

Gerard Costa, Ph.D

(September, 2011)

Brief Biographical Description

In September, 2011, Dr. Gerard Costa became the founding director of the newly established, *Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health* in the College of Education and Human Services at Montclair State University. The vision for the new *CAECMH* includes:

- Creation of clinical services with developmental and relational models of assessment and intervention for children with autism and other developmental disabilities, and expanded infant and early childhood mental health services,
- development of professional development and consultation programs including:
  - a certificate program in developmental, individualized and inclusive interventions for children with autism and other developmental disabilities,
  - a post-master's certificate program in infant and early childhood mental health,
  - a consultation and training services for schools and programs seeking increased competencies in interventions for children with autism and other developmental disabilities,
  - a consultation and training services integrating mental health in infancy, childhood and school-based programs, and
  - a professional development program for clergy formation, in infant, child and family development.

Dr. Costa was the founding director of the *YCS Institute for Infant and Preschool Mental Health*, a training and consultation, clinical service and research program concerned with the optimal development of infants and children, birth to six years, within the context of their relationships. The training division offers a *Post-Graduate Certificate Program in Infant Mental Health*. The YCS Institute developed an APPIC (Association of Pre-doctoral Psychology Internship Centers) registered internship program and operated New Jersey's only licensed, Medicaid-approved mental health clinic specializing in infants and young children, birth to six years of age, and their families.

He is a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) – New Jersey Medical School. He served as the first project director of the *Child Development-Community Policing Project of Newark*, a mental health-police partnership affiliated with Yale University, aimed at reducing the impact of violence in child victims and witnesses. He served as a Clinical Instructor at Yale University's Child Study Center where he worked with the National Center for Children Exposed to Violence. He served as a consultant to the Violence Institute of New Jersey at UMDNJ, developing the training curriculum for the *Safe Start Program* – one of 11 federally funded programs working on establishing multi-agency collaborative responses to children exposed to violence. He is a trainer of *Safe Havens* – a training program for early childhood program staff to work with children and families exposed to violence. He is a member of the Advisory Board of the ICDL (Interdisciplinary Council on Developmental and Learning Disorders) and serves on the DIR Institute Faculty headed by the late Dr. Stanley Greenspan and Dr. Serena Wieder. He also serves on the faculty of the ICDL Graduate School. He was among the first 16 faculty members issued a *Certificate* in the DIR Approach by ICDL. He has served as a consultant to ZERO TO THREE and the Early Head Start – National Resource Center, serving as one of 22 national consultants for the *Pathways to Prevention* project, an infant mental health initiative for selected Early Head Start programs, and was a trainer in the ZTT response to child care consultants serving children and families affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. He currently serves as a national and trainer for a ZTT initiative, *Coming Together Around Military Families* (CTAMF) where he works with staff providing services to children and families of deployed military personnel from military installations throughout America. He is a certified faculty member of the *Brazelton Touchpoints Center (BTC)* at the YCS Institute and served on the adjunct faculties of Fairleigh Dickinson, Rutgers and Seton Hall Universities. He served on the planning team and headed New Jersey's delegations to the 2005 and 2007 *Infant and Early*

*Childhood Mental Health Systems' Development Summits*. He has been an invited presenter on infant mental health by ZERO TO THREE, the federal *Head Start Bureau*, *Save the Children*, and other national organizations. He also serves on the advisory board and as a consultant/trainer to the New York Center for Child Development.

Dr. Costa currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Gateway-Northwest Maternal Child Health Consortium (Past President), the Advisory Board of the New Jersey Child Assault Prevention (NJCAP) Program, the Board of Directors of the Margaret Anna Cusack Care Center (Nursing Home) and is a Member and Past President of the New Jersey Association for Infant Mental Health (NJAIMH). He serves on the BUILD NJ Committee, addressing public-private initiatives for early learning, birth to five years of age, the NJDHSS Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Committee, and the New Jersey Strengthening Families Initiative (SFI) Task Force.

Dr. Costa received his Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from Temple University. He received specialized training in Infant Mental Health and has conducted trainings and workshops in Infant Mental Health throughout the United States. As head of the YCS Institute, he led a 4-year Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health systems development project in partnership with Child Development Services of Wyoming and the Wyoming Developmental Disabilities Division. He is the principal author of a 15 module Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health training curriculum. In 2009-2010, he led a yearlong training and consultation project with 25 Infant Mental Health mentors with South Dakota Voices for Children. He has presented his work on an Infant Mental Health consultation model for infant and early childhood programs at the ZTT National Training Institutes. He is a former Head Start Director and has worked in early intervention programs since 1984. He chaired the New Jersey School Boards Association's Early Childhood Education Ad Hoc Study Committee (1989-1990), which resulted in publication of the NJSBA book, Early Childhood Education: An Agenda for Young Children. (By Patricia Patracco).

His recent publications include:

- *Better treatment for Candace: How trained psychotherapists would have approached this case* (Chapter 6), in Attachment Therapy on Trial: The Torture and Death of Candace Newmaker (2003), by Mercer, J. Sarner, L and Rosa, L. (Praeger Publishing: Connecticut)
- *A Model for Integrating Infant Mental Health Principles and Practices in Early Intervention Services* (Chapter 22), in B. Williams (Ed.), Direction in Early Intervention and Assessment (2004), Spokane, Washington: The Guild's School
- *Mental Health Principles, Practices, Strategies and Dynamics Pertinent to Early Intervention Practitioners* (Chapter 5), In G.M. Foley and J.D. Hochman, (Eds.), Mental Health in Early Intervention: Achieving Unity in Principles and Practice.(2006), Paul T. Brookes Publishers
- *The wizard of echolalia*. In R. Naseef and C.N. Ariel, (Eds.) Voices from the Spectrum.(2006) New York: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- *Pervasive developmental disorders* (Chapter 4)(2009) , co-written with Molly Romer Witten, in B. Mowder, F. Robinson and A. Yasik (Eds.), Evidence Based Practice in Infant and Early Childhood Psychology , Hoboken, NJ:John Wiley & Son, Publishers.
- *What Staff Development Activities Can Be Used to Build Reflective Capacity?* (Chapter 9) (2009), co-written with Lorri Sullivan, in S.S. Heller and L.Gilkerson (Eds.), A Practical Guide to Reflective Supervision. Washington, D.C: ZERO TO THREE Press.

He has a special interest in relationship-based approaches to autistic-spectrum disorders. He has practiced as a psychotherapist for over 30 years, and is a licensed psychologist residing in Bergen County, New Jersey where he has a small private practice specializing in program trainings and consultations. He has appeared as an expert in several professional training videotapes, including serving as a content and script consultant, and appearing in a 2005, 2-part videotape series, *Identifying Signs of Stress in Young Children*, developed by New Jersey based organization, Programs for Parents, Inc., to assist infant and early child care providers understand socio-

emotional development in infants, toddlers and preschool aged children, and early signs of emotional delays and maltreatment. In April, 1994, he was awarded the biennial *Distinguished Service Award* by the New Jersey Early Intervention Coalition in recognition of his work as a consultant to programs throughout the state. In April, 2003, the *New Jersey Child Assault Prevention (CAP) Program* selected him as a recipient of their 2003 Annual Award as a *Mental Health professional* for outstanding work in the prevention of child abuse. In October 2007, Dr. Costa was awarded the *Christian Kjeldsen Champion for Children Award* by the *Child Care Advisory Council of the Department of Human Services* of the State of New Jersey. In January, 2010, Governor Jon Corzine appointed Dr. Costa as one of 25 representatives and experts to the newly established *New Jersey Council for Young Children*, an early learning council addressing birth to 5 year olds, federally mandated for all 50 states. In June 2010, the *Mental Health Association in New Jersey* awarded a *Golden Bell Leadership Award* to Dr. Costa for his vision in creating the YCS Institute for Infant and Preschool Mental Health. In January 2011, he was named as the faculty representative to the Board of Directors of the Interdisciplinary Council on Developmental and Learning Disorders (ICDL; [www.icdl.com](http://www.icdl.com)) .

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