

Child Care & Early Education RESEARCH CONNECTIONS

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Child Care and Early Education for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma: Research-to-Policy Resources

As evidence of the damaging developmental consequences of toxic stress in early childhood continues to grow (Harvard University, Center for the Developing Child, n.d.), researchers and policymakers have turned their attention to trauma as a key source of toxic stress. A recent brief published by the U.S. Administration for Children in Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) funded NITR (Network of Infant Toddler Researchers), defines trauma as “witnessing or experiencing an event that poses a real or perceived threat” (Harden, 2015, p. 1). The Florida State University, Center for Prevention and Early Intervention Policy, defines trauma as “an event that is unpredictable, produces a feeling of helplessness, and overwhelms one’s capacity to cope” (Florida State University, Center for Prevention and Early Intervention Policy, n. d.)

Trauma is a multidimensional concept: a traumatic event can be one-time or recurring; trauma can be single-faceted or complex, consisting of multiple, simultaneous traumatic events (Harden, 2015, p. 2). Examples of trauma include: witnessing or directly experiencing community or family violence, including physical and sexual abuse; separation from caregivers; neglect, including physical or medical neglect; other forms of maltreatment; serious illness; war; natural disasters; and accidents (Harden, 2015, p. 2). Infants and toddlers are particularly vulnerable to maltreatment. More than a quarter of maltreatment victims are under three years old, and rates of victimization are 2.3 percent for infants and 1.1 percent for toddlers (Mortensen & Barnett, 2016).

The harmful impacts of trauma in early childhood can be severe and enduring. Neurological changes occur in children that experience trauma. These hinder their cognitive and socioemotional development (Perry & Connors-Burrow, 2016). Children who experience maltreatment or are exposed to violence are more likely “to experience poor developmental and academic outcomes, high rates of high school dropout, criminal involvement, incarceration, and various mental health issues including depression, psychiatric disorders, and substance dependency” (Dinehart, Katz, Manfra, & Ullery, 2013, p.284). Such



is the importance of addressing the harms caused by trauma that a number of agencies within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services collaborated on the development of a *Resource Guide to Trauma-Informed Human Services* (U.S. Administration for Children and Families, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, & U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, n. d.).

This **Research-to-Policy Resource List** identifies resources in the *Research Connections* collection published in the past 10 years that examine the role child care and early education can play in both preventing traumatic experiences and in supporting children who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing trauma.¹ The resources on this list have been assigned to the following categories: research reviews, programs, interventions/curricula/trainings, systems, policies, and access.

Research Reviews

The following resources review research literature on the role of child care and early education in supporting children experiencing or at risk of experiencing trauma.

Dinehart, L. B., Katz, L. F., Manfra, L., & Ullery, M. (2013). Providing quality early care and education to young children who experience maltreatment: A review of the literature. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 41(4), 283-290.

Ellenbogen, S., Klein, B., & Wekerle, C. (2014). Early childhood education as a resilience intervention for maltreated children. *Early Child Development and Care*, 184(9-10), 1364-1377.

Harden, B. (2015). *Services for families of infants and toddlers experiencing trauma* (OPRE Report #2015-14). Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families.

Klein, S. (2016). *Benefits of early care and education for children in the child welfare system* (A Research-to-Practice Brief, OPRE Report #: 2016-68). Washington, DC: U.S. Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation.

Mortensen, J. A., & Barnett, M. A. (2016). The role of child care in supporting the emotion regulatory needs of maltreated infants and toddlers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 64, 73-81.

Perry, D. F., & Conners-Burrow, N. A. (2016). Addressing early adversity through mental health consultation in early childhood settings. *Family Relations*, 65(1), 24-36.

¹ The list does not include resources on homelessness as a source of trauma because *Research Connections* published a resource list on child care and early education for children experiencing homelessness in July 2015 (Park & Stephens, 2015).

Programs

A number of studies have examined how different child care and early education programs can either prevent trauma or influence the outcomes of children experiencing or at risk of experiencing trauma.

Early Head Start

Chazan-Cohen, R., Green, B. L., Ayoub, C., Bartlett, J., Von Ende, A., & Furrer, C. (2015). *Promising evidence that Early Head Start can prevent child maltreatment*. Washington, DC: U.S. Administration for Children and Families.

Green, B. L., Ayoub, C., Bartlett, J., Von Ende, A., Furrer, C., Chazan-Cohen, R., Vallotton, C., & et al. (2014). The effect of Early Head Start on child welfare system involvement: A first look at longitudinal child maltreatment outcomes. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 42, 127-135.

Head Start

Lee, K. (2016). Head Start's impact on cognitive outcomes for children in foster care. *Child Abuse Review*, 25(2), 128-141.

Lee, K., & Ludington, B. (2016). Head Start's impact on socio-emotional outcomes for children who have experienced violence or neighborhood crime. *Journal of Family Violence*, 31(4), 499-513.

Lipscomb, S. T., Pratt, M. E., Schmitt, S. A., Pears, K., & Kim, H. K. (2013). School readiness in children living in non-parental care: Impacts of Head Start. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 34(1), 28-37.

Pratt, M. E., Lipscomb, S. T., & Schmitt, S. A. (2015). The effect of Head Start on parenting outcomes for children living in non-parental care. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 24(10), 2944-2956.

Zhai, F., Waldfogel, J., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2013). Estimating the effects of Head Start on parenting and child maltreatment. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35(7), 1119-1129.

Child Care and Other Early Education Programs

Dinehart, L. B., Manfra, L., Katz, L. F., & Hartman, S. C. (2012). Associations between center-based care accreditation status and the early educational outcomes of children in the child welfare system. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(5), 1072-1080.

Kovan, N., Mishra, S., Susman-Stillman, A. R., Piescher, K. N., & LaLiberte, T. (2014). Differences in the early care and education needs of young children involved in child protection. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 46, 139-145.

Lipscomb, S. T., Schmitt, S. A., Pratt, M. E., Acock, A. C., & Pears, K. (2014). Living in non-parental care moderates effects of prekindergarten experiences on externalizing behavior problems in school.

Children and Youth Services Review, 40, 41-50.

Merritt, D. H., & Klein, S. (2015). Do early care and education services improve language development for maltreated children?: Evidence from a national child welfare sample. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 39, 185-196.

Mersky, J., Topitzes, J. W., & Reynolds, A. J. (2011). Maltreatment prevention through early childhood intervention: A confirmatory evaluation of the Chicago Child-Parent Center preschool program. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(8), 1454-1463.

Interventions/Curricula/Trainings

The following studies examine curricula, interventions, or trainings that can be implemented within child care and early education programs and that focus on preventing trauma or addressing the needs of children who experience or are at risk of experiencing trauma.

Douglass, A., & Klerman, L. V. (2012). The Strengthening Families initiative and child care quality improvement: How Strengthening Families influenced change in child care programs in one state. *Early Education and Development*, 23(3), 373-392.

Holmes, C., Levy, M., Smith, A., Pinne, S., & Neese, P. (2015). A model for creating a supportive trauma-informed culture for children in preschool settings. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 24(6), 1650-1659.

Hurley, J. J., Saini, S., Warren, R. A., & Carberry, A. J. (2013). Use of the Pyramid Model for supporting preschool refugees. *Early Child Development and Care*, 183(1), 75-91.

Klein, S., Falconer, M., & Benson, S. M. (2016). Early care and education for children in the child welfare system: Evaluations of two training programs. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 10(2), 152-175.

Pears, K., Fisher, P. A., Kim, H. K., Bruce, J., Healey, C. V., & Yoerger, K. (2013). Immediate effects of a school readiness intervention for children in foster care. *Early Education and Development*, 24(6), 771-791.

Shamblin, S., Graham, D., & Bianco, J. A. (2016). Creating trauma-informed schools for rural Appalachia: The Partnerships Program for enhancing resiliency, confidence and workforce development in early childhood education. *School Mental Health*, 8(1), 189-200.

Systems

The following resources explore systems-level partnerships between child care and early education services and the child welfare system.

Child Welfare Information Gateway (U.S.). (2015). *Child welfare-early education partnerships to expand protective factors for children with child welfare involvement: Synthesis*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare Information Gateway.

McCrae, J. S., Brown, S. M., Yang, J., & Groneman, S. (2015). Enhancing early childhood outcomes: Connecting child welfare and Head Start. *Early Child Development and Care*, 1-16.

United States. Office of Child Care. (2011). *Collaborative partnerships between early care & education and child welfare: Supporting infants, toddlers, and their families through risk to resilience*. Washington, DC: U.S. Office of Child Care. Retrieved

United States. Office on Child Abuse and Neglect. (2009). *Early Head Start-child welfare services initiative: Final synthesis report volume I*. Arlington, VA: James Bell Associates.

United States. Office on Child Abuse and Neglect. (2009). *Early Head Start-child welfare services initiative: Final synthesis report volume II: Compendium of grantee-specific findings*. Arlington, VA: James Bell Associates.

Ward, H. D., Yoon, S. Y., Atkins, J. A., Morris, P., Oldham, E., & Wathen, K. (2009). *Children at risk in the child welfare system: Collaborations to promote school readiness*. Portland, ME: Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, Institute for Child and Family Policy.

Policies

The following resource examines variations in state Child Care and Development Fund policies for children and families in the child welfare system.

Meloy, M., Lipscomb, S. T., & Baron, M. J. (2015). Linking state child care and child welfare policies and populations: Implications for children, families, and policymakers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 57, 30-39.

Access

These studies explore issues related to accessing and using child care and early education programs for children and families experiencing or at risk of experiencing trauma.

Hurley, J. J., Warren, R. A., Habalow, R. D., Weber, L. E., & Tousignant, S. R. (2014). Early childhood special education in a refugee resettlement community: Challenges and innovative practices. *Early Child*

Development and Care, 184(1), 50-62.

Klein, S., Merritt, D. H., & Snyder, S. M. (2016). Child welfare supervised children's participation in center-based early care and education. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 68, 80-91.

Klein, S. (2011). The availability of neighborhood early care and education resources and the maltreatment of young children. *Child Maltreatment*, 16(4), 300-311.

Lee, S., Benson, S. M., Klein, S., & Franke, T. (2015). Accessing quality early care and education for children in child welfare: Stakeholders' perspectives on barriers and opportunities for interagency collaboration. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 55, 170-181.

Lipscomb, S. T., Lewis, K. M., Masyn, K. E., & Meloy, M. (2012). Child care assistance for families involved in the child welfare system: Predicting child care subsidy use and stability. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(12), 2454-2463.

Lipscomb, S. T., & Pears, K. (2011). Patterns and predictors of early care and education for children in foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(11), 2303-2311.

Meloy, M., & Phillips, D. A. (2012). Foster children and placement stability: The role of child care assistance. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 33(6), 252-259.

Morland, L., Ives, N., McNeely, C., & Allen, C. (2016). *Providing a Head Start: Improving access to early childhood education for refugees*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

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- Florida State University, Center for Prevention and Early Intervention Policy. (n. d.). *Trauma & toxic stress: Changing the trajectory for Florida's most vulnerable children to help them thrive*. Tallahassee, FL: Florida State University, Center for Prevention and Early Intervention Policy.
- Harden, B. (2015). *Services for families of infants and toddlers experiencing trauma* (OPRE Report #2015-14). Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families.
- Harvard University, Center for the Developing Child. (n. d.). *Toxic stress*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Center for the Developing Child
- Mortensen, J. A., & Barnett, M. A. (2016). The role of child care in supporting the emotion regulatory needs of maltreated infants and toddlers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 64, 73-81.
- Park, S., & Stephens, S. A. (2015). *Research-to-Policy Resource List: Early care and education supports for young children experiencing homelessness*. New York: Child Care & Early Education Research Connections.
- Perry, D. F., & Conners-Burrow, N. A. (2016). Addressing early adversity through mental health consultation in early childhood settings. *Family Relations*, 65(1), 24-36.
- U.S. Administration for Children and Families, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, & U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. (n. d.). *Resource guide to trauma-informed human services*. Washington, DC: U.S. Administration for Children and Families.

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