reflective supervision.

For more detailed information on the League Retreat and how you might be able to participate, please visit the Endorsement tab on our website.

RESEARCH THESIS ON ARIZONA'S DAY CARE SYSTEM

by Katie Paschall, BS
Family and Human Development

In the past 40 years, America has seen a significant change in the family structure that contributed to a dramatic shift in the number of children in daycare. The National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD) launched a comprehensive, national longitudinal study examining the different kinds of non-maternal care and its effect on development, families and society. Amid conflicting ideas on the effects of early exposure to daycare, researchers agree on one finding: while children in early child care develop more pro-social behaviors than their peers, they also show higher levels of aggression when they reach kindergarten. We designed a study to investigate the amounts of aggression seen in Arizona day cares and five factors related to aggression: quantity of care, staff to child ratio, caregivers' education level, children's gender and whether the center uses developmentally appropriate responses to aggression.

Our research focused on these five variables because of their prominence in NICHD research. This research found that "larger amounts of child care were associated with behavior problems, even after quality of care was controlled" (NICHD, 2002). Other studies found that most predictive child care factor for positive developmental outcomes is the ratio of caregiver to child and the second highest predictive factors are caregiver education level and beliefs about child-rearing (NICHD, 2002; 2003). Arizona's state-mandated caregiver-child ratios are higher than is recommended by the National Network for Child Care, National Association for the Education of Young Children, and has higher ratios than the national average (National Child Care Information Center, 2008; Office of Child Care Licensing). For this reason, Arizona children in day care are at serious risk for increased aggression, as compared to other states. There are some consistent age and gender specific trends of aggression, also. Physical aggression peaks for both sexes at age two. After the age of two, boys are consistently reported to be more aggressive than girls by teachers, parents & trained

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observers (NICHD, 2001).

Finally, research shows that punitive responses to aggression are not developmentally appropriate strategies and do not adequately curb negative externalizing behaviors (i.e., aggression). In contrast to punitive responses, many studies have confirmed that as children develop more advanced language skills, they are less physically aggressive. Research has found that the tools children need to express themselves include learning emotional language and having their emotions recognized by caregivers. Caregivers must teach children “emotional” vocabulary, help to expand overall receptive and expressive language, as well as provide and explain alternatives to physical aggression that are prosocial (Kurowski, McMenamy, Grolnick, & Bridges, 1998).

With this information, we designed a study to examine the trends in aggression in day cares throughout the state of Arizona, and how the myriad of day care centers respond to aggression. Guided by previous research, our hypotheses are: 1) male toddlers in Arizona show more aggression than female toddlers, 2) the quantity of care is positively correlated with the frequency of aggression, 3) caregiver to child ratio is negatively correlated with the frequency of aggression, 4) the level of a caregiver’s education is negatively correlated with the frequency of aggression, and 5) centers that focus on socioemotional and language development when responding to aggression will show lower frequencies of aggression.

The study included 32 participants from all fifteen counties in Arizona. Each participant filled out a 29-question, anonymous electronic survey. The survey assessed demographic information, as well as the types and amounts of aggression shown by toddlers. Additionally, the survey assessed how center staff responded to aggression by asking open-ended questions about what exact words or phrases they would use with a child who had just shown aggressive behaviors, their views on discipline and what has influenced those views.

This research produced three significant findings. First, there was an association between the amount of children entering with aggression and the amount of children whose aggression worsens over time: the higher the number of aggressive children, the higher the number of children with worsening aggression. This finding reveals the importance of evaluating and catering to each unique classroom

dynamic. Second, there was an association between a day care worker’s education level and the amount of children’s aggression worsening over time: the higher the education levels, the lower the children’s aggression. There are financial barriers to requiring day care workers to have high education levels, but future research can examine whether it is the knowledge gained from education, or certain aspects of the experience of earning a higher degree that sets these workers apart from those who obtained a high school diploma or GED. Third, there was an association between the way day care workers responded to aggression and children’s aggression worsening over time; overall, day care centers with developmentally-focused responses to aggression had less aggressive children. It is imperative that day care centers move away from punitive responses to aggression and toward positive reinforcement, modeling, synchrony, reflecting emotions, and focusing on emotional language.

This study emphasizes how day care workers play a vital role in curbing toddler aggression: with adequate training they can foster language and positive socioemotional development; however, they also have the potential to create an environment that fosters worsening aggression.

A NOTE ABOUT MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

ITMHCA encourages participation by its members. Any submissions are not considered an endorsement of ITMHCA but rather an opportunity to enlighten the community as a whole of upcoming events and topics of interests.