



# ECCS

Early Childhood Collaborative of Southington

*Presents*  
**Children's Mental Health in Southington**

November 22, 2024

[www.southingtonearlychildhood.org](http://www.southingtonearlychildhood.org)

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## Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- What is Mental Health in Children?
- Treatments and Assistance Options
- Finding Help
- Support Groups and Classes
- Questions



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# ECCCS

Early Childhood Collaborative of Southington

## Welcome and Introductions

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## Introductions

Joanne Kelleher, Executive Director

Mission: Collaborating to ensure Southington's children are healthy and prepared to learn through advocacy, programs, resources, and support.



# ECCCS

Early Childhood Collaborative of Southington

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## Introductions

Holly Hansen, LMSW  
 Sr. Community Health Outreach Coordinator  
 Wheeler Health



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## Introductions

Emmanuel Silva De Sousa, Practice Manager  
 Lead Early Childhood Specialist  
 Integrated Wellness Group  
 ECCS Board Member



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## Why this topic?

- As a community, we are seeing changes in children, including difficult temperaments, Self-Regulation issues, anxiety and socio-emotional delays.
- Childhood trauma can impact a child's behaviors as well as their long-term mental and physical health outcomes.
- Still dealing with the lingering impacts of COVID
- Financial hardships are impacting parents' capacity to spend quality time with children and practice the best approaches to difficult situations.
- Parents are concerned.



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## Trends and Statistics

From an ECCS Survey of over 350 parents in January 2022:

Q: There have been instances in the past year where I have been concerned about my children's mental wellbeing.

A: Always = 7.1%

Frequently = 19.22%

Sometimes = 48.3%

Never = 25.28%



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## Trends and Statistics

- In 2021 and 2022, 19.0% of US children aged 2 to 8 years had 1 or more mental disorders. Of these children, 9.1% reported not receiving any needed health care in the previous 12 months, and of these, 45.8% reported not receiving mental health services when needed (CDC)
- 10% of children ages 3-17 had current, diagnosed anxiety (9% of males and 11% of females) (CDC)
- 7% of children ages 3-17 had current, diagnosed behavior disorders (10% of males and 5% of females) (CDC)
- 4% of children ages 3-17 had current, diagnosed depression (3% of males and 6% of females) (CDC)
- National estimates among U.S. children aged 3–17 years [who have ever been diagnosed with ADHD](#) vary from 6% to 16% across states (CDC)
- Estimates for receiving any [ADHD treatment](#) among children with current ADHD vary from 58% to 92% across states (CDC)
- In 2020 about 1 in 36 children had an Autism Diagnosis (CDC)



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## What is Mental Health in Children?

Mental health in early childhood is critical in supporting every child's emotional development as well as a crucial intervention to support children with additional needs as early as possible for the best long-term outcomes.



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## Definition - Anxiety

Anxiety is the emotional and physical response to perceived danger, stress, or uncertainty, characterized by feelings of worry, fear, or unease.

It often involves a heightened state of alertness, racing thoughts, and physical symptoms like a racing heart or tension.

While it can be a normal reaction to stress, excessive or chronic anxiety can interfere with daily life, causing discomfort and difficulty in coping with everyday situations.

It is the mind's way of reacting to potential threats, but when disproportionate or persistent, it can become a barrier to well-being and functioning.



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## Definition - Depression

Depression is a persistent feeling of sadness, hopelessness, and a lack of interest or pleasure in activities that were once enjoyable.

It affects both the mind and body, often leading to changes in appetite, sleep patterns, and energy levels, as well as difficulties with concentration and decision-making.

Depression can create a sense of emptiness or worthlessness and may cause individuals to withdraw from social interactions or experience intense feelings of guilt or despair.

It is more than just temporary sadness; it is a deeper, often overwhelming emotional and mental state that can interfere significantly with daily life and well-being.



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## How it shows up in early childhood

- In early childhood, anxiety and depression can present in different ways than in older children or adults, often manifesting through behavioral changes rather than clear verbal expressions of distress.
- Young children may not have the language skills to explain their emotions, so parents and caregivers need to observe changes in behavior, mood, and physical symptoms.



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## Anxiety in Early Childhood:

Anxiety in young children often arises from fears of separation, unfamiliar situations, or specific objects or events. The child may exhibit:

### 1. Excessive Worry or Fear:

- Fear of being separated from parents or caregivers (separation anxiety).
- Fear of new or unfamiliar places, people, or events (e.g., not wanting to go to school or daycare).
- Recurrent fears about specific things (e.g., monsters, dark places, or loud noises).

### 2. Physical Symptoms:

- Complaints of stomachaches, headaches, or feeling sick, especially before stressful events like school or social situations.
- Increased heart rate, sweating, or trembling during anxiety-inducing situations.

### 3. Avoidance Behaviors:

- Refusal to go to school, daycare, or participate in group activities.
- Clinging to parents or caregivers and having difficulty engaging in activities without their presence.



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## Anxiety in Early Childhood:

### 4. Sleep Difficulties:

- Trouble falling asleep due to fear or restlessness.
- Nightmares or waking up frequently throughout the night.

### 5. Overreaction to Minor Stressors:

- Crying or becoming easily upset over seemingly small issues or changes in routine.
- Difficulty calming down after a stressful event.

### 6. Perfectionism or Over-Compliance:

- A child may try to control their environment, becoming overly focused on "doing things right" or excessively seeking approval from adults.



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## Depression in Early Childhood:

Depression in young children can be harder to recognize, as their emotional and behavioral responses are still developing. Some common signs include:

### 1. Persistent Sadness or Irritability:

- A noticeable shift in mood, such as frequent crying, sadness, or irritability without clear cause.
- Loss of interest or enjoyment in previously loved activities, such as playing with toys, interacting with peers, or engaging in hobbies.

### 2. Social Withdrawal:

- Increased isolation from family members, peers, and activities.
- Lack of interest in socializing with others, avoiding playdates, or retreating to a solitary space.

### 3. Changes in Behavior:

- More frequent temper tantrums or outbursts of anger than usual, possibly as a result of frustration or a lack of coping skills.
- Acting out, such as aggressive behavior or defiance, especially when they feel overwhelmed or misunderstood.



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## Depression in Early Childhood:

### 4. Changes in Sleep and Appetite:

- Difficulty sleeping or oversleeping (e.g., wanting to sleep excessively during the day or having nightmares).
- Significant changes in appetite—either a loss of appetite or overeating, which can result in weight loss or weight gain.

### 5. Physical Complaints:

- Complaints of physical symptoms such as stomachaches, headaches, or fatigue without any apparent medical cause.

### 6. Self-Doubt or Low Self-Esteem:

- Expressing feelings of worthlessness or guilt, even at a young age (e.g., “I’m bad” or “I’m not good at anything”).
- Difficulty accepting praise or frequently saying negative things about themselves.

### 7. Regression in Skills or Behavior:

- Returning to earlier behaviors, such as thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, or clinging to parents more than before.



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## Overlap Between Anxiety and Depression in Early Childhood:

Sometimes, anxiety and depression can overlap in young children, making it harder to distinguish between the two.

For example, a child with anxiety may also experience sadness or withdrawal due to feeling overwhelmed, while a depressed child may become anxious or fearful of specific events or situations.

Both conditions can affect a child's ability to engage with peers, perform in school or daycare, and maintain healthy relationships with family members.



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## Importance of Early Recognition and Intervention:

Because young children may not yet have the language skills to express their emotions clearly, parents and caregivers need to observe behavioral and emotional shifts closely.

Early intervention is crucial, as untreated anxiety and depression can lead to ongoing challenges in school, social interactions, and overall emotional development.

If signs of anxiety or depression persist or interfere with the child's ability to function, it is important to seek help from a pediatrician, child psychologist, or other mental health professional specializing in early childhood.



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## Paying for Help

- Insurance
- Financial aid
  - Providers
  - The Family Assistance & Social Determinant Fund (open until 12/13/24)



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# Stepped Care Model for Mental Health

## 5. INPATIENT AND CRISIS CARE

24/7 care for severe crises, including hospitalization or residential treatment.

## 4. INTENSIVE OUTPATIENT COUNSELING (IOP)

Structured, multi-day programs providing focused therapy and support.

## 3. OUTPATIENT COUNSELING

Regular therapy sessions and medication management from licensed professionals.

## 2. PEER SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY

Support groups, peer-led programs, and community-based education.

## 1. SELF CARE AND PREVENTION

Daily wellness practices like mindfulness, exercise, and stress management.

Collaborative

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# Emergency Care

- 911 (24/7)
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (24/7)
- 741-741 Text Crisis Line
- Mobile Crisis Intervention Services (MCIS) -  
Call 2-1-1, then pick 1 for crisis and 1 for  
mobile crisis

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## Urgent Crisis Centers for Children

Walk-in clinics for children experiencing a behavioral health crisis - Thoughts of suicide or self-injury, feelings of depression or anxiety, out-of-control behaviors; substance misuse, etc.

### [Urgent Crisis Centers for Children:](#)

- The Village for Families and Children in Hartford
- Yale New Haven Hospital in New Haven
- The Child and Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut in New London
- Wellmore Behavioral Health in Waterbury

**Important Note:** *This program is not an emergency department. If a youth needs immediate medical attention, please call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest hospital.*



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## In-Patient Care – Key Features

- Crisis Stabilization
- 24/7 Supervision and Support
- Structured Environment
- Medical and Psychiatric Assessment
- Individualized Treatment Plan



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## In-Patient Care

- Length of Stay and Discharge Planning
- Who Benefits from Inpatient Care
- Situations Requiring Inpatient Care



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## Out-Patient Care – Key Features

- Flexible Treatment Setting
- Types of Services Offered
- Frequency of Care
- Focus on Goals



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## Out-Patient Care

- Who Benefits from Outpatient Care
- Advantages of Outpatient Care
- Common Outpatient Treatment Modalities
- Importance of Outpatient Care



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## Southington Community Health Outreach Project

- Referrals - Key Components
  - Best Fit for Treatment Goals
  - Autonomy of Choice
  - Engage and Re Engage
  - Multi Agency Collaboration
- 860-604-7448  
or [hrhansen@wheelerclinic.org](mailto:hrhansen@wheelerclinic.org)



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**SOUTHINGTON**  
Behavioral Health  
Resource Directory  
Third Edition, 2022

**Main Street**  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



Funded by the Bradley H. Barnes & Leila U. Barnes Memorial Trust at Main Street Community Foundation

 **Wheeler** | SOUTHINGTON  
COMMUNITY HEALTH  
Outreach Project

**SOUTHINGTON**  
Behavioral Health  
Resource Directory  
FOURTH EDITION



Funded by the Bradley H. Barnes & Leila U. Barnes Memorial Trust at Main Street Community Foundation

**Southington Behavioral Health Resource Directory**



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## Other Resources for Finding Providers

- Open Access
- Psychology Today
- Primary Care Physician
- Crisis Hotlines
- Insurance Provider Directory



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## Other Resources for Finding Help

- KidsMentalHealthInfo.com by Child Health and Development Institute of CT
- kidshealth.org – Advice on children's health, behavior, and growth – from before birth through the teen years.
- CT Clearinghouse - [www.ctclearinghouse.org/](http://www.ctclearinghouse.org/)



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## Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP)

- Promote children's social and emotional development from birth to age five
- Free in-person and telephonic consultation services to parents and early childhood educators
- Ruth Clark, LMSW, Early Childhood Consultant  
Wheeler Clinic, 74 East St, Plainville, CT  
(860) 461-5035  
<http://www.eccpct.com/>



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## Child First™

Child First™ is a no-cost intensive, therapeutic home visiting program that works with caregivers and families to help address emotional, behavioral or developmental challenges, as well as learning problems in young children, prenatal to 5.

<https://www.wheelerclinic.org/services/wheeler-services/child-first>



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## Talk It Out CT

For parents and caregivers who need someone to listen, to understand, and to talk your feelings out.

Engage with trained professionals who will listen and speak with them about their concerns; if additional help is needed, they will be referred to community-based services.

Monday through Friday from 8 am to 8 pm and on weekends from 1 pm to 8 pm and has both English and Spanish capacity.

1-833-258-5011 or <https://talkitoutct.com/>



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## UConn Health Child and Family Development Program

Supporting Southington children ages 6-17 and their parents and guardians. Free parenting and lending library groups at 1115 West Street, Southington. Call or text [959-256-6078](tel:959-256-6078).

- **Managing Children's Behavior** - This is an 8-week parenting group for parents of youth ages 6-11 whose noncompliant behavior happens more than their peers, interferes with home life, and causes the child or parent distress.
- **Tuning in to Teens®** - This is an 8-week parenting group for parents of youth ages 12-17. Tuning in to Teens® is an evidence-based program designed to help parents establish better connections with their adolescent.
- **Tuning in to Kids®** - This is an 8-week parenting group for parents of children ages 6-11. Tuning in to Kids® is an evidence-based program designed to teach parents skills that will help to improve their child's emotional, social, and behavioral functioning. It also focuses on improving communication in the parent-child relationship.
- **Virtual Drop-In Support Group for Parents of Youth With Autism Spectrum Disorder**

<http://h.uconn.edu/parenting-support>



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- First Congregational Church is W.I.S.E.
- Communitywide Block Party focused on with Mental Health Services – 5/18/25
- <https://fccsouthington.org/wise>



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## NAMI Family Support Group

- NAMI - National Alliance on Mental Illness.
- Peer-led support group for any adult with a loved one who has experienced symptoms of a mental health condition.
- Second Tuesday of month at 7 pm at First Congregational Church of Southington starting 1/8/2025
- For any questions or to register contact:
  - Dan Gabree, dgabree@gmail.com, 860-385-1533
  - Amy Truskowsky, amyjeant269@gmail.com, 860-637-5458
  - or call the church office at 860-628-6958



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## Upcoming Classes and Presentations

- QPR: Question. Persuade. Refer.  
Three steps anyone can learn to help prevent suicide.
- [QPR Institute | Practical and Proven Suicide Prevention Training QPR Institute \(en-US\)](#)

STEPS and South Central Health District planning suicide prevention training for early 2025



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## Upcoming Classes and Presentations

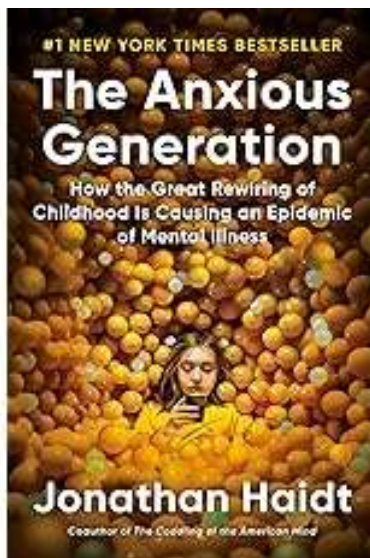
- Youth Mental Health First Aid
- Mental Health First Aid

To be offered in Southington in second half of 2025.  
Offered in other communities too.



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## Anxious Generation: One Community – One Book



Bestseller - How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness

Presented by ECCS, Southington Public Schools and Southington Public Library  
1/16, 2/5, 2/19, 3/5, (Snow Date 3/12 ) at 6:30 pm.



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## Developmental Screening via Sparkler

By using the free Sparkler's mobile app, families with children aged 5 and under can access developmental screening whenever, wherever.

[www.southingtonearlychildhood.org/sparkler/](http://www.southingtonearlychildhood.org/sparkler/)

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## What Does the ASQ-3 Measure?

The ASQ-3 covers 5 domains of development:



**Communication**  
(Words)



**Gross Motor**  
(Body)



**Fine Motor**  
(Body)



**Problem-Solving**  
(Mind)



**Personal-Social**  
(Heart)

sparkler



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## What Does the ASQ:SE Measure?



Social Emotional  
(Heart)

The ASQ:SE-2 measures SEVEN core social-emotional behavioral areas:

1. **Self-regulation** — A child's ability or willingness to calm or settle down or adjust to physiological or environmental conditions or stimulation
2. **Compliance** — A child's ability or willingness to conform to the direction of others and follow rules
3. **Adaptive functioning** — A child's success or ability to cope with physiological needs (e.g., sleeping, eating, elimination, safety)
4. **Autonomy** — A child's ability or willingness to self-initiate or respond without guidance (i.e., independence)
5. **Affect** — A child's ability or willingness to demonstrate his or her own feelings and empathy for others
6. **Social-communication** — A child's ability or willingness to interact with others by responding to or initiating verbal or nonverbal signals to indicate interests or needs, feelings, and affective or internal states
7. **Interaction** — A child's ability or willingness to respond or to initiate social responses to parents, other adults, and peers.

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## Questions

- My child is adopted and biracial. She is struggling with “not matching” and asking more detailed questions about her adoption.
- I am interested in mental resources that are available in person to those without insurance or with HUSKY insurance.
- What can the Southington community do to foster good mental health for its children?
- Your questions.....?



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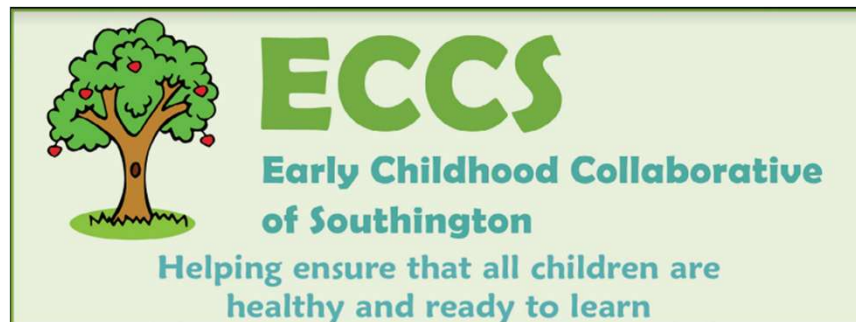
## Thanks to Supporters

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Funding both the ECCS and  
Southington Community Health Outreach Project



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860-385-1665



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SOUTHINGTON  
COMMUNITY HEALTH  
Outreach Project

Funded by the Barnes Memorial Trust at Main Street Community Foundation

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