

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health



IECMHC Network

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Network

Connect. Reflect. Grow.

Infant-early childhood mental health, sometimes referred to as social and emotional health, is the developing capacity of the child from birth to 5 years of age to form close and secure adult and peer relationships; experience, manage, and express a full range of emotions; and explore the environment and learn—all in the context of family, community, and culture.

– Zero to Three



What are infants and toddlers learning?

- How do I get my needs met?
- How do I feel safe?
- How do I get your attention?
- How do I explore the world?
- How do I express my feelings in a healthy way?
- How do I solve problems?

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“ . . . a problem-solving and capacity-building intervention implemented within a collaborative relationship between a professional consultant with mental health expertise and one or more caregivers.”

– Duran et al., 2010



Distinctive Features of IECMHC

- **Indirect mental health service**
- **Relationship- and equity-based**
- **Attends to promotion, prevention, and intervention**
- **Builds reflective capacity of caregivers**

IECMHC is not...

- **direct therapy**
- **expert-driven**



Foundational Practices of IECMHC

Diversity-Informed Tenets

- **History and experience shape assumptions and interactions**
- **Mismatches and conflict between practitioner and family perspectives affect engagement**
- **Our emotional state influences our ability to hold in mind another's perspective**
- **Reflective practice is critical to integrating a diversity-informed approach**

Consultative Stance

- **Consultant's 'way of being'**
- **Authentic partnerships**
- **Holding varied viewpoints**
- **Leaning into difficult topics**
- **Parallel process**



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IECMHC Network Services

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Building Statewide IECMH Consultant Workforce Capacity

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Participants All Cohorts
Native American/Alaskan	5
African American	15
Asian	16
Hispanic or Latino	78
Mixed Heritage	2
Pacific Islander	1
Caucasian	55
Other	5

Language	Number of Participants All Cohorts
English Only	82
Bilingual Spanish	65
Multilingual Other	13



Voices from the Field

“I learned so many different things about accepting everyone’s cultures. We all came from different backgrounds which will help us understand our children’s cultures.”

“I like the experience of sharing ideas with my colleagues. Together we can reflect better and the ideas we share help us grow and reflect on our work. Thus we are able to use different strategies that help us support children and their families.”



Voices from the Field

“This was the first time I was able to be transparent with strangers.”

“Thank you for having an open dialogue between the group, it feels safe to talk about hard conversations and it’s nice to be heard.”

“The ECE field is struggling- especially with mental health. We were told we were essential so we would work through COVID but are now forgotten. Please keep this going.”