

Self Regulation, Dysregulation, & Co-regulation Part I: Intervention and Prevention of Chronic Behavioral Problems and Delinquency

Early neurodevelopment is a sensitive process largely coordinated by the quality of the primary care taking. Abuse and neglect interrupt normal early brain development, and harsh parenting has been proven to have similar detriments. This damage is prevented by caretaking that emphasizes relational regulation of the young child by the caretaker. Understanding the mechanism of regulation, dysregulation, and co-regulation and its effect on both the caregiver and child provides an informed framework for responding to and healing early brain disorganization. Self-regulatory disorganization (dysregulation) underlies a broad range of behavioral problems, often initially recognized as chronic tantrums, hyperarousal, and attentional problems that can then cascade into more resistant behavioral problems and even delinquency later on. Understanding the neurodevelopmental process of co-regulation underscores the importance of sensory sensitive, sequentially appropriate, relationally based clinical and parenting practices in working with mainstream and at-risk children.

George Davis, MD, is a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist who currently serves as the Director of Psychiatry for the New Mexico Department of Children, Youth. This state department encompasses all essential state services for the children of New Mexico including early childhood development, child protection, and juvenile justice. Although Dr. Davis is located within the juvenile justice division, the department recognizes the causative links between early neglect, interruptions of care, and later delinquency, and, thus, he serves across the several divisions of child services. Dr. Davis earned his medical degree from Southwestern Medical School in Dallas and completed his psychiatry residency and child fellowship at the University of New Mexico. He previously served there on the faculty at the School of Medicine as Residency Director and Division Director of the Child and Adolescent Division and continues to teach and supervise there on a limited basis as adjunct faculty. In addition to the University and State service, Dr. Davis previously worked for five years at the Indian Health Service, providing care for several of the pueblos and tribal hospitals and clinics in New Mexico. His primary areas of interest and expertise are delinquency as an outcome of early neglect and abuse, extreme behavioral disorders in young children, psychopharmacology, and systems of care for severely disabled and underserved populations.