

Supporting Early Connections

Infant Mental Health Services – Provided by Navos

Treatment Overview

Child-Parent Therapy is a relationship-based approach to the treatment of mental health issues in infancy and early childhood. The experiences of families involved in the dependency system often expose young children to stressors and risk factors that have a direct impact on their mental health. They also affect parents' abilities to provide sufficient structure and caregiving to protect and heal the child. The goal of Child-Parent Therapy is to promote a psychological partnership, in which the child learns to regulate feelings and understand their "world," and the parent is able to protect the child and respond in developmentally appropriate ways. This is done within the framework of the attachment relationship that is continuing to form between the child and parent.

Goals for the Parent and Child

1. Encourage healthy development and adaptive coping.
2. Maintain regular levels of affective arousal.
3. Establish trust.
4. Establish and maintain healthy levels of reciprocity in relationships.
5. Normalize any traumatic responses.
6. Move to a balanced way of being—developmentally, emotionally, socially, physically, reflectively.
7. Support healing for the child, the parent, and the child-parent relationship to promote and sustain health development.

Program Implementation

Each family participating in this program will receive 10 months of Child-Parent Therapy services from Navos. The therapist, who has an infant mental health specialization, comes to the child and parent either in the home or at another site, as appropriate. The therapist also has a Family Support Specialist working closely with her to enhance family engagement in services. This program is free to the family. Medicaid and/or other health insurance is billed for services when appropriate. Follow-up services may be recommended after completion of this program.

In order to participate, a family must have a dependency case filed in King County Superior Court. The child is the target "client" and services will support the child's relationship with the biological parent(s), but may also include other caregivers who become involved in caring for the child. Parents should be motivated and invested in improving their relationship with their infant or toddler and in developing their parenting abilities. All children and parents are screened and/or assessed upon entering the program and at various times throughout their participation. Screening and/or assessment focuses on family needs, psychological and emotional functioning, development, communication, and interaction.