Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) Colorado Implementation Manual

Selected Example: March 2023

Colorado Department of Early Childhood

Vision: *All Colorado children, families and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy and thriving.*

Mission: *The Colorado Department of Early Childhood ensures the delivery of a comprehensive, community-informed, data-driven, high-quality and equitable early childhood system that supports the care, education and well-being of all Colorado's young children, their families and early childhood professionals in all settings.*

Colorado Early Childhood Mental Health Program

Our Vision: *Building a high quality and responsive continuum of early childhood mental health supports across Colorado to ensure all children are valued, healthy, and thriving.*

Our Mission: *The Colorado Early Childhood Mental Health program drives alignment among partners representing the continuum of supports. We build adult knowledge and skills by investing in training, technical assistance, and data sharing. Through these actions, we foster the developing social, emotional and mental health of children and their caregivers.*

The Colorado Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program supports and aligns with the Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation stance on equity, which works to reduce disparities based on race, ethnicity, language, gender, culture, and socioeconomic status, and recognizes the central role that race has played historically in contributing to persistent inequities:

> *"Equity is a central component of IECMHC. Every individual who is part of the IECMHC system has an important role to play in battling racism and promoting fair, positive, and equitable learning experiences for children and families. Through our work, the CoE for IECMHC helps consultation systems leaders and all IECMHC practitioners build capacity in understanding race and systemic racism, bias, and culturally responsive practice and meaningfully embed equity in their programs and practice."*
>
> *- Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation*

Introduction

This implementation manual describes Colorado's Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) program. It is intended to provide an *overview* of the core program elements, mechanisms and practices, and personnel and expectations. We anticipate that this foundational information will remain "evergreen" for the years to come.

Our goal is for ECMHC program staff at all levels, especially consultants and supervisors, to find this manual as a useful starting point for understanding the ECMHC program and their role. Throughout this manual you will find links to a variety of more "in depth" resources and references, which are more likely to change over time as the program evolves and we continue to learn.

The implementation manual is an important step forward in building Colorado's ECMHC model: by better defining the program elements and practices we lay the foundation to examine implementation and program outcomes and impact.

Organization of the Implementation Manual

Section 1. Program Overview
- What is ECMHC?
- ECMHC as an Evidence-Based Practice
- Colorado's ECMHC Theory of Change
- Implementation of ECMHC in Colorado

Section 2. Program Implementation (Essential Elements)
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Section 3. Mechanics & Best Practices: Workflow, Data Entry, and Direct Service Requirements
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- Consultation Visits
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- Direct Service Requirements
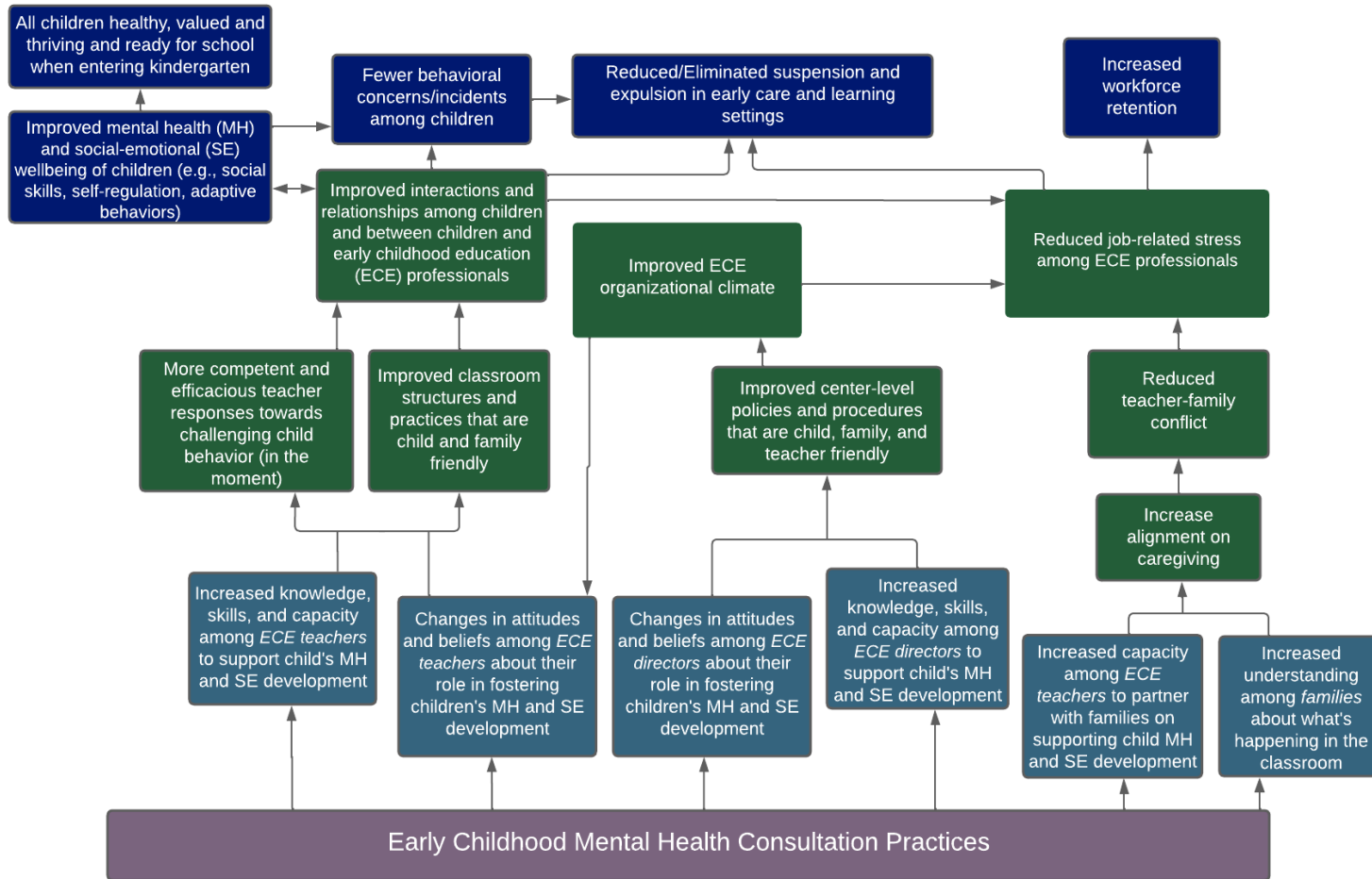
Section 4. Qualified Personnel/Expectations
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References

Figure 1: Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation: Theory of Change[1]

Note: *An early care and education setting is used above to illustrate Colorado's theory of change. Consultative practices, changes in attitudes and beliefs, and gains in adult capacity are expected to be similar across settings where children learn and grow, in service of the shared north star outcomes of child well-being. Children are defined as birth through six, including the prenatal period*

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[1] In the Theory of Change visual, abbreviations used include:
MH = mental health
SE = social-emotional
ECE = early childhood education

Section 2. Program Implementation (Essential Elements)

Overview

Essential elements are the core functions or principles and the associated activities ("active ingredients") that are necessary for ECMHC to produce its desired impact. The essential elements are described in three buckets: principles, context and structure, and consultation practices.

Table 2. ECMHC Essential Elements

Principles	Context and Structure
What assumptions is ECMHC grounded in? ● ECMHC is focused on building the capacity of adults. It is not about "fixing kids." ● ECMHC is based on strong, positive relationships with adults providing care for young children. ● ECMHC is focused on prevention and early mental health promotion. ● ECMHC aims to be culturally and linguistically responsive and works to understand how culture, language, and community impact all aspects of caregiving and child-rearing. ● ECMHC is strengths-based and grounded in equity. It builds upon the abilities and positive qualities of *all* children, families, and early childhood professionals. ● ECMH consultants are supported through professional development and reflective supervision to deepen their practice.	*What does implementation look like?* ● Consultants collaborate and partner with adults providing care for children age birth to 6, including the prenatal period. ● Consultation occurs in settings where children learn and grow. ● Consultants may be embedded within a program/organization or set of organizations. ● Consultants follow program guidance on frequency, intensity and duration of service delivery, as defined here.

Consultation Practices

What do consultants do in their day-to-day work?
- Consultant and consultees collaboratively develop goals and a related service plan based on assessments (e.g., observations, screening) and individually identified consultee priorities. Consultants and their consultees regularly check-in on and monitor progress toward mutually agreed upon goals and adjust consultation content to be responsive to progress and barriers over time.
- Provide opportunities for coaching, training, modeling, reflection, and/or education on fostering social emotional development and mental health with respect to racial, linguistic, and cultural considerations based on the goals or action plan above and/or another identified need.
- Consultants apply the consultative stance in order to cultivate knowledge, skills and reflective capacity within the adult clients with whom they partner.

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