

About
Building Connections
for Young Children



PROJECT



*About Building Connections
for young children and their families*

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Project ABC

Project ABC is designed to create change at the beginning of children's lives. Particularly when they are infants and toddlers, children need support to optimize their healthy social and emotional development which, for some children, is facilitated by mental health services.

What is Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health?

Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health refers to the social and emotional well-being of children under the age of six. Positive relationships between young children and adults lay the foundation for healthy social and emotional development. This foundation allows children to:

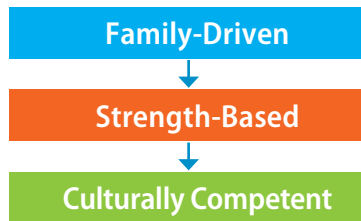
- ◆ Experience a range of emotions, cope with frustrations, and regulate their behaviors;
- ◆ Safely explore and learn from their environments; and
- ◆ Feel protected in their families and neighborhoods



What is Project ABC?

Project ABC is a multi-year, federally funded project to help Los Angeles County design an integrated early childhood System of Care service network that is based on family needs and includes families as partners in planning and service delivery.

Our goal is to ensure that children, birth to five years who live in Los Angeles, have access to services that are:



Our **services** for children birth to five and their families draw from the strengths of a variety of disciplines and utilize specialty training and a relationship-based approach.

They include:

- ◆ Home visiting
- ◆ Training and consultation for parents and professionals
- ◆ Care coordination
- ◆ Therapeutic preschool groups
- ◆ Parenting classes and support groups
- ◆ Parent-Infant/Child Therapy (Dyadic Therapy)
- ◆ Family therapy
- ◆ Assessment services
- ◆ ParenTeen (groups for teen parents)
- ◆ Coordination with schools, service agencies, and professionals
- ◆ Evidence-based programs such as Parent-Child Interaction Therapy and The Incredible Years



services PUBLIC AWARENESS *community building* ADVOCACY

Implementing a system of care model for service delivery for children from birth to age 5

A system of care is a coordinated network of community-based resources that integrates health, education, social and legal services that are organized to meet the mental health needs of very young children. Families work in partnership with organizations to design mental health services and supports that are effective, that build on the strengths of individuals, and that address each person's cultural and linguistic needs.

The Project ABC early childhood service network was initially launched in Service Planning Area 4 in Central Los Angeles and has now expanded to Service Planning Area 8 in Southern Los Angeles County, with the goal of developing innovative approaches that can be replicated in other areas of the country. Project ABC is working to develop a coordinated community network of trained service providers, representing multiple sectors, involved with very young children and their families.

Advocating for systems change to support families with very young children

Project ABC is a system of care initiative based in Los Angeles that employs both service improvement and policy change strategies to positively transform the way in which young children with mental health needs and their families receive support.

"The family is at the center of the process, and they always have as much say about the plan as the providers involved."

WILLIAM ARROYO, M.D.

*Medical Director, Child Youth and Family Administration
Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health*



“It is important to know the developmental stages that our kids go through, and Project ABC has taught me that.”

YVETTE

Mother of Joshua

Project ABC has developed a **Governing Board** of key public and private birth-to-five stakeholders throughout the county to begin to address the policy issues affecting its target population. ABC works to bring together key leadership from the various systems that serve young children and families in Los Angeles in order to strategize about innovative approaches to addressing system-level barriers that families of young children encounter when trying to access services and supports.

Features of Project ABC’s policy and system change approach include family forums, media products, a policy summit and a “white paper” of family-driven recommendations.

Workforce Development and Training

A core component of Project ABC is interdisciplinary professional development in the area of infant and early childhood mental health. Project ABC provides high quality, low-cost trainings for the workforce in Los Angeles that increases expertise around infant and early childhood mental health issues.

Sharing information and resources

Project ABC is building public awareness of the social and emotional needs of infants and young children through media outreach, development and dissemination of public education materials, and training for professionals and families in the community.

Our website, www.ProjectABC-LA.org, provides a broad range of timely resources to help educate families, providers, and policymakers about the need for infant and early childhood mental health services that utilize a relationship-based approach. *Also en español.*

Monitoring our efforts to ensure that we are providing the highest quality services

ABC includes a research component and families enrolled are asked to participate in a multi-year research protocol. Each family's information is confidential, but by participating in the research study, families will help develop a "family-designed" service approach for Los Angeles County.

Parents give the following reasons for seeking specialized infant/early childhood mental health treatment services:

*"Learning that my son has **behavior problems**."*

*"The way my child **handles animals**, very rough."*

*"To know if my child had **physical and mental problems** like me."*

*"To learn **parenting skills**."*

*"**Behavior problems**, fights among siblings."*

*"**Playing hard**, hitting, talking back."*

*"**How to care for my child better** and know how she is developing."*



Project ABC is a collaboration of:

- ◆ Children's Institute, Inc. – childrensinstitute.org
- ◆ For The Child – forthechild.org
- ◆ Pacific Asian Counseling Services – pacsla.org
- ◆ TIES for Families
- ◆ Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health – dmh.lacounty.gov
- ◆ Los Angeles County Department of Child and Family Services – dcfs.co.la.ca.us
- ◆ USC School of Social Work – sowkweb.usc.edu

Project ABC is funded through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration – samhsa.gov

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www.ProjectABC-LA.org*

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For more information please visit:

www.ProjectABC-LA.org

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