

2025 -- H 5497

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

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A N A C T

RELATING TO INSURANCE -- INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR MENTAL ILLNESS AND  
SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

Introduced By: Representatives Fogarty, Carson, Dawson, Cortvriend, Noret, Kazarian,  
Donovan, Alzate, Ajello, and McGaw

Date Introduced: February 13, 2025

Referred To: House Health & Human Services

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Legislative findings.

2 The general assembly hereby finds that:

3 (1) All babies and young children need responsive, consistent, nurturing relationships to  
4 promote the development of positive mental health.

5 (2) In Rhode Island, the number of young children enrolled in Medicaid presenting with  
6 Serious Emotional Disturbance grew from ten percent (10%) in 2017 to twenty-two percent (22%)  
7 in 2024. Many young children are experiencing significant mental health challenges that interfere  
8 with their development, relationships and learning.

9 (3) As of 2023, there were twenty-three (23) states and the District of Columbia that  
10 actively promoted specific age-appropriate assessment frameworks and/or therapies through  
11 Medicaid policy.

12 (4) Rhode Island's Medicaid and commercial insurance providers already pay for mental  
13 health services for young children, but the state has a very limited supply of therapists who have  
14 specific training to work with the youngest children.

15 (5) Rhode Island has not developed adequate infrastructure to support the use of  
16 recommended mental health assessment frameworks designed for young children or evidence-  
17 based dyadic therapies for children under age six (6).

18 SECTION 2. Chapter 27-38.2 of the General Laws entitled "Insurance Coverage for Mental

1 Illness and Substance Use Disorders" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

2 **27-38.2-7. Infant and early childhood mental health hub.**

3 (a) The executive office of health and human services (EOHHS) shall develop a budget  
4 and seek federal, philanthropic, or other funding to establish an early childhood mental health hub  
5 program ("hub") focused on promoting and improving access to infant and early childhood mental  
6 health services for children under the age of six (6) years and their families. The hub shall be funded  
7 as a pilot program for a minimum of three (3) years to:

8 (1) Train and support infant and early childhood mental health professionals in Rhode  
9 Island;

10 (2) Maintain a registry of infant and early childhood mental health professionals and their  
11 qualifications;

12 (3) Monitor the availability of services, new national recommendations, and advancements  
13 in interventions and therapies; and

14 (4) Make recommendations to Medicaid and behavioral health systems to address gaps.

15 (b) The hub shall be designed to integrate and align with the Rhode Island children's  
16 behavioral health system of care managed by the EOHHS.

17 (c) Needs that are outlined in the Rhode Island infant early childhood mental health plan  
18 shall be early priorities for the hub including:

19 (1) Offering training and ongoing implementation support for clinicians to become certified  
20 and to use evidence-based, family-based dyadic therapy models for children under the age of six  
21 (6) years, such as child-parent psychotherapy (CPP), parent-child interaction therapy (PCIT), and  
22 attachment and bibehavioral catch-up (ABC). Building the training capacity in the state by holding  
23 train-the-trainer programs should be considered;

24 (2) Offering training and ongoing implementation support on developmentally-appropriate  
25 screenings to identify mental health challenges in young children from infancy to under the age of  
26 six (6) years;

27 (3) Offering training and ongoing implementation support for clinicians to conduct  
28 developmentally-, culturally-, and family-appropriate assessments of mental health in young  
29 children under the age of six (6) years;

30 (4) Advancing equitable access to services and reducing racial and ethnic disparities,  
31 increasing the number of infant and early childhood qualified mental health clinicians who are  
32 bilingual or represent the diverse races, ethnicities, and cultures of young children and families in  
33 Rhode Island; and

34 (5) Serving as a community resource for families and health professionals to find a connect

1 [with effective therapeutic services for young children suffering with mental health challenges.](#)

2 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO INSURANCE -- INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR MENTAL ILLNESS AND  
SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

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1           This act would require the executive office of health and human services (EOHHS) to  
2   develop a budget and seek federal, philanthropic, or other funding to establish an early childhood  
3   mental health hub program focused on improving access to infant and early childhood mental health  
4   services for children under the age of six (6) years and their families. The hub would be funded as  
5   a pilot program for a minimum of three (3) years.

6           This act would take effect upon passage.

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