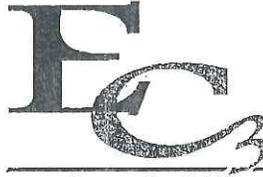


COUNCIL MEMBERS

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Academy of Pediatrics
Sherry Iverson - Co Chair

Parent Representative
Justin Coleman - Co Chair



Early Childhood Coordinating Council

May 28, 2014

Optum Idaho
205 East Water Tower Lane
Meridian, ID 83642

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is on behalf of the Early Childhood Coordinating Council, which serves as a statewide advisory group for the IDEA Part C, Infant Toddler Program, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant and all other early childhood stakeholders in Idaho. This Council is appointed by the Governor.

It has come to our attention that Optum is compiling a needs assessment or gap analysis around mental health services in Idaho. We have been told by Optum that they are gathering their data from existing services.

We would like to report a severe gap in this state around early childhood mental health. It is difficult to show a gap between providers and services because, there are fewer than one dozen people endorsed by the Idaho Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Association in this state to provide services for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. So the first gap we would like to have recognized is the lack of skilled, competent and endorsed professionals to provide the service.

The second gap is the fact that we know infants, toddlers and preschoolers need mental health services and do not have access to those services. The nationally renowned research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study has shown the more adverse experiences a child encounters, the higher the rate of lifelong health issues. One of those experiences is child maltreatment which is typically accompanied by other experiences such as drugs, violence, etc. Currently there is a national emphasis on "trauma-based care and practices" in recognition of the damaging social and emotional impact on young children of maltreatment. In the past nine months in Idaho, there have been 365 infants and toddlers (birth to three years old) with substantiated situations of abuse. We also know anecdotally, that children are expelled from child care for behavioral issues and that school districts are continuing to see a rise in behavior problems with young children from three years up.

Please accept this letter as input to the needs assessment (gap analysis) currently underway in Idaho. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Sherry D. Iverson, Co-chair
Early Childhood Coordinating Council

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