

The term **social-emotional development** refers to the developing capacity of the child from birth through five years of age to:

- form **close** and **secure** adult and peer **relationships**
- **experience**, **regulate**, and **express emotions** in socially and culturally appropriate ways and
- **explore** the environment and learn

...all in the context of **family**, **community**, and **culture**.

**Caregivers** promote healthy development by:

- working to **support** social-emotional **wellness** in all young children
- making every effort to **prevent** the occurrence or escalation of social-emotional **problems** in children at-risk
- identifying and working to **remediate problems** that surface, and
- when necessary, **referring** children and their families to **appropriate services**

*Adapted with permission from ZERO to THREE's definition of infant mental health, 2001.*