

# Workforce Support in Times of Crisis: Examples from New Jersey

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# Three layers of workforce support

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1. Cultivate a trauma-aware and trauma-informed workforce through education and discussion
2. Provide relationship-based coaching, consultation, and support
3. Offer opportunities for connection and reflection

# Cultivate a trauma-informed workforce

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We have the responsibility to ensure that the workforce is adequately aware and informed about the science of safety and stress, including toxic stress and trauma

We also have the responsibility to root relationship-based and reflective practice in trauma/crisis response, as well as everyday practice

The workforce that centralizes relationships can ensure more efficient and effective restoration and repair during times of crisis (intervention), and can promote resilience in future traumatic experiences (promotion)



Intervention

Promotion



# Cultivate a trauma-aware workforce

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After Superstorm Sandy in 2012, New Jersey began a population-level disaster/trauma response that was offered to the multidisciplinary/multisystemic early relational health workforce

This occurred because of a group of people's creativity, courage, voice, and access

These people had RELATIONSHIPS that informed the understanding that trauma-response starts with a PROMOTIONAL mindset

# An example: Keeping Babies and Children in Mind

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KBCM Curriculum: 7 sessions, 3 hours per workshop for a total of 21 hours of professional formation

Initially funded through NJ Department of Children and Families by Superstorm Sandy Block Grant funding in the 10 counties most affected by Superstorm Sandy. Funding also supported 24 hours of Reflective Consultation for any interested participants of KBCM.

**Staff from all sectors of public and private infant/child/school and family programs were invited to attend**, including home visiting, childcare centers, Early Head Start/Head Start, Early Intervention, family child care providers, preschools, elementary schools, and child protective services.

# Keeping Babies and Children in Mind

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## **Goals of KBCM:**

To “raise the floor” of knowledge and practice for all who work with infants, toddlers, children and families.

To inform professionals about the impact of trauma in the early years of development

To emphasize the interpersonal process – especially affect, gesture, movement, pacing, voice – in promoting human development

To promote the action of reflection in practice

# Keeping Babies and Children in Mind

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To provide core knowledge in five critical themes:

- Early experiences matter to all future learning and connecting;
- Development occurs through relationships;
- Experiences of repair build relational resilience;
- Culture and context organize relationships and development;
- Reflection is required for best practice



# Keeping Babies and Children in Mind

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After SSBG funds were expended, in 2015, the NJ Department of Human Services chose to fund KBCM and spread the eligibility to all 21 counties of the state, funded through CCDBG funds

To date, we have trained over 10,000 infant and early childhood professionals in our state in at least one workshop of KBCM

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Education + Coaching =  outcomes

# Relationship-based coaching, consultation and support

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The NJ Department of Human Services also funded New Jersey's first Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation model in early care and education

This consultation uses relationship-based strategies to partner with providers to **reduce reactivity** and **increase responsivity** in their interactions with children

This is done through educating about the science of safety and stress, and increasing reflectivity in the providers

During Covid-19, programs accessed reflective support for leadership and full program staff to support their experiences and reduce stress

# Opportunities for connection and reflection

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In April 2020, through CCDBG and PDG B-5 funding, we began reflective groups for the early relational health workforce as a way of responding to the social isolation, fear and uncertainty of Covid-19

**Conversations for Connection, Comfort and Calm (3C's)** are 6-week groups that meet virtually for 1 hour for the multidisciplinary/multisystemic ERH workforce to have reflective space to focus on connection with others, cultivate comfort, and find calm

These groups had not set agenda, but all shared the goal of providing the workforce relationship-based, reflective supports so that they were more regulated to support children and families

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Let's take a look at why supporting the workforce during times of crisis is so important

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FC4qRD1vn8>

# STRONGER THAN THE STORM: KEEPING INFANTS AND CHILDREN IN MIND DURING THE RESPONSE TO SUPERSTORM SANDY

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Costa, K. Mulrooney, N. Spinazzola (2013). Stronger Than the Storm: Keeping Infants and Children in Mind During the Response to Superstorm Sandy. *Journal of ZERO TO THREE: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families*, 34(2), 55-62.

# Contact us!

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