
UAIMH NEWSLETTER

Utah Association for Infant Mental Health

Issue 7 – December 2005



Special Topic: Infant Mental Health Training

News from UAIMH

UAIMH has gone through some significant changes in the past months. Although a number of changes were on the organizational level, several were also on a deeply personal level for some of us. For the first time in the existence of UAIMH, we have changed Board members and we are welcoming three new people into our midst: Catherine Johnson, Vonda Jump, and Elizabeth Kuhlman. Brief biographical sketches of all UAIMH Board members are presented in a following section of this newsletter.

We are also proud to announce our new President, Jessica Singleton. We will have to wait until the next newsletter for her “President’s Corner” column, since she has recently become the proud mother of a healthy baby girl. The baby is named August, and was born almost five weeks early, at 6 lbs 2 oz. Congratulations from all of us to Jessi and her husband!! With the new UAIMH presidency, some other roles have shifted as well. Nick Tsandes, proud father of a little baby girl, is now Past President, and Aziele Jensen has assumed the indispensable role of Secretary.

UAIMH Mini-Conference with Dr. Suzi Tortora January 6, 2006

We are proud to announce the next UAIMH Mini-Conference will be held on **Friday, January 6, 2006**. This mini-conference will focus on “the

use of movement and nonverbal cues to support relationships” and will be presented by Dr. Suzi Tortora. Young children communicate primarily nonverbally and this workshop will teach us how to connect with them on a nonverbal level.



Suzi Tortora, EdD, ADTR, CMA, KMP, has over 20 years experience working with people at all levels of development. She focuses particularly on infants and young children with special needs. A dance/movement therapist, Dr. Tortora has been actively involved in ZERO TO THREE (ZTT) for decades. She has presented her work both nationally and internationally. She has been profiled on *Good Morning America ABC-TV*, *Eyewitness News WABC-TV*, and interviewed on the *National Public Radio (NPR) Weekday* talk show. Dr. Tortora also recently presented a full-day workshop at the ZTT National Training Institute, similar to the one she will be presenting for us in Utah in January!

In her new book, *The Dancing Dialogue: Using the Communicative Power of Movement with Young Children*, Dr. Tortora explains how to use a child’s nonverbal expressions as a springboard for supporting physical, emotional, and cognitive development.

Mini-conference participants will explore nonverbal cues used by infants and young children and experience movement activities that support early attachment relationships while

enhancing physical, cognitive, communicative and social/emotional development. These activities can be used with families, in groups, dyadic and individual therapeutic, hospital, preventative, and child care settings. We hope to see you in January!

Introducing Our New Board

In the past year, UAIMH elected three new Board members. This also means we have had to say goodbye to two highly committed founding Board members, who have shared with us their experience, wisdom, enthusiasm, and hard work. We'd like to extend a big "Thank You" to Glenna Boyce, PhD, and Mark Innocenti, PhD!!

The third UAIMH member who has left the Board will remain active as UAIMH's Executive Secretary. This is a good thing since we're not sure we could manage without her! Janet Wade, Community Partnership Specialist with Baby Watch Early Intervention, is the driving force behind UAIMH. We are happy that she will continue to offer us her unbridled energy to help us all move things forward. Below are brief bios of all current UAIMH Board members and of Janet Wade, to give you a sense of who we all are!

Adrienne Akers, MS, RPT, President-Elect, is a Senior Researcher at the Early Intervention Research Institute at Utah State University. She has enjoyed a 30-year clinical, research, and training career working with young children and their families. Adrienne has developed a strengths-based infant mental health model referred to as *mutual competence* and has conducted extensive training on the model nationwide.

Ilse de Koeyer, PhD, Treasurer and Newsletter Editor, is a Researcher in Dr. Alan Fogel's Infant Laboratory at the University of Utah. Ilse has been involved in studies about infants' and young children's sense of self, emotional expressions, and parent-child relationships, including attachment security.

Kristina Hindert, MD, Founding President, is Medical Director at The Children's Center in Salt Lake City. Kristina received her medical degree from the University of Utah

College of Medicine, 1978, and was in the Pediatric Honors Program. She has worked in child psychiatry since 1986 and has given many lectures and seminars on the subject.

Aziele Stewart Jenson MEd, Secretary, has worked with infants, toddlers, and at-risk preschool children for over 20 years, with an emphasis on children with disabilities and vision impairment. She is certified in Special Education (Early Childhood through Grade 12) and has specialized in challenging behavior, inclusion, literacy, early childhood, and children with vision impairment. Aziele has provided training and technical assistance to teachers and administrators, and has presented regionally and nationally on assessment, emergent literacy, observation, behavior, inclusion and other topics. Presently, Aziele is Director for the HOPE Institute at Utah State University and coordinator and trainer for the *Utah Touchpoints* Site and the T. Berry Brazelton *Touchpoints Center* in Boston. She is a peer reviewer for Reading First, Early Reading First and other federal grants. Her research interests include early childhood, Native American education, inclusion, early intervention, and behavior.

Catherine Johnson, LCSW, is the Program Manager of School Based Programs at Wasatch Mental Health. Presently, her specialty is infant mental health and autism. She has been in the field of social work for the last 27 years and has enjoyed every minute of it. Catherine is excited about joining the UAIMH Board, and the progress we are making to help infants and young children.

Vonda Jump, PhD, is a Senior Research Associate at the Early Intervention Research Institute at Utah State University. Vonda also teaches undergraduate and graduate classes in the Departments of Psychology and Family, Consumer, and Human Development at Utah State University. Her research interests include infant massage, the developing parent-child relationship, and vulnerable families and infants. Vonda has conducted interventions in orphanages in Ecuador and Haiti, and speaks both Spanish and French fluently.

Elizabeth (Liz) Kuhlman, MS, is the Child Abuse Prevention Specialist for the Division of Child and Family Services. With an academic background in early intervention, Liz has more than thirty years experience working with young children and their families, particularly in Head Start. Her work in child protection is based on years of witnessing the devastating connection between violence and early development. She is currently facilitating an interagency group working on implementation of the new federal requirement that all children under age three who have supported cases of child abuse be referred to Early Intervention.

Jessica Singleton, PhD, President, is a School Psychologist for Davis Early Childhood Programs. She conducts assessments, provides consultation, and analyzes program outcome data for children from birth to five years of age in Davis County. Jessica earned her doctorate from the University of Northern Colorado. She has taught various graduate level courses on assessment.

Nick Tsandes LCSW, Past President, is the Director of Children's Services at The Children's Center, where he provides assessment and treatment for infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families. He obtained his MSW from the University of Utah Graduate School of Social Work where he also serves as clinical instructor for practicum students.

Janet Wade, Executive Secretary, is the Community Partnership Specialist with Baby Watch Early Intervention. She has worked in the field of early childhood as a home visitor and also as the Disabilities and Mental Health Coordinator for Head Start in Utah and Oregon. Janet has been the driving force behind the statewide *Expanding Options for Infant-Toddler Mental Health Committee* and has been the catalyst in creating the Utah Association for Infant Mental Health (UAIMH).

Special Topic:

IMH Training

Many UAIMH members are interested in

continued training in Infant Mental Health (IMH). Where do we start? IMH is a new and rapidly growing field. Training is not yet common at universities. A few excellent possibilities exist now at the graduate (Master's) level. There are also various certificate programs in the United States and abroad. For those of us who want to expand our knowledge and skills while continuing our day-to-day work with infants/toddlers and their families, Utah offers various possibilities. This newsletter highlights some of these training opportunities, past and present. On the UAIMH website (see www.hope.usu.edu/uaimh), we will be posting a list of training opportunities at various levels. Below is a summary of various training opportunities available in Utah.

Training Offered by UAIMH

Some Background

In May 2001, the *Expanding Options for Infant-Toddler Mental Health Interagency Committee* was formed to address the lack of understanding and resources in the field of Infant Mental Health. Four and a half years later, we can look back with a feeling of accomplishment as we see many of the recommendations on Research, Training and Service Delivery being implemented.

UAIMH was formed in 2002 as an offspring of the *Expanding Options Committee* and as a vehicle to continue this important work. Since then, UAIMH has offered training in the form of mini-conferences and by participating in the Summer Institute Program, School of Social Work, University of Utah.

Summer Institute Program Trainings

UAIMH was pleased to accept an invitation from the University of Utah School of Social Work to present a course on Infant Mental Health, at the University of Utah College of Social Work's 21st **Summer Institute 2005**. The topic of this course, "**The Parent-Child Relationship: Developing an Advanced Skill Base in Working with Very Young Children and their Families,**" proved to be of interest to 31 participants from different agencies and

groups, including DCFS, Early Intervention, Early Head Start, Adoption, Home Care, Odyssey House, clinicians in private practice and students.

Participants came from as far away as St. George and Vernal.

As one course participant stated in her evaluation, “Each instructor brought their piece to the child/parent relationship puzzle.” Mark Innocenti, PhD, and Ilse De Koeyer, PhD, began putting the pieces of the puzzle together using excellent videotapes prompting discussion on the importance of understanding early childhood development when observing parent child interaction.

On Day Two of the course, Kristina Hindert, MD, moved from observation to assessment in bringing her experience and understanding of the research behind the DSM-IV, as well as practical information on assessment and diagnosis to the group. Jessica Singleton, PhD, presented various methods of assessment as well as a variety of assessment tools that are available.

Participants received numerous handouts and resources to add to the information presented. Kristina and Jessica were sensitive to the fact that not everyone in the class was qualified to administer assessments nor to interpret the assessment information. Participants appreciated this and gave the presentation high marks for content and information.

Nick Tsandes, LCSW, showed how the information from the previous two days could be put into practice by presenting a case study. Nick used his wealth of experience in working with infants and toddlers as he walked the class through the steps he uses to build a relationship with the family through the intervention process. This prompted a rich discussion from the participants followed by a summing up of the three days by Adrienne Akers, MS, RPT. Adrienne reminded the class of the importance of focusing on the strengths that families have and the importance of letting parents show their competency in nurturing their families.

“After 40 years in the field I discovered that I am still learning” was one of the many positive statements about this course in the evaluation material. The UAIMH Board has been asked to

submit a course for the 22nd Summer Institute. If you would like to provide input on course content please e-mail your suggestions to janetwade@utah.gov.

Janet Wade

Children’s Center Training

In May 2005, The Children’s Center, in conjunction with Baby Watch Early Intervention, wrapped up a series of very successful trainings that took place over the preceding year. Through an Interagency Outreach Training Initiative Grant from Utah State University, staff from The Children’s Center was able to conduct intensive trainings to participants from across the state of Utah.

The initial “kick off” trainings dealt with coping styles in children with special needs. Topics covered critical areas such as temperament, attachment, emotional regulation, and coping. These initial trainings were conducted in Provo, Ogden, and Salt Lake City. Participants from those trainings were then invited to apply for advanced training in parent-child relationships over the next year.

The response we received was outstanding, and we had the opportunity to train people from across the state. Participants included professionals from varied early childhood domains like early intervention, child welfare, nursing, psychology, and social work. Advanced training participants came from several areas of the state, including Provo, Moab, Salt Lake City, Logan, Brigham City, Park City, and Ogden, just to name a few.

The advanced training curriculum covered topics like reflective supervision, attachment, and effective interventions for children and families. Transdisciplinary professional support groups were formed from different regions of the state, and these groups had the opportunity to meet several times over the course of the year. The smaller group work lent itself well to advanced learning, and professional relationships were formed to help coordinate better services and

support for children and families in the identified communities.

All in all, the training was a very enjoyable experience for trainees and facilitators alike, and we sincerely hope that more intensive, advanced training opportunities will be made available in the future for all of us interested in the welfare of very young children and their families.

Nick Tsandes, LCSW
UAIMH Past President
Director of Children's Services
The Children's Center

PS – After the writing of this article, the Children's Center was able to offer another very interesting training on December 8th and 9th by Jill Simon, LICSW, in the STEEP™ and Seeing is Believing™ programs. UAIMH members were informed of this training by e-mail.

Children's Center Trainings in Southeastern Utah

The Southeastern Utah District Health Department (SEUDHD) Early Intervention Program has benefited greatly over the years through its association with The Children's Center. In previous years, The Children's Center faculty has come to Moab and Price to present trainings. SEUDHD staff has traveled to the Salt Lake City area several times as well.

Training events over this past year proved to be even more beneficial. All our staff was able to attend a training on "Coping Styles for Children with Special Needs." This training was provided by The Children's Center through an Interagency Outreach Training Initiative Grant. Following this training, two of our staff were selected to participate in an intensive training course focusing on reflective supervision.

Dr. Kristina Hindert came to Moab on a monthly basis. This training provided support to the Early Intervention staff and the local mental health agency (Four Corners Community Mental Health) staff, also selected to participate. These sessions were wonderful as they laid the

groundwork that has led to a lasting alliance with our local mental health agency. The wonderful support and input we received from Dr. Hindert nurtured the relationship between Early Intervention and Community Mental Health. Cases were staffed together under the expert guidance of Dr. Hindert. This coordinated approach to serving families will be continued throughout the coming year.

Dr. Hindert will be returning in the fall and we look forward to continuing to work with The Children's Center for years to come. We really appreciate their help and support.

Lois Boomer
Director
Southeastern Utah Early Intervention Program

Pre-doctoral Psychology Internship Programs Providing Infant Mental Health Training

Last year, like thousands of other psychology graduate students, I applied to pre-doctoral psychology internship programs around the country. The pre-doctoral internship is a full-time, clinically focused position that students typically complete at an agency independent from their graduate program during their last year of graduate school. Infant Mental Health (IMH) was one area in which I wanted to get some additional training while on internship.

There is no really quick way to find out which programs offer IMH training, partially because The Association of Psychology PostDoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC)—the organization through which students apply for internship only allows one to search for programs that offer the opportunity to work with "children." (Almost 300 programs come up with that search!) I used the training programs listed on the WAIMH, ZERO TO THREE, Harris Center, and The American Academy of Child And Adolescent Psychiatry websites in conjunction with the APPIC Directory in order to narrow my search.

Below I will briefly describe five internship programs offering IMH training. While the number of programs offering IMH training at the

pre-doctoral internship level is rather small, please be aware that this list is *not* comprehensive.

Please feel free to contact me if you are considering one of these internship programs or others and would like to talk to someone who has been through the internship application process.

1. The Children's Center (Salt Lake City, UT)

The Children's Center is a fantastic local internship site if you are interested in assessing and treating young children (especially preschoolers) with emotional and behavioral issues. Dr. Doug Goldsmith and his staff are interested in the clinical application of attachment theory. Interns gain experience with a range of individuals and treat a variety of psychological disorders through modalities such as play therapy, family therapy, parent therapy, and parent-child group therapy. The Children's Center has both day treatment services as well as outpatient services. The only drawback to The Children's Center internship program is that it is not accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA). Though this has not created any problems for past interns, some clinical psychology graduate programs will only allow students to apply to APA-accredited internship programs.

2. Tulane University Health Sciences Center (New Orleans, LA)

If you are interested in learning to work with families with slightly younger children, Tulane University Health Sciences Center's internship program provides excellent IMH training through its Infant Institute. Interns spend twenty hours each week working with the Tulane/Jefferson Parish Infant Team, a community treatment program for abused and neglected infants and toddlers in the New Orleans metropolitan area. The Infant Team is headed by Dr. Charles Zeanah, who has twice presented at the annual "Bridging the Gap" Conference in Salt Lake City.

Interns spend the remainder of their time each week in one of two six-month rotations—one focused on outpatient treatment with children and adolescents and one in pediatric psychology at the Tulane and Charity Hospitals.

3. Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center (New Orleans, LA)

Though close in location and in aims, the internship program and Infant Team at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center is separate from the one at Tulane. Dr. Joy Osofsky, editor of the WAIMH *Infant Mental Health Journal*, is one of the supervisors for the child/infant track interns at this site. In addition to evaluating and treating abused and neglected infants and toddlers in Orleans Parish, interns also work with traumatized children and adolescents.

As this article goes to press, it is not known how this program and the program at Tulane will be affected by the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina. I found both programs to be very organized and amiable, so I would recommend calling or e-mailing them (once phone and internet service is restored to their campuses) if you are interested in them. In the meantime, APPIC officials might have information on their future.

4. University of California, San Francisco (San Francisco, CA)

The APA-accredited internship program at the University of California, San Francisco is geared toward students who are interested in an academic career. Thus, there is a strong research component to the training. Interns in this program are able to gain experience in IMH through work at the UCSF Infant-Parent Program, which provides services for infants, toddlers, and their families when there are child-parent relationship issues. Dr. Alicia Lieberman, another previous "Bridging the Gap" Conference presenter, is one of the supervisors for this internship. There is also a separate internship program housed exclusively within the Infant-Parent Program; however, this program is not accredited by the APA.

5. University of Wisconsin, Madison (Madison, WI)

For individuals looking for more generalist training (i.e., adult and child) in conjunction with

IMH training, the internship at the University of Wisconsin, Madison provides a small rotation in the Department of Psychiatry's Parent-Infant and Early Childhood Clinic. Dr. Roseanne Clark (yet another "Bridging the Gap" presenter!) supervises interns working in this clinic. If you are interested in the Parent-Infant and Early Childhood Clinic rotation, I would e-mail Dr. Clark directly. As the clinic director, she will have more information on this rotation than the director of internship training.

Kelly Pelzel, MS

Sharing Utah's Expertise with Russia

In July 2004, Dr. Cherie Martin visited Udmurt State University in Izhevsk, Udmurtia, Russia while her daughter participated in a Sister-City youth exchange between Tooele, Utah and Kambarka, Russia, a small town south of the capitol city of Izhevsk.

Cherie is an Adjunct Professor at Utah State University and a registered nurse for the Tooele Early Intervention Team of DDI Vantage, serving children under three years of age with developmental delays and their families. Her graduate and post graduate research focused on children and attachment theory.

Making Contact with the Russians

Having heard that it was quite unlikely to find anyone in the former Soviet Union studying attachment theory, Cheri located the Udmurt State University Department of Psychology on the Internet and wrote an e-mail expressing her desire to find a colleague with a similar research interest. She was surprised to receive a response from Maria Melnikova, a faculty member and graduate student, who had just helped to translate the early works of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, the founders of Attachment Theory and Research, into Russian.

With some knowledge of the English language, Maria was able to respond and express the interest of her department in learning more

about how to use attachment theory in their work with children. They had the theoretical background, but no valid instruments nor research methods in this area of study, and welcomed Cherie's upcoming visit and information. When they learned of Cherie's professional connection with Early Intervention in Utah, she was immediately given "official" permission to tour and meet with the administration of the Children's Hospital "Neuron," a hospital/orphanage which houses over 100 children from birth to four years of age with varying degrees of special needs, whose parents felt they were unable to personally or financially care for them and had given them to the care of this government facility.

"Neuron" and the University have a clinical and research connection. Many in Russia today are very concerned about the welfare of children. In Cherie's interaction with the Russian people last summer, she heard from political leaders and everyday people alike that, "in the midst of our current difficult economic and political changes, our hope lies in our children."

During Cherie's visit to Udmurt State University, information was exchanged about current attachment research methodology and early intervention. The discussion of possible collaborative project ideas began.

Helping the Russians Come to Utah

The Russians had a particular interest in the home-based program of early intervention that is practiced in Utah and hoped for an opportunity to see Utah's early intervention programs in action. But with such limited resources available to them, it was only a dream. Cherie wanted to help make this dream a reality. Connections with the Sister-City Program and Open World were important resources.

Sister City International is a program established during the 1950s. It was designed to bring together individuals from the United States with those from other countries of the world, in a city-to-city program, to improve international relations. Cherie's principal contact was Jennifer Andelin of West Jordan, who is the State Coordinator for Sister Cities International.

Jennifer is also the Chairperson of the West Jordan Sister City Foundation and oversees the ten-year relationship between West Jordan and Votkinsk, Russia. Jennifer was instrumental in establishing relations between Tooele and Kambarka, as well as between Salt Lake City and Izhevsk, Russia. In addition, she is the Executive Director of International Hosting and is a host for the Open World Program.

Open World is a program authorized by the U.S. Congress with the aim of bringing Russian leaders, from various professional areas, to meet with American counterparts and gain firsthand knowledge of how things work in America. Through such exchanges, mutual understanding between our countries is built and new avenues for the exchange of information are opened. Since its inception in 1999, Open World has brought over 8,000 young leaders from Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan to the United States. Jennifer and Cherie worked closely for many months with Open World to obtain approval for Open World to sponsor the first Early Intervention delegation to Utah.



from left to right:

Sergey Sirotkin,
Olga Koroleva,
Maria
Melnikova,
Cherie Martin,
Nikolay Leonov

A Visit to Utah

Encouraged by Jennifer’s international expertise and Cherie’s proposed ideas for collaboration, Open World approved a delegation of four Russians and a facilitator/interpreter to visit Salt Lake City in July 2005.

The delegation included Nikolay Leonov, Dean of the Department of Psychology and Education of Udmurt State University; Sergey Sirotkin, Department Head over Clinical

Psychology and Research, Maria Melnikova, Assistant to the Department Head, and Olga Koroleva, Vice-Head of the Children’s Hospital “Neuron.” For them this was a “dream come true.”

The five-day program (Monday, July 11th-Friday, July 15th) was designed to give a view of how children with special needs are cared for in Utah from various levels and by various programs.

Monday morning was spent meeting with administrators from the Utah Department of Health’s Bureau for Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN). This included a welcome from Dr. Fan Tate, CSHCN Bureau Director, and presentations by Susan Ord, Program Manager of Baby Watch Early Intervention for State of Utah; Karen Hahne, Retired Director of Utah County’s “Kids on the Move” Early Intervention Program and her college-student son with Down Syndrome; Janet Wade, Founding Board Member of the Utah Association for Infant Mental Health; and Chris Chytraus, Program Manager of the Fostering Healthy Children Program.

Monday afternoon included a presentation by Dr. Doug Goldsmith and a tour of the Children’s Center, observing DDI Vantage’s structured play groups for children with autism, and a presentation on “Sensory Integration Dysfunction” given by Jessica Nalewjska, Occupational Therapist with DDI Vantage. A special early evening addition to Monday’s agenda was a meeting with Kelly Peterson, Director of the Utah Foster Care Foundation. Dr. Nicolay Leonov was particularly interested in Kelly’s work in training foster care parents. We learned that Nicolay had been recently asked by his government to look into foster care as an alternative to institutional care of young children in Russia.

Tuesday and Wednesday were spent with the DDI Vantage Early Intervention Program’s administration and providers. First, Judy Cantrell, Site Facilitator, explained program philosophy and administration after which individual providers explained their roles on the Early Intervention Team. The rest of Tuesday

and Wednesday were spent observing the Salt Lake City and Tooele Early Intervention providers as they assessed and provided individual service in the homes of various families who had children with special needs.

Thursday morning the delegation observed Jordan School District's early intervention class for mothers and toddlers.

On Thursday afternoon and Friday, the focus shifted to the research aspect of early intervention and attachment theory, as the delegation traveled to the Utah State University campus in Logan to meet with administration and faculty of the Department of Family, Consumer, and Human Development, the Department of Psychology, the Center for Persons with Disabilities, and the Early Intervention Research Institute.

A Lasting Connection

The professional and friendship connections made during this week were remarkable. There are many hopeful possibilities for future collaborative research and the sharing of information between the two Universities, early intervention, and foster care programs concerning infant mental health, and the care of children with special needs in Russia. Our Russian visitors began their homeward journey with the words, "Ochin, ochin harasho--Ochin Spasebo!"(written phonetically instead of in Russian letters) describing their visit as "very, very fine -- thank you so very much!" Those of us who participated in the visit with these Russian professionals here in Utah have all expressed that it was a very positive, insightful, rewarding opportunity. We'd like to extend a special thanks to everyone who took part in this week of learning for all of us. It was a great exchange. Cherie has kept in contact with these delegates and has learned that they are currently working toward establishing a center for children with special needs and their families patterned after what they learned in Utah.

Cheri Martin, PhD

Mark Your Calendars

- **The Use of Movement and Nonverbal Cues to Support Relationships** will be presented by Dr. Suzi Tortora, at the next UAIMH Mini-Conference on **Friday, January 6, 2006**. Participants will explore nonverbal cues and experience movement activities that support early relationships while enhancing physical, cognitive, communicative and social/emotional development. These activities can be used with families, in groups, dyadic and individual therapeutic settings, and hospital, preventative, and child care settings.
- **Bridging the Gap: Clinical Application of Attachment Theory and Research.** The Children's Center will present its 7th Annual "Bridging The Gap" Conference on Thursday/Friday, February 9th & 10th, 2006 at The Salt Lake City Library Auditorium.

UAIMH Activities

Volunteer Needed for Newsletter:

Energetic, organized person with a good sense of language is needed to oversee the **UAIMH Newsletter**. This is a wonderful opportunity to network with colleagues and collect interesting information. If you are interested, contact Ilse de Koeijer at ilse.dekoeijer@psych.utah.edu

Web Site: Don't forget to visit the UAIMH web site at www.hope.usu.edu/uaimh.

We are continually updating the content so there is always information on a conference or new information on the "Tool Kits" to view. We will also be posting information on **Training Opportunities**. If you hear of any upcoming event that you would like to post, please send an e-mail to janetwade@utah.gov.

For information about the **World Association for Infant Mental Health (WAIMH)**, log on to www.waimh.org.

To become a **member of UAIMH**, log on to www.hope.usu.edu/uaimh or contact Janet Wade at janetwade@utah.gov

The next UAIMH Newsletter will appear in Summer 2006. Please send submissions by April 30, 2006, to ilse.dekoeijer@psych.utah.edu or call her at (801) 581-2233 if you would like to contribute!

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Contributing Editor: Jan Robinson, RN, MS

Utah Association for Infant Mental Health

Helping young children cope with natural disasters

<http://www.hope.usu.edu/uaimh>



Dear Parents,

As our nation recovers from Hurricane Katrina, we realize that this is an especially difficult time for you as parents. It is hard to try to help your children feel safe and secure when you yourself may not. Many parents have questions about what to do and how to interact with their child during this stressful time. If you were not involved in Hurricane Katrina, but your child is starting to ask questions, talk to your child about hurricanes and other natural disasters that can happen. Explain the forces of nature in a matter of fact way. You could talk about the various seasons and daily changes (sun during the day, moon at night), how the weather is always changing, and how various weather patterns come about, depending on the age, cognitive ability, and interest of your child. Reassure your child that he/she is safe. There is no need for your child to see the TV images of destruction, as these may create feelings of fear.

If you or your family have been traumatized as a result of recent events, here are some things you can do to help:

- Get back to your regular routine as much as possible. If your child normally naps at 2 pm, help your child stick to that routine as much as possible.
- Answer your child's questions simply and let them know they will be safe. You could say something like: "Yes, scary things have been happening, but now we are safe."
- Take care of yourself so that you will be better able to care for your child.
- It is important to notice any change in behavior. Your child may need more attention or your child may withdraw. Comfort your child and help him/her feel like he/she has been listened to.
- Provide gentle but firm limits for your child. Your child may begin misbehaving due to the uncertainty, chaos, and scariness he/she experienced or is still experiencing. Limits are one way children know they are safe and will help your child know you are available.
- If your child acts out events from the hurricane, go along with it, pretend with your child, but for example, if your child builds a house and tears it down, help your child build it back up again. Let your child know that there is rebuilding after destruction. Talk about what happened and listen to your child's feelings. Validate these feelings by saying "It's O.K. You're safe now and I'm going to keep you safe". Provide comfort and reassurance.
- Most importantly, take time to do the things you and your child enjoy together like reading favorite stories, going for walks, cuddling close, and playing together.
- Be patient with your child. He or she has experienced a traumatic situation and doesn't have the words or coping skills that you have to handle the situation alone. Help your child feel secure by reassuring him/her.
- Infants may sense your apprehension about the situation. Help them feel secure by finding time to talk to them, play with them, hold them, and reassure them that it will be okay. If possible, minimize the outside stimulation and chaos your child is exposed to.

Please refer to <http://www.zerotothree.org/coping/> for more information on Coping During Uncertain Times

A copy of this letter was edited for the October edition of the UTAH HEALTH magazine.