

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Nancee Tracy
(603) 653-1419
Nancee.tracy@dartmouth.edu

LITTLETON – Recent research shows that about 85 percent of the brain’s core structure is formed by the age of three. The best way to support a child’s optimal growth and development is right from the start. And that’s exactly why the Early Connections Littleton team has worked diligently to create an effective public awareness campaign.

The vulnerable nature of the birth to three years suggests that the earlier young children and their families receive appropriate services and supports, the better. The work the Littleton Early Connections team has completed over the last year directly addresses a federal mandate to identify children who are eligible for Family Centered Early Supports and Services (early intervention) program.

The team has developed a public awareness plan to disseminate canvas tote bags filled with vital information to families of all Littleton newborns at their 6-week checkup visit. Inside, families will find bright, interactive and reader-friendly public awareness materials from the Early Connections Project that explore developmental milestones and tips for health. The tote bags will also contain a board book, agency brochures that provide information about community services and resources, and other helpful items for new parents.

More than 14 members bring diversity and collaborative spirit to the Littleton team, including representation from early intervention, SAU 35, Partners in Health, Department of Children Youths and Families, Littleton Regional Hospital, mental health, child care, Head Start and parents.

The team, which was established in March 2000, is part of the Early Connections Project at the Institute on Disability at UNH and the NH Dept. of Health & Human Services, Division of Developmental Services, Family Centered Early Supports and Services. The project is a four-year model demonstration grant ending in 2003 that is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

The statewide Early Connections Project is working to: increase the number of young children who participate in hearing and vision screening in six target communities; innovative strategies and useful products for quality early identification; and to assist the state to adopt exemplary child find policies and practices at the state and local level.

A total of six New Hampshire community teams work toward the Early Connections Project's major goals. Teams in Laconia, Sullivan County, Portsmouth, Dover/Rochester and Keene also meet on a regular basis and work toward the above outcomes.

The Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire was established in 1987 with a mission to promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities into their communities.

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