



Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Strategy
Community Co-designed
Guiding Principles
for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health in King County



Principle 1

We honor and cherish the cultural roots and the stories of where babies of color come from.

How?

We reclaim and sustain cultural and family practices.

Practices

- Respect and encourage family's cultural celebrations, rituals, food, traditions, and families' way of life.
- Create opportunities for family storytelling of traditional stories, ancestral practices, family celebrations, or songs.
- Respect the homes of BIPOC families when entering their environment.
- Support parents in recognizing the power of bilingual, multilingual, and multicultural environments in the development of children.

Principle 2

We facilitate connections to be one with nature.

How?

We support families in creating enjoyable opportunities for outdoor nature connections.

Practices

- Hold home visits and activities outdoors, connecting with nature for play and interaction.
- Help families identify outdoor resources like parks, walking paths, and community gardens.
- Promote play in inclement weather.
- Honor the cultural and healing connections that families have with the natural world.
- Build knowledge of environmental justice with children's books.

Principle 3

Everyone, everywhere, is impacting a baby. We are all accountable.

How?

A sign of a community's success is the thriving of babies of color. Each of us has a collective responsibility for the well-being of all children.

Practices

- Be flexible, adaptable, and willing to continuously transform along with the families and communities we serve.
- Do the necessary personal self-work by seeking support and training on self-awareness, ableism, oppression, socio-emotional well-being, racial justice, and liberation.
- Advocate for systems that create thriving communities for babies of color.
- Participate in reflecting on how our personal and collective roles impact each child's development, and share with others the solutions and successes you are finding.

Principle 4

Community connections support the emotional health of children and families of color.

How?

We cultivate meaningful connections to build a nurturing village.

Practices

- Explore play and activities that connect to the child's community, culture, and ancestral practices.
- Create spaces for immigrant, refugee, and isolated families to connect and build relationships of care for each other and their babies.
- Expand beyond the nuclear family to include connections to other caregiving roles and the broader community.
- Listen with curiosity to the family's dreams and hopes for community connection and support them in finding spaces of collective care.

Principle 5

We affirm the child's development and celebrate the child's unique identities.

How?

We nurture and honor the wholeness of the baby.

Practices

- Acknowledge children as their full selves.
- Honor the gift of sharing moments of connection with the child. Listen to them with mind, eyes, ears, and heart.
- Respect the family's and children's identities, preferences, culture, and traditions when entering their lives.
- Sustain or build communities grounded in ancestry where babies of color can thrive and find spaces for shared joy.
- Embrace LGBTQ families and children and affirm their experiences.

Principle 6

We honor the self-determination of BIPOC families and caregivers.

How?

We support BIPOC families to choose the road they want to travel for their child's development, then become a bridge to help them navigate some of the obstacles they may encounter.

Practices

- Support each BIPOC family to develop at their own pace by nourishing their intersectionality.
- Collective liberation requires us to collaborate radically with families by honoring their lead when bringing our support and expertise.
- Await for the family's readiness. Respect the necessary time or stillness a family may need to heal or process.
- Be observant and learn about the family's beliefs, values, culture, relationship dynamics, priorities, and goals.
- Affirm the family's strength's and celebrate their successes and milestones.

Thank you!

We acknowledge and extend our gratitude to all the participants who contributed to co-designing these Guiding Principles for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health in King County. Thank you for your time, energy, and clear vision to keep building communities where babies grow to be happy, healthy, safe, and thriving.

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