



## Three Alabama women receive prestigious early childhood mental health endorsement

BY SMITH ON JANUARY 25, 2018

SLIDER WOMEN

Thursday, **Joy Winchester**, **Nicole Harrington-Ryans** and **Christal Coker** were given the honor of being some of the first **early childhood education** professionals in the nation to earn an Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsement (ECMH-E).

These three Alabama women received the endorsement for their special insight and expertise concerning infant and early childhood mental health principles, and their ability to apply this knowledge to their work with families and children within the state.

**First 5 Alabama** is currently one of only four state associations in the United States that offer the ECMH-E. Including the three Alabama specialists earning this endorsement this year, only eleven professionals in the nation have received the endorsement.

Originally organized in 2017, First 5 Alabama endeavors to provide training opportunities to individuals who care for children and families from birth through age five.

"First 5 Alabama is proud of the accomplishments of our recent endorsed professionals," stated **Betsy Prince**, the chair of First 5 Alabama. "Their outstanding work and the work of the Association stands to enhance programs of care, intervention and prevention of mental impairments in infancy and early childhood."

The endorsement is only granted through proper documentation and verification of the required education, in-service training, work, and reflective supervision experiences.

More about each of the women:

- **Joy Winchester** lives in Montgomery, Ala. and is the current Coordinator for Early Learning Best Practice with the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education supporting the Alabama Voluntary Pre-K classrooms statewide. Winchester has spent twenty-four years in the field of early childhood education and has served in numerous positions from assistant teacher to director in a variety of classrooms. She now serves the **Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education** supporting teachers with methods for building a strong resilient classrooms, challenging behaviors, dual language learner support and advocates the importance of high quality early childhood education.
- **Nicole Harrington-Ryans** lives in Tuscaloosa, Ala. and serves children and families as the Disabilities Coordinator for Head Start Community Service Programs of West AL. Mrs. Ryans has provided mental health procedures and techniques for over 11 years for those who have received services from Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Intervention. Mrs. Ryans looks forward to her continued education as a Mental Health Consultant.
- **Christal Coker** lives in Mobile, Ala. and is a family and community engagement specialist with the B.E.S.T. Early Head Start program. She holds an Educational Specialist degree from Mississippi State University, a Masters degree in Child and Family Studies from the University of Southern Mississippi, and a Bachelors of Arts from Mississippi University for Women. Ms. Coker has been assisting children birth to six years of age and their families for seven years and has worked in various mental health and child advocacy settings.

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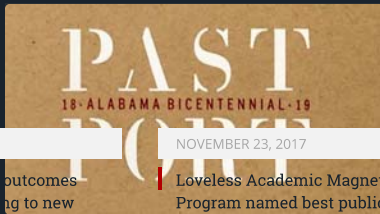


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