



## Multisystem Developmental Disorder (MSDD)

### Fact Sheet

Summer 2009

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### Condition Description

Multisystem Developmental Disorder (MSDD) is a formal mental health diagnosis given to infants or toddlers by a licensed mental health professional using the Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood: Revised Edition (DC:0-3R). Children who qualify for MSDD demonstrate extreme difficulty in the following four areas: their ability to relate to their primary caregiver, their ability to engage in developmentally appropriate communication, their ability for sensory processing, and their ability for motor planning. This diagnosis should not be used if the child is over two years old and qualifies for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fourth Edition Revised (DSM-IV-TR®) diagnosis of Pervasive Developmental Disorders- Not Otherwise Specified.<sup>1</sup>

### Impact on Learning and Development

If untreated, young children with MSDD may experience delays in development and demonstrate difficulties in their relationships with others. They may also demonstrate difficulties in later school achievement and develop behaviors that require juvenile corrections interventions.<sup>2,3</sup>

### Treatment Options

While evidence based mental health treatments are few in number for children under the age of five, the leading evidence based treatment for MSDD includes Intensive Communication Training provided to the child and the child's parents.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, consistent and

frequent communication across all of the systems working with the child (the child's primary care givers, child care providers, primary health care providers, mental health providers, etc.), is essential for optimal success in treatment.<sup>5</sup>

### References

- <sup>1</sup> Zero to Three (2005). Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood: Revised Edition. Washington: ZERO TO THREE Press.
- <sup>2</sup> Zigler, E., Taussig, C., & Black, K. (1992). Early childhood intervention: A promising preventative for juvenile delinquency. *American Psychologist*, 47(8), 997-1006.
- <sup>3</sup> President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. (2003). Goal 4: Early mental health screening, assessment and referral to services are common practice. *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America*. 57-66.
- <sup>4</sup> Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division, Hawaii State Department of Health (2009). Blue Menu: Evidence-Based Child and Adolescent Psychosocial Interventions [On-line]. Available: <http://hawaii.gov/health/mental-health/camhd/library/webs/ebs/ebs-index.html>
- <sup>5</sup> Parlakian, P. and Seibel, N.L. (2002). *Building Strong Foundations, Practical Guidance for Promoting the Social-Emotional Development of Infants and Toddlers*. Washington: ZERO TO THREE Press.