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Growing Ideas - Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

University of Maine Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies

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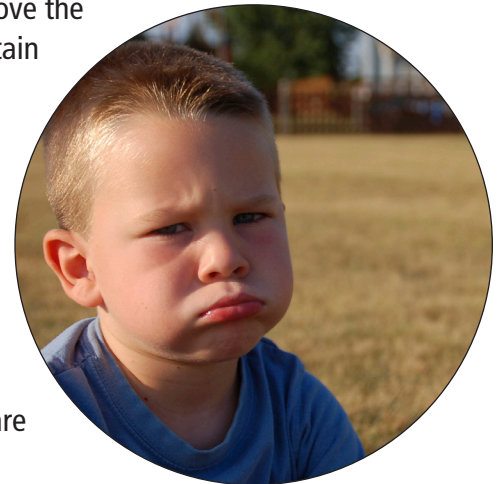
GROWING IDEAS

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

What is Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation?

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) is a collaborative relationship between a mental health consultant and family members, child care providers, early care and education teachers, and/or child development professionals. ECMHC strives to improve the ability of families, teachers, and caregivers to promote, sustain and restore healthy social and emotional development for all children. It supports building and maintaining healthy working relationships between care and education professionals and families.

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation approaches challenging situations with children from a problem solving perspective. ECMHC is not a therapeutic intervention: it occurs in the children's natural settings, school, home, and child care, and is offered at no cost to care and education professionals and families.



Who are Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants?

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants are licensed mental health practitioners and/or highly skilled professionals with a particular interest and specialized expertise in child development and mental health.

What do Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants do?

- Recommend resources that support healthy social and emotional development for all children.
- Provide training for care and education professionals and families on social-emotional development and mental health issues.
- Support care and education professionals and families in building and maintaining working relationships with each other.
- Offer resources and support around self-care and wellness to care and education professionals and families.

(continued)

What do Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants do? (continued)

- Conduct on-site observations and assessments, and meet with care and education professionals to review and change practices. Model strategies to support children's ability to identify and express their emotions, build and maintain friendships, and solve problems.
- Develop collaborative intervention plans with care and education professionals and families when they have specific concerns about their child.
- Refer to and collaborate with early intervention/ special education practitioners and ECE consultants when appropriate.

Why is ECMHC important?

- "Young children's healthy social and emotional development is critical to school readiness and positive long term outcomes." (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2000).
- "The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study reveals a powerful relationship between our emotional experiences as children and physical and mental health as adults, as well as the major cause of adult mortality in the United States." (American Journal of Preventative Medicine, 1998).
- "Preschool children face expulsion rates three times higher than children in kindergarten thru 12th grade, due in part to a lack of attention to their social-emotional needs." (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2009).

- "Emerging research suggests that ECMHC systems reduce the classroom behaviors that lead to expulsion." (Early Childhood Education Partnerships study, 2007).
- "Research suggests that longer duration and higher intensity of mental health services may be related to lower staff turnover, improved teacher effectiveness, and higher program quality." (Early Childhood Education Journal, 2005).



What families are saying about ECMHC:

"We have a better understanding of our daughter's needs."

"Our consultant was very resourceful and easy to get in touch with, very prompt."

"The consultant has helped me think about my child's experience in child care."

Where to learn more:

Brennan, E. M., Bradley, J.R., Allen, M.D., & Perry, D. F. (2008). The evidence base for mental health consultation in early childhood settings: Research synthesis addressing staff and program outcomes. *Early Education and Development* 19, 982-1022.

Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation. Available at <http://www.ecmhc.org>.

Duran, F. et al. (2009). What Works? A Study of Effective Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Programs. Washington, DC: George Town University Center for Child and Human Development.



Paul R. LePage, Governor

Department of Health
and Human Services

Maine People Living
Safe, Healthy and Productive Lives

Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner

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