

Erikson Institute

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Supporting Children's Mental Health in the Wake of Gun Violence

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, August 18, 2022- Today, Erikson Institute's Center for Children and Families (CCF) hosted a free informational presentation and Q & A for parents, teachers, caregivers, neighbors, and others can do to support young children's mental health, whether they have been personally impacted by gun violence or exposed through media and adults' conversation around them. The recent mass shootings in Highland Park, Illinois, Uvalde, Texas and Buffalo, New York have impacted the national consciousness.

Meanwhile, ongoing gun violence in neighborhoods creates a chronic state of trauma for community members. The [Illinois Risk and Reach Report](#), released in 2021, shows that 62 of the 102 counties in Illinois have low to low-moderate percentages of children accessing mental health services. These data are one of 15 risk factors young children and their families experience. Other data in the report include poverty, homelessness, lead exposure, violence exposure, and more. The effect of repeated exposure to violence is especially harmful to a child's well-being. Adults have a crucial role in restoring safety and normalcy for children after they experience a traumatic event.

CCF's mental health therapists created this opportunity to give information and tips for caregivers to help infants and young children make sense of their experiences. It is important to **talk** to children about their experiences. Explain in as many ways as possible that you can help them to feel more confident that someone will be there to take care of their needs.

Erikson is dedicated to children, families, and communities in providing positive ways to support children and their parents when a child faces a developmental problem. The Center for Children and Families (CCF) is available to provide mental health counseling for children birth to age eight through our clinic in River North, and at Centro para Niños y Familias, located in Little Village. Bi-lingual therapists are available, and all families are welcome regardless of ability to pay. For more information, please visit <https://www.erikson.edu/center-children-families/>.

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