

# Pennsylvania's Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program 2021-22 Annual Report Summary

## Supporting the Early Childhood Education Community

Through a reflective, collaborative, problem-solving and capacity-building relationship, mental health consultation encourages adults to build stronger relationships with infants and young children so they feel safe, supported, and valued.

**603** Requests for child-specific consultation

**1,206** Classroom educators impacted

**4,388** Classroom children impacted

## Acknowledgement

The IECMH Consultation program is a free service offered through the **Office of Child Development and Early Learning** for early learning programs participating in Keystone STARS.

## Program At-A-Glance

### Who provided consultation supports?

The IECMHC program had a total of 29 consultants providing services across the Commonwealth.

### What type of consultation was provided?

Onsite consultation was provided to 324 early learning programs in 52 out of 67 counties. Virtual Office Hours was used by 183 callers, 25% of which were families seeking direct support.

### Who were services provided on behalf of?

60% of consultation requests were on behalf of children 36-60 mos. of age. 16% of children had EI services in place at time of request. Male children were often the focus on consultation supports (75%). Externalizing behavior concerns, such as aggression (21%) and self-regulation (60%), were the primary reason for requesting consultation.

## IECMH Promotion and Messaging Efforts

**345+**  
Hours of outreach, program promotion, resource and referral, and professional development.

**1,800+**  
Subscribers reached with the monthly **Focus on ECMH** newsletter.

"We have used IECMHC many times and have always felt that support from the consultant is greatly beneficial to both the educational staff and our families. The program is truly an asset to the field."

EC Program Lead Teacher



# 2021-2022 PROGRAM YEAR OUTCOMES

## *Goal 1: Reduce the number of children expelled from child care due to behavior issues.*

ECMH consultants work collaboratively with early childhood educators and parents to understand the nature of children's behavior. With this kind of understanding, adults in the child's life can respond more sensitively to a child's needs, design strategies that will help the child be successful in the classroom, and ultimately reduce the number of children who are expelled from child care.

### **Progress Report:**

- 54% of consultation cases closed with a positive outcome of Goals Met or Referral Eligible.
- Expulsion rate was 8% for child-specific cases (up from 4% during 2019-2021 reporting period).
- 82% of program respondents strongly agreed/agreed their ability to respond to challenging/puzzling behaviors in nurturing and positive ways increased as a result of consultation services.

## *Goal 2: Increase caregiver understanding of social and emotional development and its impact on educational success.*

While the ECMH Consultation Program primarily provides child-specific consultation, the overarching goal is to increase the capacity of practitioners to understand and support the social and emotional development of all children in their classroom. Consultation is driven by collaborative action plans and strategies grounded in The Pyramid Model, a conceptual framework of evidence-based practices for promoting young children's healthy social and emotional development.

### **Progress Report:**

- 89% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed they could identify strategies to use to build positive relationships with children.
- 81% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed they learned more strategies to promote children's social emotional development.
- 81% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed they learned several strategies that can be used to design classroom environments, schedules, and routines to prevent challenging behaviors.
- 82% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed their ability to recognize every child's strength and potential has increased.

## *Goal 3: Link and bridge systems and services on behalf of a child, family and program.*

Consultants help facilitate links to appropriate services for children who require a higher level of intervention and provide information to practitioners about community resources. ECMH consultants are able to consider the many factors that may impede a family's ability to access services. They often advocate on behalf of families and practitioners and facilitate linkages to overcome barriers. Members of the team become more empathetic to each other's needs during this process.

### **Progress Report:**

- 86 referrals were made for children and their families to community-based resources for more intensive services.
  - 23% of referrals were for children's mental health services.
  - 52% of referrals were to Early Intervention (12 to EI 0-3 and 33 to EI 3-5).
- Of those referred, 16% of referrals were accepted for service, with 28% pending approval as of June 30, 2022, and 8% were not pursued due to family member/guardian decision.

