* April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time to celebrate the good things our communities do to promote healthy child development and help prevent child abuse and neglect.
* We know that mental health is connected to social, emotional, and cognitive development and is a foundation for a healthy life, healthy community, and healthy state.
* When children’s mental health needs are met, they are more likely to do better in school, graduate, and more likely to be healthy, productive adults in our community.
* All children have mental health, even infants and very young children. Children are not little adults. The mental health needs of children are similar, but different than adults. Children’s Mental Health efforts should focus on the unique needs of children and their families.
* The architecture of a child’s brain is built over time. Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) such as community violence or parental substance abuse can damage brain architecture, but secure, loving relationships, stimulating experiences, and healthy environments can build a solid foundation to support children into adulthood. Health promotion, prevention, and early intervention for children’s mental health needs, particularly when experiencing ACEs, is essential to aid in healthy development.
* According to the National Institute of Mental Health (nimh.nih.gov),
	+ Eight percent of youth have an anxiety disorder,
	+ Ten percent of youth have a behavior or conduct disorder,
	+ Twenty percent of youth ages 13-18 live with a mental health condition,
	+ Eleven percent of youth have a mood disorder
* We all have a role to play in healthy child development, and our goal this April is to help others recognize that role and the ways we can maximize our impact.
* We encourage adults to know the signs of youth mental health concerns, and be a trusting adult, ready to listen non-judgmentally and encourage appropriate professional support.
* For more information, please visit [www.pcaiowa.org](http://www.pcaiowa.org).