

EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH

HONORING THE GROWTH, BALANCE, AND WELL-BEING OF OUR YOUNGEST RELATIVES

Early childhood mental health reflects the healthy social, emotional, spiritual, and behavioral development of children from birth to age eight. Native culture teaches us that children come into the world with gifts, purpose, and connection to their ancestors. Their ability to form secure relationships, express emotions, and explore their environment is shaped not only by biology and genetics, but also by the love, teachings, and cultural experiences surrounding them. When little ones grow within nurturing, culturally grounded environments, they build strong roots that support well-being across their lifespan.

KEY ASPECTS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH

Relationships: Strong, responsive relationships with parents, caregivers, extended family, and community members help children feel safe and valued. Gentle caregiving, holding, singing, storytelling, time on the land, lays the foundation for confidence, learning, and exploration.

Emotional Development: Young children learn to identify, understand, and express their feelings through the guidance of caring adults. When caregivers model calm, empathy, and patience, children develop emotional balance and resilience.

Social Development: Through play, family gatherings, ceremonies, and community involvement, children build important social skills—communication, cooperation, self-regulation, and respect for others.

Brain Development: The early years are a sacred and critical time for brain growth. Supportive, predictable experiences strengthen neural pathways, while chronic stress or trauma can disrupt development. Culturally informed, trauma-responsive caregiving helps protect and heal growing minds.

All Nations Crisis Textline

Text "Support" to 33464 to chat with an All Nations team member.

We are here seven days a week from 8:00am–Midnight.



For Relatives living in Nebraska



SUPPORTING THE HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH

- **Center relationships.** Consistent, responsive caregiving—rocking, holding, singing, and storytelling—helps children feel secure and cherished.
- **Use culture as medicine.** Language, songs, traditional foods, ceremonies, and time on the land all strengthen identity and emotional balance.
- **Create predictable routines.** Gentle structure around meals, sleep, and transitions helps children feel safe in their environment.
- **Teach about feelings with compassion.** Naming emotions and responding with patience supports communication and self-regulation.
- **Offer calming, sensory-safe spaces.** Quiet corners, nature walks, drumming, and grounding activities help soothe big feelings.
- **Reach out for support.** Early childhood mental health providers, tribal programs, and community healers can partner with families using trauma-informed, culturally respectful care.

SOURCES:
[Rooted in relationships Overview.pdf](#)
www.cdc.gov

Created by Morningstar Counseling and Consultation 11/17/2025

