University of Southern California  
Keck School of Medicine  
Master of Public Health Program

PM 583: Foundations of Early Childhood Mental Health  
Thursdays 9-12:30 p.m.

Instructors:  
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Course Description:  
In response to the serious crisis in mental health care for children, there is a growing movement in the United States and in other countries to treat infant and early childhood mental health as a primary issue in child health and welfare with a family-centered focus on early identification, preventive intervention and treatment. This course will provide a broad overview of major infant and early childhood mental health issues, relating to the status of child mental health and the importance of comprehensive systems of care for children that support resilience and respond to biological and psychosocial mental health risks. Specific topics will include: early brain development, biological and psychosocial risks that impact child mental health, developmental trajectories to mental health problems, and systems, programs and policies that support the mental health of young children.

Student Learning Objectives:  
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:  
1. Describe the status of young child mental health and mental health services in the United States, and associated major public health issues.  
2. Describe the variety of public programs and policies designed to support a range of early childhood mental health issues.  
3. Discuss state, national and international policy issues related to early childhood mental health and development.  
4. Define principles and standards of care that guide the development of mental health systems of care.
5. Differentiate the roles of public health specialists in developing policies, providing advocacy, conducting epidemiological studies, and influencing direct clinical services on behalf of young children and their families.

**Evaluation Methods & Course Assignments:**
Evaluations will be based on the following criteria:

1. Active class participation and discussion indicating that you have read and understand assigned materials. Course readings are listed by session on the Course Outline. You are expected to bring in a question or issue raised by the readings each week and be prepared to address it during class. (25% of your grade)

2. Decide on a policy or public health topic impacting the development of very young children. Prepare an article for Wikipedia entry about this and plan to submit it for inclusion in the largest reference work in the world and the 5th most visited website. This assignment will be discussed in detail in class on Sept 15. If you miss class that day, it will be your responsibility to get the details directly from another student as this will not be repeated privately or in another class session. **MARK YOUR CALENDARS** so you do not miss this important information. Your entry will be DUE on October 13, 2011. (25% of your grade).

3. Final Paper: Choose a topic requiring legislative action or international advocacy. Prepare a “white paper” or policy brief designed to influence federal or international policy in a specific public health area with implications for early childhood mental health. Complete the process required for legislative advocacy at the local, state, or federal level. You will be required to do an oral presentation of your work to the class at the final meeting. Please choose your topic by 09/29/11 at the latest, (topic must be cleared with course instructors first and duplicate topics will not be permitted). Paper is to be 10-15 double spaced pages maximum. DUE DATE: 12/1/11 (25% of your grade for written paper and 25% of your grade for oral presentation). **THERE WILL BE NO EXTENSIONS FOR THE DUE DATE**—PLAN NOW TO BE SURE YOU HAVE ADEQUATE TIME.

Grading will be as follows:

- A = 93 - 100
- B = 84 - 92
- C = 75 - 83
- D = 65 - 74

**Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be certain the letter is delivered to us as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located on the University Park campus in STU 301 and is open from 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday. The phone number is: (213) 740-0776.
Course Outline: * Starred readings are required

8/25/11: Course Introduction; Historical Perspectives and Early Childhood Mental Health Issues; Developing White Papers

- Introduction to course
- How does early childhood mental health fit into public health work
- Importance of addressing ecmh issues in public health—trends and future directions
- Life course perspective in public health
- Historical perspectives of child mental health in the United States
- Status of child & adolescent mental health
- Early childhood mental health: why now

Readings:


9/01/11: Overview of Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health & Environmental Context (Finello)

- Defining early childhood mental health
- Early childhood mental health through interdisciplinary perspectives
- Mental health promotion, preventive intervention & treatment
- Mental health risk & protective (resilience) factors in early childhood
- Effects of poverty on the mental health of children
- Public health threats to mental health (lead, toxins)
- Cultural variations
- Development of attachment
- Markers of early childhood mental health
  - Social-emotional development and school readiness
- Programs and policies addressing early childhood well-being
Mental health services in early childhood
- TANF
- Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)

Readings:


http://www.pacer.org/pacerwebinars/#paragraph1

9/08/11: The Biological Context of Early Childhood Mental Health (Poulsen)

- Infant Brain Development
- Biological influences on early childhood mental health
  - Prematurity
  - Under-nutrition/iron deficient anemia
  - Prenatal substance exposure
  - Developmental disabilities
  - Chronic illness
  - Serious illness
- Programs and policies
  - Medical home concept
  - Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
  - Federal Food Stamp Program (FSP)

Readings:


9/15/11  Wikipedia as a Resource & Research Tool (Finello)

- Wikipedia Overview
- Why use Wikipedia?
- Global reach and impact
- Constructing knowledge in a digital world
- Developing Wikipedia entries
- Topics and brainstorming ideas re ECMH and public health

Readings:


9/22/11: The Parenting Context of Early Childhood Mental Health (Poulsen)

- Perinatal caregiver issues
  - Perinatal substance abuse
  - Maternal & paternal depression
  - Unsupported single parenthood
  - Teen parenthood
  - Fathers
  - Maternal mental illness
- Programs and Policies
  - Family Leave Legislation

Readings:
9/29/11: Research Issues & Advocacy in Early Childhood Mental Health (Finello)

- Epidemiological studies
- Community Based Participatory Research
- Community engagement
- What do public health advocates do to influence policy
- Priority legislative areas for APHA
- Visiting legislators
- Influencing policies on behalf of young children and their families

Readings:


Frank, John (2007). *A beginner’s guide to judge research studies: Quick tips to sort the wheat from the chaff*. Editorial in Medical Post.


10/06/11: Mental Health of Children in Kinship, Foster Care & Adoption (Poulsen)

- Mental health needs of children in foster care
  - Consequences of trauma and emotional neglect
  - Consequences of separation and loss
Policies that support behavioral health needs of children and families involved in the child welfare system
  o Family Preservation programs

Readings:


10/13/11: Addressing Policy: State, National, and International Programs (Finello)

  o Challenges and opportunities in mental health systems
  o International approaches to early childhood mental health
  o SAMHSA early childhood mental health systems of care
  o State Initiatives: Florida, New Mexico, Arizona, Louisiana
  o State, Federal and International Programs and Policies
    o IDEA, Part B & Part C
    o Head Start
    o Child Care & Development Fund (CCDF)
    o CAPTA
    o Titles IV- & IV-E
    o State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)
    o Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis & Treatment (EPSDT)
    o Medicaid
    o Maternal & Child Health Programs

Readings:
* Zero to Three Public Policy Information section. [http://www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)


### 10/20/11: The Impact of Trauma and Violence on Early Childhood Mental Health (Poulsen)

- Effects of trauma and violence on young child development and mental health
  - chronic family stress
  - domestic violence
  - community violence
- Programs addressing exposure to violence

**Readings:**


### 10/27/11: Mental Health as a Primary Health Concern (Finello)

- Child mental health as a primary health concern
- Need for a comprehensive mental health system
- Principles to guide a mental health system of care
- Standards of care for mental health service delivery
System of Care Issues
Integrated approaches to early childhood mental health

Readings:


11/03/11: Diagnosing Mental Health Disorders in Infancy and Early Childhood (Poulsen)

Developmental psychopathology
The stigma of mental health disorder
Developmental trajectories to disorder
Diagnosis of mental health in young children
Diagnostic classification systems
- DSM IV
- DC:0-3
- ICD 9 codes
- Medical necessity

Readings:

11/10/11 Field Experience (Poulsen)

- Head Start program (Thursday morning: 11/10/11)
- Autism Interdisciplinary Diagnostic Clinic (Monday mornings)
- Interdisciplinary Scenario-Based Discussion (2 sessions: Wednesday mornings)
- Los Angeles County Perinatal Mental Health Task Force Meeting (Friday morning)
- Other with approval

Readings: (different readings dependent on chosen Field Experience)

11/17/11: Controversial policies impacting early childhood mental health (Finello)

- Psychotropic drugs in early childhood
- Controversial treatment strategies (autism)
- Feeding Practices & their impact on development
- Controversies regarding causes of problems (vaccines & autism)
- Measuring poverty—use of the federal poverty line
- Multiethnic placement of young children
- Programs & Policies
  - Multiethnic Placement Act (1994)
  - Adoptions & Safe Families Act (1997)

Readings: (different readings to be selected by teams who will lead the discussion around that issue)


West Africa force feeding to free time for fields

Burtless, G. Political consequences of an improved poverty measure.

Herring, D. The Multiethnic Placement Act: Threat to foster child safety and wellbeing.
http://law.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1051&context=pittlwps&sei-redir=1#search=%22multi%20ethnic%20placement%22


11/24/11: Thanksgiving Holiday

12/01/11: Class Presentations of Projects Demonstrating the Intersection of Public Health & Early Childhood Mental Health

**White Papers due at beginning of class—will lose credit if you turn this in after 9:30 am

- Individual/Group Presentations
- Course Wrap Up

Useful Web Sites:

Center on Infant Mental Health & Development http://depts.washington.edu/chdd/ucedd/ucedd_infantmentalhealth.html

National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) http://www.nccp.org

Zero to Three: Infant Mental Health Resource Center http://www.zerotothree.org/imh/

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) http://www.nimh.nih.gov/healthinformation/childmenu.cfm

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/topics/explore/children

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) http://www.brightfutures.aap.org

Child Welfare League of America http://www.cwla.org
World Health Association (WHO)
http://who.int

United Nations Children’s Fund
http://unicef.org