Making the Most of Your Mental Health Consultation Services

National Center on Health

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Presentation Objectives

• Define “effective” early childhood mental health consultation (ECMHC)
• Describe core components of effective consultation programs
• Increase awareness of strategies to assess your mental health consultation
• Highlight resources for further guidance
Definition of Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation:

“A problem-solving and capacity–building intervention implemented within a collaborative relationship between a professional consultant with mental health expertise and one or more individuals with other areas of expertise - primarily child care, child development, and families – or individuals with child care responsibilities.”

(Cohen & Kaufmann, 2000)
Defining ECMHC (cont’d)

• Culturally sensitive
• Collaborative
Defining ECMHC (cont’d)

• Promotes social emotional development
• Addresses children’s challenging behavior
• Primarily indirect services
• Impacts child, family, staff, and outcomes
Child- and Family- Centered Consultation

• Child observations
• Parent consultation
• Staff support for individual and group behavior management
• Modeling/coaching
• Link to community

• Training on behavior management
• Modeling and supporting individual child
• Education on a child’s mental health
• Advocacy for family
Programmatic Consultation for Staff and Programs

- Classroom observation
- Strategies for supportive environments
- Training on behavior management
- Support for reflective practices
- Promote staff wellness
- Address communication issues
- Promote team building
- Training on cultural competence
What ECMHC “Isn’t”

• Formal diagnostic evaluations
• Therapeutic play groups
• Individual therapy
• Family therapy
• Staff therapy
• Family support groups
Summary of Findings:

Child Outcomes
Staff Outcomes
Program Outcomes
Conceptual Model of Effective EMCHC

**POSITIVE OUTCOMES**
- Child
- Family
- Staff
- Program

**CATALYSTS FOR SUCCESS**
- Positive Relationships
- Readiness for ECMHC

**CORE PROGRAM COMPONENTS**
- Solid Program Infrastructure
- Highly-Qualified Consultants
- High-Quality Services

**Support for Sustainability/Expansion**
- Guidance for Continuous Quality Improvement
SCENE 1...TAKE 1...

1. Read the Scene on The front of the card.

2. Discuss your Take on the scene and decide:
   - What type of consultation is indicated?
   - What might be the role of the Mental Health Consultant?
IMAGINE AND CREATE...

Think about desirable qualities or traits ...

What are some important attributes?

Represent these traits on the poster paper figure.
The Effective Consultant: Qualifications & Characteristics

• Education/Knowledge
  – Masters degree in a related field, e.g., social work, psychology
  – Core content knowledge

  • Respectful
  • Trustworthy
  • Open-minded/non-judgmental
  • Reflective
  • Approachable
  • Good listener
  • Compassionate
  • Team player
  • Flexible
  • Patient
Consultant Knowledge

- Child development
- Typical and atypical behavior including:
  - Attachment
  - Separation
- Medical and genetics information
- Cultural understanding
- Treatment alternatives
- Family systems
- Early childhood systems
- Adult learning principles
Skills and Experience
Specialized Experience

- Separation and loss
- Substance abuse
- Maternal depression
- Abuse and neglect
- Teen motherhood
- Working with fathers
- Early childhood mental health including:
  - Aggressive behavior

- Medical concerns including:
  - Prematurity and low birth weight
  - Failure to thrive

- Developmental delays including:
  - Speech and language
  - Learning
  - Developmental disabilities
Elements of the Consultative Stance

• Mutuality of endeavor
• Avoid position of expert
• Wondering not knowing
• Understanding another subjective experience
• Consider influence

• Hearing and representing all voices
• Centrality of relationships
• Parallel process
• Patience

— Johnston & Brinamen, 2006
Roles and Responsibilities (cont.)

• Support staff in addressing individual challenges that effect work
• Provide crisis stabilization
• Work with families on resolving behavioral challenges
• Refer when indicated
Getting Off to a Good Start

• Clarify roles and expectations up front
  — Written agreements
  — Widespread communication

• Integrate into ECE program
  — Attend activities/events
  — ECE program-level accommodations
Philosophy
Create a Want-Ad
Finding a Consultant
Where Have You Looked?
Delivering High-Quality Services

• Provide an array of services/activities
  – Information gathering
  – Individualized service plan development
  – Plan implementation support
  – Provider/family education
  – Provider/family emotional support
  – Linkages to services beyond consultation
  – Staff training and support
Delivering High-Quality Services

• Include both types of consultation

  – Child/family-centered consultation:
    Focuses on a particular child with challenging behavior and/or the family of that child

  – Programmatic consultation:
    Focuses on a general program or classroom issue that impacts the mental health of staff, children and/or families

Cohen & Kaufmann, 2000
## Strategy Examples

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<th>Classroom-Based Strategies</th>
<th>Specific Examples</th>
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| Improve classroom functiona | • Rearrange furniture to get rid of “run ways”  
|    lity                  | • De-clutter the classroom to cut down on overstimulation |
| Promote social skills      | • Introduce social stories or “feelings” books that teach social/emotional concepts and skills |
| Improve transitions       | • Introduce “5 minute warnings”  
|                           | • Use a transitional object to help a child move from one activity to another |

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| Support positive behavior support practices | • Explore setting limits and boundaries  
|                           | • Post visual reminders around the home  
|                           | • Create a “time-in” space for child to calm him/herself |
| Help parents meet children’s specific social/emotional needs | • Create photo books to help children with attachment issues  
|                           | • Promote children’s understanding of caregiver permanence through games like peek-a-boo |

Excerpted from *What Works?* – Table 5, page 73
Tips on High-Quality Service Delivery

• Strong service initiation process
• Collaboration
• Family involvement
• Cultural and linguistic competence
• Individualization of services/strategies
• Consistency across home & classroom
Tips on High-Quality Service Delivery (cont’d)

• Utilization of hands-on, practical materials
• Consistency in consultants
• Availability of consultants
• Integration of consultant into program routines and operations
• Facilitation of ECE program requirements and goals
Head Start Performance Standards
1304.24(a)(2)

• “secure the services of mental health professionals on a schedule of sufficient frequency to enable the timely and effective identification of and intervention in family and staff concerns about a child's mental health; and...”
Mental health program services must include a regular schedule of on-site mental health consultation involving the mental health professional, program staff, and parents on how to:
Continued 1304.24(a)(2)

• (i) Design and implement program practices responsive to the identified behavioral and mental health concerns of an individual child or group of children;

• (ii) Promote children's mental wellness by providing group and individual staff and parent education on mental health issues;

• (iii) Assist in providing special help for children with atypical behavior or development; and

• (iv) Utilize other community mental health resources, as needed
Homework: Assess Your MH Consultation

• Adopt a Process: Consider
  – Survey staff
  – Survey families
  – Survey your consultant
  – Survey community members
Quick Survey Tools

• How is the Mental Health Consultation in the Program? Survey for Families

• How is the Mental Health Consultation in the Program? Survey for Staff

• Assessing Your Program’s Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation: How do you know if your mental health services are effective?
Group Discussion

- Is it Effective?
- Is it Sufficient?
- How do you know?
Additional Considerations in Developing/Refining ECMHC Models

- Caseloads
- Intensity of services
- Use of best/evidence-based practice(s)
- Local resources/capacity
Key Partners for Effective Consultation

- ECE program administrators
  - Strong influence on “readiness” for ECMHC

- Local resources/referral sources

- Consultation “champions”

- Evaluators
Resources

• Center for Effective Mental Health Consultation
  http://www.ecmhc.org/

• *What Works?* study
  http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/78358.html

• *Mental Health Consultation in Child Care*
  (K. Johnston & C. Brinamen)

• *Mental Health Consultation in Early Childhood*
  (Donahue, Falk, & Provet)
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Wrap-Up- Follow-Up

• E-mails (subject line: ECMH Consultation)
  – *Within the week*: tools and resources (subject: mh consultation)
  – *Winter* MH Consultation Webinar
  – *Spring* Follow-up Survey
Wrap-Up Next Steps

• What stood out for you from what you heard or experienced today?
• What excites you or concerns you about what you learned?
• Any insights from the session?
• How might you use what you heard today?
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