

Memorandum

TO: Regional Accountable Entity Directors and Mental Health Center Executive Directors

FROM: Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Behavioral Health
Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing

RE: Use of the Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood™ (DC:0-5)

DATE: December 31, 2020

The use of the Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood™ (DC:0-5) is the recommended practice for the clinical conceptualization and diagnosis of young children ages 0 through 5.^{1, 2, 3} This clinical classification is developmentally sensitive, relationship-based and contextually grounded. The DC:0-5 enhances clinicians' ability to diagnose and treat mental health problems specific to infants and young children that are not well addressed in other classification systems. Most mental health problems have their origins in early childhood, and decades of clinical research clearly demonstrate that intervention of clinical problems in the earliest years of life is most effective and has the greatest return on investment than intervention at any other age.

As the Mental Health Authority for the State of Colorado, the Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) recommends the use of the DC:0-5 for diagnosis of children ages 0-5. Furthermore, OBH and the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) support the use of a crosswalk to allow DC:0-5 diagnoses to be mapped onto DSM diagnoses and billed as ICD-10 diagnostic codes that allow for medically necessary services.

Mental health professionals who provide clinical services to young children ages 0-5 and their families should be trained in the use of the DC:0-5 (and all future iterations). Colorado is the first and currently only state in the nation to have a cohort of ZERO TO THREE certified trainers who are available to provide this training across all regions of the state, and many of them can provide it at no cost. The ZERO TO THREE certification process ensures quality trainers can support providers in maintaining high fidelity to the diagnostic training curriculum.

For more information on training please visit: <https://mhcd.org/right-start-colorado/>

The Colorado COMPASS will include a section for the DC:0-5 and will make inclusion of a DSM diagnosis unnecessary for children with a DC:0-5 diagnosis. The DC:0-5 crosswalk and Frequently Asked Questions are enclosed.

¹ Mental Health Colorado (2018). Early Childhood Mental Health Toolkit.

² ZERO TO THREE (2018). Advancing Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health: The Integration of DC:0-5 Into State Policy and Systems.

³ ZERO TO THREE (2017). DC:0-5: Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood: A Briefing Paper