



ZFive at Five

ZFive marks its fifth anniversary in 2012 and would like to pause long enough to take stock of where it's been and where it's going. We want to know what you think.

ZFive is a team of clinicians, researchers, program managers and parents in Mecklenburg County who are dedicated to improving the lives of children, ages birth through five, with mental health issues and their families. Since 2007, ZFive has been working to raise awareness, build resources and enhance the quality of developmental services provided to young children. Represented by more than 25 organizations, ZFive meets monthly to share information, build and implement new initiatives, evaluate progress and support each other on issues of shared concern. Subgroups work between meetings to move initiatives forward. Recent activities include the identification and development of trauma screening and attachment focused assessment protocols and instruments.

Increasing Public Awareness

ZFive has produced three reports to frame the issues and identify the community needs in the field of infant and young child mental health. These reports are available at www.zfive.org.

- (1) An Assessment of Infant Mental Health Needs in Mecklenburg County: A Report to Smart Start of Mecklenburg County on behalf of The Infant Mental Health Working Group, April 15, 2008
- (2) Risk, Responsibility and Opportunity: Facing the Facts about the Social-Emotional Health Needs of Mecklenburg County's Most Vulnerable Young Children Prepared by Natalie Conner, Ph.D. for the Infant Mental Health Working Group, July 21, 2009
- (3) ZFive Recommendations: Addressing the social-emotional needs of children 0-5 with a substantiated finding of abuse or neglect or in need of services in Mecklenburg County , 2010

MISSION

The mission of ZFive is to expand the availability and accessibility of high quality mental health services and supports to young children 0-5 years old and their families in Mecklenburg County, and to raise public and professional awareness about mental health needs for young children.

VISION

- ❖ A high quality, integrated and easily accessible array of services and supports to meet the needs of young children 0-5 with mental health issues and their families in Mecklenburg County, and
- ❖ Families, child-serving agencies and health care providers who are well-informed about:
 - supporting healthy social and emotional development,
 - supporting family relationships, and
 - preventing and treating infant/early childhood mental health issues.

ZFive's website, www.zfive.org, connects families and professionals with information including:

- (1) A locally produced video in English and Spanish for parents with concerns about their young child's development
- (2) Local news and events particularly regarding professional development opportunities
- (3) Recommended reading and helpful websites on topics related to healthy social and emotional development of young children
- (4) Overview of ZFive programs and reports
- (5) An "I Need Help" button that connects parents to:
 - a) Definitions of the different types of providers in the community
 - b) Questions to ask providers while shopping for the right match for their child
 - c) Links to resources on how to choose a provider
 - d) Family support resources in NC
 - e) A list of NC licensed providers in Mecklenburg County—agencies and individuals—caring for the social and emotional development needs of young children 0-5 years old. This list includes a description of the services provided, insurance accepted, locations where services are provided, languages spoken—and more.

Building Resources and Enhancing Quality

Mentoring Program. ZFive offers licensed clinicians the opportunity to participate in a six-month mentoring experience led by Laverne Fesperman, MSW, LCSW. Established in 2008, the Mentoring Program increases the number of licensed clinicians who are competent in evaluating and treating the mental health needs of children ages birth through five years via evidenced-based assessments and practices. Clinicians gain knowledge about the skills needed to work with children of age and their families, as well as become acquainted with evidence-based evaluations and therapeutic interventions for this population. Additionally, the Mentee practices his/her new skills with children and families, with guidance from the Mentor, via weekly mentoring sessions and monthly group mentoring meetings.

Peer Consultation. In February 2012, ZFive launched a peer consultation initiative to expand understanding, appreciation, knowledge and awareness of the clinical issues involved in Infant Mental Health and to support the Mecklenburg community in enriching the quality of treatment services for infants, toddlers, young children and their families. Monthly meetings, geared for a broad base of professionals, are led by core clinicians, Carrie Reinecke, MSW, LCSW; Laverne Fesperman, MSW, LCSW; and Libby Rains, MSW, LCSW.

YFS Collaboration. In 2010, ZFive completed its pilot where a single Infant Mental Health specialist was embedded in the Department of Social Services' Geo-District One to serve as a consultant, coach and trainer for YFS social workers and supervisors. In 2012, YFS and Mecklenburg Children's Developmental Services partnered to co-locate a licensed mental health clinician and a case coordinator in each Geo-District. With the support of a supervisor, they collaborate with the YFS social workers to meet the needs of young children. Targeting all children under age 5 with a YFS case designated as (1) substantiated abuse or neglect or (2) in need of services, the goal is improvement in child and family

access to developmentally appropriate services that support children's educational, social and emotional well-being.

Infant Mental Health Training Series. ZFive, in conjunction with Charlotte Area Health Education Center (AHEC), has developed an ongoing training series covering a broad array of issues regarding social and emotional development in children birth to age five. The training series offers topical presentations by nationally recognized experts in the field of early childhood mental health. Many of these workshops are paired with community impact events to bring further attention to the information and to deepen awareness and capacity in our community.

More information about each of these initiatives can be found at www.zfive.org.

Extending Our Reach

ZFive continuously looks for opportunities to grow awareness about the field of infant and young child mental health outside of Mecklenburg County—as well as to learn from others across the state. ZFive members:

- (1) Connect each other to opportunities for participation in best practice learning collaboratives
- (2) Have presented ZFive highlights at the national Smart Start Conference as well as local conferences and gatherings
- (3) Are participating in an advisory capacity in the development of the Institute of Medicine's Infant Mental Health Study
- (4) Are supporting the development of the new NC Infant and Young Child Mental Health Association.

Generous funding from Smart Start of Mecklenburg County supported ZFive's early initiatives.

Continued financial support comes from Mecklenburg County Children's Developmental Services.

The Lee Institute provides logistical and strategic support to ZFive.

What Do You Think?

- ❖ Where should ZFive pay particular attention over the next couple of years?
- ❖ What talent or resources could you contribute to strengthen ZFive?
- ❖ How could ZFive and its members help you or your organization?
- ❖ What additional information do you wish you had about ZFive or about infant mental health?
- ❖ Who else should ZFive speak with as part of "taking stock"?

Contact John Ellis at john.ellis@mecklenburgcountync.gov or Libby Cable at lcable@leeinstitute.org.

Did you know.....

- There are nearly 80,000 children zero to five in Mecklenburg County
- Nationally, an estimated one in five children has a diagnosable mental health disorder
- Examples of mental health issues affecting young children include failure to thrive, parent-child relational problems, sleep disorders, depression, adjustment disorders and attachment disorders, among others
- Left unaddressed, mental health issues in early childhood can lead to failure in school, drug abuse, family conflicts, violence and, in most extreme cases, suicide
- The earlier these issues are identified and treated, the more likely future mental health issues and problem behaviors will be prevented.

Mental health in young children is about healthy social and emotional development—their ability to experience, regulate and express emotions; form close interpersonal relationships; and explore their environment and learn.

If you would like more information, visit us online.

www.zfive.org

