

ILLINOIS MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTATION INITIATIVE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC) is a multi-level, proactive approach that focuses on supporting and enhancing children's social and emotional development and overall health and wellbeing. I/ECMHC teams multidisciplinary infant early childhood mental health professionals with those who work with young children and their families in a variety of settings and systems and is based on a relational, strengths-based and individualized approach.

I/ECMHCs use their knowledge to assist providers, programs, systems and families in understanding typical development, addressing challenging behaviors in young children, and promoting environments that foster healthy development and relationships. I/ECMHC work includes: monitoring and supporting infants/young children's wellbeing and healthy development; education and emotional support for responsive and developmentally appropriate care of young children; early identification of unmet social and emotional needs, and possible signs of developmental and mental health problems; and, a focus on prevention and/or mitigation of social, emotional, behavioral and mental health problems.

A growing body of research indicates that I/ECMHC is valuable for early childhood education programs, providers, and the families with whom they work in that it has been shown to increase staffs' ability to understand and respond to children's challenging behaviors, reduce staff stress, and increase staff job satisfaction.

The Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership is working closely with numerous public and private stakeholders to design a multi-year expansion initiative that advances the goal of a universal, effective and sustainable Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation model in Illinois.

Development of an expanded, qualified, and diverse workforce is essential to the goal of improved access to effective mental health consultation in Illinois. The *Workforce Development Plan (the Plan)* was developed

in Phase 2 of the MHC Initiative and focuses on building and sustaining the workforce across multiple systems through the standardization of orientation and training opportunities, the expansion of reflective learning groups, coaching/mentoring support, other professional development opportunities, as well as increased support for consultant credentialing and certification.



THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN:

- Provides a summary of *The Illinois Model for Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation* that was developed as part of Phase 1 of the MHC Initiative, a summary of the consultant role from the Model, and a list of the seven competencies demonstrated by I/ECMHCs.
- Provides a description of the current I/ECMHC workforce, including themes, issues, and needs with information taken from *The Integrated Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Model and Capacity Building Project Scan* conducted during Phase 1 of the MHC Initiative.

Issues identified were:

- ◆ Lack of diversity in the workforce
- ◆ No clearly defined career path
- ◆ Need for improved cross system coordination
- ◆ Need for more coordinated and well-funded approach to reflective consultation
- ◆ System wide preparation for and understanding of consultation and the consultant role

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Needs identified were:

- ◆ Promotion of diversity and recruitment strategies
- ◆ Promotion of career development including higher education
- ◆ Integrated formal structure for reflective supervision
- ◆ Expansion of Reflective Learning Groups
- ◆ Common role expectations, outcomes and evaluation measures that are adaptable across child serving systems
- Highlights the need for an increased, qualified, and diverse workforce (both demographically as well as geographically). The Plan also suggests that a more clear and intentional pathway be created for pre-service professionals in order to introduce new consultants into the field of I/ECMHC.
- Identifies the need of a coordinated, statewide system, including a Home Entity that will serve as a clearinghouse, a resource for trends in the field, and a research partner.

The Home Entity will:

- ◆ Create and maintain a registry of I/ECMHCs
- ◆ Develop, track and/or coordinate and evaluate ongoing training and professional development for consultants
- ◆ Work in partnership with academic institutions to develop consultants
- ◆ Manage two-way referrals across all systems, linking programs with consultants
- ◆ Offer common orientation
- ◆ Prepare programs for using consultants and consultation process
- ◆ Coordinate RLGs and reflective consultation, including a statewide network of reflective consultation and training
- ◆ Create and maintain an on-line professional development portal

- ◆ Braid funding to support orientation and ongoing training
- Outlines a common orientation for both new and experienced consultants that will be based on the competencies outlined in the Model.
- Recommends observation opportunities, coaching/mentoring experiences, and learning/practice groups for consultants, as well as differentiates among the types of supervision a consultant needs (administrative and reflective).
- Includes a matrix of the seven competencies from the Model and identifies the content, how the skill is developed, and how it will be confirmed/validated. The Plan stresses the importance of reflection in the work of a consultant.
- Includes a list of ongoing professional development and continuing education opportunities that are currently available, such as annual retreats and seminars, as well as makes recommendations for training modules that should be developed.
- Suggests a targeted strategy of reaching out to programs and department chairs to educate them on the role of the I/ECMHC, survey any current offerings, create more intentional pathways for pre-service individuals, develop internships and course content, and raise awareness of I/ECMHC.

The next steps for the Plan are to define the Home Entity and identify how it would work. The Plan will be used to inform future phases of the MHC Initiative. The ICMHP will work with the MHC Initiative Leadership Team to create a public/private plan for cross-system support of the I/ECMHC workforce, and will engage consultants to design both a systems and outcome evaluation plan that will measure the impact of the Illinois I/ECMHC model pilot.