



**Georgia Dept
of Early Care
and Learning**

BRIGHT FROM THE START



Child Care Services Spring 2024 Newsletter

Dear Child Care Provider,

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning will celebrate the third annual Children's Mental Health Week May 6 – 10. During Children's Mental Health week, we promote activities that help children, and their caregivers recognize the importance of social and emotional development. We also celebrate early learning professionals and the important role they play in supporting early childhood mental health!



We have lots of fun activities planned for early care and learning classrooms for the week, and you can find out all about them [here](#).

Be sure to check out the self-care resources for teachers while you're there. Please share pictures of your class engaged in Children's Mental Health Week activities to social media using the hashtags **#littlekidsbigfeelings** and **#DECALCMHWeek2024** during the week, and you'll be entered into a drawing to win self-care gift cards being provided by our partners at the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS).

Also please check out the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health links below.

Thanks for all you do and Happy Spring!

Pam Stevens

Pam Stevens
Deputy Commissioner
for Child Care Services



[CONTACT US](#)

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Links

- [DECAL's IECMH Webpage](#)
- [DECAL's Children's Mental Health Week Webpage](#)
- [IECMH Issue Brief](#)
- [IECMH Issue Brief #2](#)
- [DECAL IECMH/Early Relational Health Video – long version](#)
- [Harvard Center for the Developing Child. Early Childhood Mental Health Science Resources](#)
- [Georgia Association of Infant Mental Health GA-AIMH, Birth to Five](#)
- [GA-AIMH 2023 Conference Registration Link](#)
- [Child Parent Psychotherapy](#)
- [Sesame Workshop](#)

Importance of Caregiver Relationships

Children grow and develop best when given the opportunity to have close, warm relationships with others, particularly adults. The development of



attachment relationships is particularly important for infants. Secure, trusting relationships with caregivers are essential if young children are to thrive and learn in the child care environment. Children who do not have this security often become suspicious, uncaring, and even hostile towards others. Children who

learn to trust others are more likely to become confident, secure adults who respect themselves and others and are able to form healthy emotional attachments. When a staff person is planning to depart, it is advisable to prepare children in advance for the transition to another adult.

Ways Caregivers Can Practice Self Care

Article by [Strong4Life](#)

Acknowledge your feelings, and allow yourself to feel them. The only way to deal with feelings is to name them and work through them. There is no right or wrong way to feel. Whatever you feel is real and valid. Sometimes just acknowledging what we feel can provide a sense of control and lower our stress.

Avoid comparing your feelings to others'. It's common to compare our circumstances to another person's and think we shouldn't feel a certain way. For example, if you think someone is going through something harder than you are, you may think you're not allowed to feel stressed or upset. But your feelings and experiences are just as real and valid as anyone else's. Similar to how we'd encourage you to not minimize or dismiss your kids' feelings, we encourage you to not invalidate yours either. Everyone's situation is unique, and we're all allowed to feel whatever we feel.

Practice healthy habits. It sounds simple enough, but try to prioritize eating a balanced diet, moving your body and getting enough quality sleep. Practicing healthy habits can sometimes help prevent stress, and it helps us feel better. Have you ever snapped when you were hungry (aka hangry) or tired (aka cranky)? Staying ahead of the game by getting good sleep and eating well can help keep the little things from becoming bigger things.

Follow a routine. Routines create predictability, and knowing what to expect can offer a sense of comfort and

security. Try to keep at least one simple routine, such as waking up or going to bed at the same time each day.

Give yourself a break, and let go of your inner perfectionist. Things won't always go as planned, so we need to have realistic expectations. Give yourself permission to bend where you need to—even if it's something you wouldn't normally do. Cut yourself some slack. You are doing your best. That might mean saying yes to things you normally say no to or vice versa. It's OK to make exceptions and adjustments as needed to care for yourself. There's no textbook to follow, and there's no one right or wrong way to do it. Find what works best for you.

Click [HERE](#) for more.

What is Children's Mental Health?

Article by the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Being mentally healthy during childhood means reaching developmental and emotional milestones and learning healthy social skills and how to cope when there are problems. Mentally healthy children have a positive quality of life and can function well at home, in school, and in their communities.

Mental disorders among children are described as serious changes in the way children typically learn, behave, or handle their emotions, which cause distress and problems getting through the day. Many children occasionally experience fears and worries or display disruptive behaviors. If symptoms are serious and persistent and interfere with school, home, or play activities, the child may be diagnosed with a mental disorder.

Mental health is not simply the absence of a mental disorder. Children who don't have a mental disorder might differ in how well they are doing, and children who have the same diagnosed mental disorder might differ in their strengths and weaknesses in how they are developing and coping, and in their quality of life. Mental health as a continuum and the identification of specific mental disorders are both ways to understand how well children are doing.

Click Here to Read Entire
Article

I Notice, I Feel, I Can

By Sesame Workshop

A three-step plan to help children manage challenging emotions.



Coping Skills for Kids with Anxiety

By Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Strong4Life

STRONG⁴LIFE



Children's
Healthcare of Atlanta

Just like we need to help kids and teens learn to identify and express feelings, we need to teach them how to manage (or cope) with them. Coping skills are strategies we use to manage feelings and handle stress.

Coping skills are tools or strategies anyone can use to manage their feelings, reduce stress and become more resilient (better able to handle life's ups and downs). What works for you one day may not work the next, so build your coping skills toolbox by learning and practicing lots of different strategies. A few examples are below:

 Be active	 Find your calm	 Get creative	 Connect with others	 Shift your mindset
Put on music and dance	Take some deep breaths	Color, draw or paint	Cuddle or play with your pet	Think of something positive
Build with Legos or blocks	Listen to music or sing a song	Play with Play-Doh or sand	Read a book with someone	Focus on one thing you're grateful for
Do 10 jumping jacks	Close your eyes and count to 10 or backward from 100	Play an instrument	Play a game with a friend or family member	Identify your top three strengths
Run in place for 20 seconds	Take a quiet break or rest	Make up a song	Work with someone on a puzzle	Think about something you're looking forward to
Bounce a ball or play catch	Have a drink of cold water	Write about your thoughts or feelings	Write someone a letter	Focus on the present moment
Go for a walk, run or hike	Blow bubbles	Create a dance	Share your feelings with someone you trust	Think about something that makes you laugh

[Click to View Coping Skills Chart](#)

[Click to Read Entire Article](#)

Feelings Detectives

By Sesame Workshop



Children need grown-ups' support to understand feelings — their own and those of others. They're beginning to recognize that how someone feels on the inside often shows on the outside. By starting early, we help children to:

- Express and label their feelings in a healthy way, using an ever-growing list of “feelings words.” Words have power!
- Build a stronger understanding of how their emotions are felt in their bodies.
- Notice others' body and face and look for clues that show how the person is feeling.

Share this video with children and try playing your own version of the game with different feelings. You might remind children:

- I'm always here to help you name your feelings and talk about why you may be feeling them.
- Someone else may feel differently than you about the same thing, such as feeling excited or nervous about a school performance or birthday party with new friends.
- When we focus on feeling our emotional responses, we can then name those feelings, like sad, frustrated, curious, or happy.

And Try This!

- When reading storybooks together, look at pictures of characters and play “feelings detective” on each page. Look closely at characters' faces and bodies. How do children know a character is feeling a certain way? Why may they be feeling that way?

[Click to Learn](#)



Clean Water for Georgia Kids™

THE IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTING LEAD IN DRINKING WATER EXPOSURE

Lead is a toxic metal, and there is *no* safe level of exposure. Early childhood lead exposure can cause lifelong behavioral and cognitive deficits. Lead in water can come from various sources, including lead service lines, piping, and plumbing, including faucet fixtures and solder.

Fortunately, exposure is preventable!

The best way to prevent exposure is to test every tap used for drinking and cooking and take no-cost or low-cost steps to remove lead, if it is found.



The Clean Water for Georgia Kids is a free program, helping to identify and get the lead out of drinking and cooking water where children learn and play. This program is a partnership between RTI International, a nonprofit research institute, and the Georgia Department of Education.

Our approach is designed for easy online registration, enrollment, and participation!

To get started you can register for one of the 30- minute required webinars [here](#).

How you can participate:

1. **Sign up** for a 45-minute pre-enrollment webinar on how to enroll and participate at <https://bit.ly/3hW66kN>. They are offered several days each month at 10 AM and 1 PM.
2. **Enroll at** www.cleanwaterforUSkids.org/Georgia using the access code provided during virtual training.
3. **Collect and ship water samples** with trained facility staff (about 1-3 minutes per tap).
4. **Receive results** from RTI, along with no-cost and low-cost recommendations for action, if needed.
5. **Share results** five days after you receive your results via our facility data mapper, another tool to share your efforts to protect children's health with parents, caregivers, staff, and students.

Together with your help, we can protect and make positive changes in the lives of young children across Georgia. Sign up today for a brighter tomorrow!

For more information, visit www.cleanwaterforUSkids.org/georgia, call 1-855-997-3183, or scan the QR code!



Consumer Product Safety Commission Children's Products Recalls

Sign up today to receive up-to-date email notifications whenever



children's products are recalled by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

[**Click Here to Enroll**](#)

Interested?

Interested in reading past issues of the CCS Newsletter? Click [here!](#)



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