



Jamal's Story

When Jamal (not his real name) was 2 1/2 years old, his childcare center director referred him to the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project because he wasn't speaking or interacting with his peers or adults. Since he and his family had recently moved to the United States, the consultant assumed he would begin talking and interacting as he gained language skills and became more comfortable. However, this didn't happen. Jamal's father reported that Jamal talked at home but not anywhere else. The consultant also learned that his mother had severe postpartum depression and was often unable to care for her children. His pediatrician eventually diagnosed Jamal with selective mutism, an anxiety disorder. Children with selective mutism choose the environments where they are willing to speak.

Jamal was referred for mental health services and with the assistance of a child psychiatrist, the ECMH consultant provided specific strategies for the center staff to use with Jamal. He achieved slow but steady progress. First, he began interacting with one specific friend, although in silence, and then he was able to whisper one-word responses to his teachers. Soon after, Jamal had to withdraw from the center, but was referred back to the same ECMH consultant when he went to a different childcare center. His progress had stopped, and the consultant was able to provide services again. After several more months Jamal began whispering short responses to his teachers. When the consultant closed the case, she made herself available by phone and offered to reopen the case if needed.



Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project

Annual Report Summary
July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010

Report Overview

This report details the work of the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project for the 2009-2010 fiscal year, based on three established goals: reduce the number of children expelled from child care due to behavior issues, increase the understanding of social and emotional development and its impact on educational success, and link and bridge systems and services on behalf of a child, family and program. Information in this report was obtained from case data collected by Early Childhood Mental Health consultants in all six Regional Keys and the program feedback surveys distributed to early learning center directors and teachers at the end of each case.



"I can't say enough wonderful things about the program. The consultant went above and beyond and was so kind and understanding."

Project At-a-Glance

Who Provided and Received Services?

- 12 full-time ECMH consultants provided services
- 453 children received ECMH consultation services
- 8% of the requests for service were for children ages 0-24 months, 18% were for children ages 25-36 months, and 74% were for children ages 37-60 months
- An average of 207 early childhood educators received on-site ECMH consultation each month
- An average of 1315 children were impacted each month by consultation services delivered in their early care and education programs

Where Were Services Provided?

- In 51 counties (76% of all Pennsylvania counties)
- In 273 early learning facilities across the commonwealth
- In all levels of Keystone STARS facilities, with more than 59% being STARS 1 or 2

Why Were Services Provided?

- 38% of requests for services were for aggression
- Other reasons included self-regulation (37%), interaction (11%), communication (13%), and attachment (1%)

What Linkages Were Made to Other Services?

- 298 children were referred to community agencies for more intensive services
- Of the cases referred:
 - 44.5% were referred to early intervention (13% to EI 0-3 and 31.5% to EI 3-5)
 - 32% were referred to child mental health
- 53% of cases were accepted for service, with 31% pending approval



"The consultant is extremely knowledgeable, keeps plenty of resources coming, and is a pleasure to work with. Her suggestions are easy for staff to implement and they actually work."

Achieving the Early Childhood Mental Health Project's Goals

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

ECMH consultants work collaboratively with early childhood education and parents to understand the nature of children's behavior. With this understanding, adults in the child's life can identify strengths that can be built on and help everyone feel more capable of meeting children's needs and teaching social and emotional competence. According to the research, teachers who receive this kind of support are far less likely to expel a child.

How We're Doing

- 58% of cases were closed with positive outcomes (defined as successful referral to another level of service or meeting goals).
- 36% of cases were closed for neutral reasons, including the child/family moving, child changing program, or child moving to kindergarten.
- The percentage of children expelled from childcare facilities decreased from 3.7% to 1.1%.
- 95% of directors and teachers reported that increased understanding of behavior within the context of a child's family and school environment helped them respond to behavioral challenges in ways that support the child's social and emotional needs.



Goal 2: Increase the understanding of social and emotional development and its impact on educational success

The ECMH consultants provide targeted professional development sessions on a variety of topics related to increased understanding of social and emotional development. The consultants also provide training on administering the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and its social-emotional component (ASQ-SE), screening tools that help to identify children with developmental delays.

How We're Doing

- 313 hours of professional development were offered to the early care and education community.
- 169 participants benefitted from 13 sessions on using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire screening tool; 39 facilities participated in Mind in the Making training, and 4 sessions on Preschool Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) were held.



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

ECMH 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.

How We're Doing

- ECMH consultants offered 429 hours of resource and referral, such as fielding calls from parents and providers.
- 81% of teachers and directors indicated that their knowledge of resources available to children and families significantly improved as a result of working with ECMH consultants.

Additional Early Childhood Mental Health Supports

In addition to the ECMH Consultation Project, several other initiatives in Pennsylvania are working to increase the coordination and accessibility of services to promote early childhood mental health:

- Networking and joint training opportunities for professionals from early intervention, early childhood education and children's mental health
- Collaborative professional development to promote the use of Positive Behavior Supports in early care and education
- Cross-system collaboration with the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, including a program liaison and clinical consultation



"The consultant was always professional, always positive, always available and always ready to help!"

"The consultant was a wonderful listener. She responded to my needs as well as the child's. She researched information for me and followed through with things we discussed at our meetings. She helped me understand what JC needs to help him learn how to control himself and express his emotions positively."