No man is an island. I think we can all agree on that. In that same light, I’d also like to suggest that no organization is an island. That is—we can’t do it alone and there is no such thing as a silver bullet, no matter how awesome our programs are.

First3Years is proud of our continued ability and perspective to bring collaboration into every aspect of work. From the little details such as planning content for trainings to the bigger system-wide issues like building an early childhood system of professional development for Texas—our priority is always to involve as many other organizations as possible. Through collaboration we brainstorm more ideas, pool more resources, and impact more children.

As our work continues, collaboration continues to be a pillar we build upon. Our work to restructure how infants and toddlers are managed within the child welfare system through the Safe Babies initiative is the effort of more than a dozen partners coming to the table to say that maltreated infants and toddlers deserve better and we can do better.

So, do you have a great idea of to advance the healthy development of young children? We’d love to hear—actually we’d love to work with you on it because in the end, we’re all in this together.

Sadie

Collaboration in Action

Top: Dallas Food for Thought at WINGS, Dr. Kim Kertsburg, Dallas Postpartum Support, Jan 19

Bottom: Home Visiting Training with HHSC at Texas Tech University Health Center, Lubbock, Feb 4.

Bottom: Raising of America screening and discussion, Austin, Jan 18
First3Years and HHSC Partner in Home Visiting Tour

As a part of their ongoing efforts to support infants and toddlers throughout the state, Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and First3Years have partnered up to support professionals in the Texas Home Visiting program.

Texas Home Visiting is a free program that helps parents during pregnancy and throughout a child’s first 5 years by sending trained professionals to their home to provide information and support. The goal of the program is to help parents around the state have improved pregnancy and child health outcomes; cognitive, social, and emotional development of young children; parenting skills; and child safety.

To support those goals, First3Years has been contracted to work with the HHSC to present six 2-day mini-conferences around the state to train professionals in the Texas Home Visiting program.

Jes Fyall, Training Manager for First3Years, along with Katie Compton, a Certified Family Life Educator and Endorsed Infant Mental Health Specialist, will conduct the trainings in Dallas, Lubbock, San Marcos, McAllen, Houston, and Odessa. Training topics include: Social-Emotional Development for Infant/Toddlers; Impact of Toxic Stress on the Developing Child (Adverse Childhood Experiences); Cultural Sensitivity and working with non-English speaking families; and Importance of Self-Care for Compassionate Providers

“By providing mentoring and modeling, home visitors compassionately help parents and caregivers build capacity to support their own children,” said Jes Fyall. “Parents look to their home visitor as an expert on their child’s development. It is imperative that we equip these professionals with a strong theory-based foundation, so they can focus on building the relationship in practice with their families.”

Providing training support for the Home Visiting program is an important part of the First3Years mission to educate, advocate, and collaborate to advance the healthy development of infants and toddlers. First3Years is proud to support this program to provide assistance to so many across the state.

Learn more about Texas Home Visiting, or for more about how First3Years trainings can support your organization’s needs, contact Jes Fyall at jfyall@first3yearstx.org.
Program Update: Just Beginning

In 2015, First3Years launched the program to address the parenting support needs of fathers within the juvenile justice system in Dallas County. Just Beginning is a successful parenting program that has been implemented among incarcerated parents in California, Connecticut, and Ohio with great success. First3Years is the first to carry out this program in Texas.

Just Beginning (formerly known as Baby Elmo) is a parenting program for incarcerated parents that teaches strategies to positively interact with their children, develop parenting skills, and foster positive emotional bonds that will continue to be advantageous to the family after the parent is released. Supporting adjudicated teen fathers as parents and providing them the tools to address the needs of their children helps build protective factors for both the father and child.

Just Beginning is media-based, using Sesame Street videos, curriculum, discussion, and play sessions. There are five videos catered towards attachment theory, following the child’s lead, talking to your baby, praise, and bringing it all together. As well, there are five videotaped parent-child interactions that are evaluated to judge the efficacy of the program. With our partner Café Momentum, Just Beginning hopes to reach a minimum of 30 fathers and their children. Georgetown University serves as evaluator for the initiative.

Benefits for fathers of initiatives like Just Beginning that focus on teenage fathers range from reduced recidivism to maintenance of family ties. Involved fathers are shown to have a decrease in negative behaviors ranging from less substance abuse to less than average contact with the criminal justice system. Fathers also learn important personality aspects from their children, including having an expanded ability for caring and nurturance, and deepened emotions and emotional intensity. Teen fathers who are emotionally attached to their children can provide protective factors against risky behaviors of the child later in life. By providing these fathers the necessary tools to connect emotionally with their child, Just Beginning supports a lifetime of positive mental health in the child and helps strengthen the mental health of the father.

We thank our funders, Gaston Episcopal Hospital Foundation, The Dallas Foundation, and Community Foundation of Texas whose support enables Just Beginning to help positively shape the lives of incarcerated fathers and their children.

Matthew Willoughby joined as the coordinator for the Just Beginning program in November 2015. He has a profound interest in the two-generation approach with families, which creates opportunities for and addresses the needs of both vulnerable children and their families together. He also has a special interest in paternal involvement. One of Matt’s favorite quotes is, “Being a great father is like shaving. No matter how good you shaved today, you have to do it again tomorrow.” (Reed Markham)
If a value for community and collaboration brought Dr. Angela Moemeka, Vice President and Medical Director for Children’s Health, to First3Years, it’s our shared belief in working together to create positive health outcomes for Texas’ youngest that keeps our partnership strong.

Dr. Moemeka first met Sadie Funk of First3Years at a panel discussion organized by the Dallas Regional Chamber of Commerce on the importance of early life and health outcomes, and how promoting a strong early start for children drives the economy and community.

The meeting was timely, as Dr. Moemeka had been seeking out partnerships with community groups to ensure the intersections between health outcomes and childhood development. “First3Years views the clinical and social needs of babies and toddlers as one and the same. So we really connected on the need to make sure that the family is ready for a child, providing resources and continuing to manage care beyond birth to age three,” says Dr. Moemeka.

This same perspective drives the Children’s Health philosophy for patient care: “You’ve got to know the who, the why, and where of poor health outcomes, and then you will understand the health and cost drivers for that population. It’s driven by the triple aims of meeting quality of experience for patients, reducing the cost of care, and improving health outcomes,” says Dr. Moemeka.

One exciting new initiative at Children’s Health is Wellness at WIC, which supports early childhood WIC beneficiaries with a needs assessment into the family’s health and social needs, and connecting children and their caregivers with a medical home. The goal is to link that family unit to local resources. “We aren’t just building awareness, but closing the loop—helping to serve as a community navigator by connecting patients to other health services and resources. By focusing on one neighborhood (Pleasant Grove) it also allows us to do a gap analysis, looking at the needs of the community.”

In addition to sponsoring and presenting at First3Years’ 2015 Annual Conference in Dallas, Children’s Health is collaborating with First3Years on an early childhood health initiative to ensure every child is ready for kindergarten, targeting the underserved and ensuring they are screened appropriately for optimal physical, social and emotional health. The initiative engages pediatric doctors in physician practice education, enriching knowledge so they can be confident in identifying delays and equipping them to coordinate care by linking them with external partners.

So why does Children’s Health support initiatives related to children, from birth to age three? “We know from evidence-based, early childhood studies that the first 1,000 days are critical for brain development. Children are using this time and those experiences to build everything they need to be ready to learn, ready to read and ready to become a successful adult.”

We couldn’t agree more, and thank Dr. Moemeka and Children’s Health in joining with First3Years to create stronger, better starts for Texas infants and toddlers.

For more information about partnering with First3Years, please contact Soudary Kittivong-Greenbaum, Director of Advancement at skgreenbaum@first3yearstx.org or at (469) 763-4936.
Volunteer Highlight: Ashley Borthick, IMH-E® (II)

In the world of non-profits, there are many ways an organization receives support in achieving its mission. Without the help of dedicated and tireless volunteers who give their time and expertise, First3Years would not be able to reach as many infants and toddlers throughout the state of Texas.

Ashley Borthick, IMH-E® (II), first learned about First3Years four years ago as a graduate student, and today she’s a pivotal part of a team of volunteers partnering in our advocacy efforts. We hope others will consider joining her in support of Texas babies.

How did you first get engaged with First3Years?

I learned about First3Years when I was a graduate student at the University of Texas at Dallas. I attended one of the Food for Thought sessions and my interest was sparked. I was new to the child development field at the time and enjoyed knowing that there was a group of professionals that cared deeply for the lives of children and families.

How do you support First3Years through volunteering?

I have truly enjoyed working with the Dallas Food for Thought committee both as a member and now as the Chair (2015 and 2016). We host the monthly luncheon series, which presents infant mental health topics and speakers throughout the spring of each year.

I also serve as a reviewer and advisor for those working towards their First3Years Endorsement to obtain their IMH-E (link).

In what way does being involved with First3Years support your work?

Being a part of First3Years not only brings me in proximity to knowledgeable professionals in my field, but I also learn about new ideas, studies, and skills from our Food For Thought presenters. In addition, I have gone through the endorsement process myself and gained invaluable information and techniques to help support my work with Texas children.

What motivates you to support babies and toddlers?

My motivation first lies in my knowledge of the critical years for children. I work as a Parent Educator for ChildCareGroup for Collin County and as the Coordinator for the Texas Healthy Start Alliance. Throughout my work in this field, I am continuously motivated and encouraged by the families I work with, my co-workers, and other professionals working to help children and families.
Infant Mental Health Endorsement (IMH-E) is the internationally recognized credential for infant and family professionals, and it is the cornerstone of the First3Years professional development programs. With four levels designed to target different professional areas within the infant-family field, an IMH-E enhances a professional profile and affirms the knowledge and skills an applicant has gained. It also helps raise the standard for quality and effectiveness in the early childhood development field.

**Dr. Cindy Frosch, IMH-E (IV)**, recently received her Level IV Endorsement with a research/faculty designation. She is a lecturer at the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences at the University of Texas at Dallas.

**What made you decide to pursue Endorsement?**

I viewed the Endorsement process as a way to demonstrate my on-going commitment to Infant Mental Health. Several of my colleagues have been endorsed, and I wanted to join them in documenting my specialized skill set and training while also increasing awareness of the value of Endorsement- both for myself and for the field.

**Did you feel that the Endorsement process was affirming of your knowledge and skills in the infant-family field?**

Definitely. Having not taken an exam for many years, I was quite anxious about whether I had the depth and breadth of knowledge required to be Endorsed as a Level IV! But I am always reading, teaching, or thinking about Infant Mental Health in some way, and the knowledge and experiences that I have gained over the years prepared me well for the overall Endorsement process.

**Now that you are endorsed, how do you plan on using the credential in both your personal and professional life?**

I added it to my CV and resume right away! I received my PhD in 1997 and now have this recent achievement listed under 2015. I think this shows that even though it has been almost 20 years since I finished my degree, I continue to enjoy learning and growing in my chosen field.

**Would you recommend that others in the infant-family field pursue Endorsement?**

Yes. Each level of Endorsement is valuable and important, and becoming endorsed has made me feel more professional. It provides a way for us to document our skills and training and be recognized for our contributions. I see Endorsement as a reflection of our on-going commitment to best practice and high-quality care for very young children and their families. By continuing to advance ourselves professionally through Endorsement, I think we will help other to see our work as specialized, meaningful, and vital to the lives of children and families.
2016 RAISING OF AMERICA SCREENING AND DISCUSSION
HOUSTON, TX

Join us for lunch and a viewing of the Raising of America documentary series followed by a meaningful discussion of how the economy and early childhood intersect in our own community.

WHEN: 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

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To donate online visit: http://first3yearstx.org/support

In 2015, gifts from donors helped us positively impact over 300,000 infants and toddlers in Texas by giving their caregivers, parents and advocates the knowledge and tools to help them reach optimal social emotional development.

For other questions about supporting First3Years, please contact Soudary at skgreenbaum@first3yearstx.org.

Chapter Highlight: San Antonio

By Julie Yocham, MS, LPC-S, LMFT, San Antonio Chapter President

One of the things I love about living in San Antonio is our rich sense of community. It is beautiful to see so many people reaching into their hearts and giving of their time, talents, and often their own wallets to improve the lives of children and families.

The First3Years chapter in San Antonio was started by compassionate leaders from a group of local nonprofits. It has been our vision to expand membership to reach all agencies and companies serving children under the age of 3. Currently, we have a fairly diverse group of members from programs such as Brighton Center, The Center for Healthcare Services, Family Service Association, Healthy Families, and many others.

We host bi-monthly meetings where we incorporate resources and trainings that highlight infant mental health and development and an annual appreciation conference in December. Some topics have included Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, attachment, nurturing touch, and building relationships with caregivers.

We owe much of our success to our past president, Adam Dusenbury, who just completed his term. His determination, integrity, and dedication to the chapter will truly be missed. As president, I look forward to continuing our focus of building our local chapter so that children, families, and service providers will have the tools, collaboration, and mentorship they need to support infant mental health in San Antonio.

Join the First3Years San Antonio Chapter for their next meeting and training on SIDS/SUDI-Safe Sleep on March 8. For more information, please contact SanAntonio@First3yearstx.org.
To Contact Your Local Chapter:

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from the Board President, Susan Peek Hoff

Great organizations depend on great leadership.

First3Years, dating back to our beginning 36 years ago, has been blessed with strong, committed, passionate board members, volunteers, and advocates.

Back in 1980 a group of infant mental health professionals banded together to create high-quality training and continuing education opportunities for those whose work impacted the emotional development of infants and toddlers and their families. Since that time we have trained and mentored thousands of professionals across the state, reaching hundreds of thousands of children.

Those first babies are all grown up, and many have children of their own. I am certain the efforts of our founders and subsequent leaders throughout our history have made a lasting difference in many, many lives.

I am so proud to walk in the footsteps of these pioneers and also honored to serve with our next generation of leadership.

Our current board is comprised of a stellar group of individuals. They represent diverse backgrounds, skills, and expertise – but they are united by a commitment to ensuring the social and emotional health of our youngest children. They are smart, strategic, motivated, and engaged.

I am confident in their ability and will to lead us into the future, and I am beyond grateful for their service!

Susan

Our deepest gratitude!

Grant Awards (Nov 2015—Feb 11, 2016)
A Child of Grace Foundation
Communities Foundation of Texas
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The Miles Foundation
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SVP Dallas
WORTH Endowment Fund at the Community Foundation of North Texas
Dallas Food for Thought

Infant/Toddler Clues: Helping Parents & Caregivers Respond Appropriately to Young Children, Dr. Cindy Frosch, IMH-E® April 1

Homelessness and Early Childhood Trauma: Health Education Intervention Utilizing Music, Lee Johnson, IMH-E® April 29

Healthy Eating Behaviors: Nurturing the Parent-Child Feeding Relationship May 20

All Sessions held at WINGS Dallas at 2603 Inwood Rd, Dallas and start at 11:15 am CST. Registration includes lunch and CEUs.

To REGISTER & INFO: First3Yearstx.org/dallas-food-for-thought

Digital Learning Initiative

A 10-part online series for professionals who want to obtain continuing education specific to infant mental health. Partnership with Texas A&M Agrilife Extension.

To REGISTER & INFO: First3Yearstx.org/online-training

2016 First3Years Advocacy Award & Conference
Driving Texas Families Forward: Research and Policy in Practice
Friday, May 6, 2016 / AUSTIN, TX

Featuring Dr. Joshua Sparrow, of The Brazelton Touchpoints Center

Dr. Sparrow’s work focuses on cultural adaptations of family support programs, organizational professional development, and aligning systems of care with community strengths and priorities, and has included collaborative consultation with the Harlem Children’s Zone and American Indian Early Head Start Programs among many others. Co-author with Dr. T. Berry Brazelton of 8 books and a weekly New York Times Syndicate column, “Families Today,” Dr. Sparrow is also a contributing editor to Scholastic Services’ Parent and Child magazine. In 2006, he revised with Dr. Brazelton Touchpoints: Birth to Three, 2nd Edition and in 2010, co-edited Nurturing Children and Families: Building on the Legacy of T. B. Brazelton.

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Jason Sabo
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