



Emily's Story

Emily was 27 months old and enrolled in a STAR 4 center. Her teacher reported that she was hitting and biting other children. She was also preoccupied with some activities such as opening and closing doors and gates. The Early Childhood Mental Health consultant observed Emily and met with the teacher and Emily's parents. The consultant also administered the *Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional (ASQ:SE)*, a screening tool that helps in understanding children's social and emotional competence and identifies children who may need further evaluation.

Everyone shared their concerns about Emily and worked on a plan that would best meet her needs. The ECMH consultant made some recommendations about the room arrangement and suggested that Emily might benefit from some sensory activities throughout the day as well as a referral to Early Intervention. Emily is now receiving occupational therapy. The teacher reports that as a result of Emily's therapy and suggestions from the ECMH consultant, her challenging behaviors have decreased.



Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project

Annual Report
July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009

Report Overview

This report details the work of the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project for 2008-2009 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.



"Working with the consultant was a wonderful experience. She was insightful and caring. She was sensitive to both the child's needs and the mother's concerns."

Project At-a-Glance

Who Provided and Received Services?

- 8 ECMH consultants provided services
- 434 children received ECMH consultation services
- 13% of the requests for service were for children ages 0-24 months, 25% were for children ages 25-36 months, and 62% were for children ages 37-60 months.
- 837 early childhood educators received on-site ECMH consultation
- 5,054 children were affected by consultation services delivered in their early care and education programs

Where Were Services Provided?

- In 48 counties (72% of all Pennsylvania counties)
- In 244 early learning facilities across the commonwealth
- In all levels of Keystone STARS facilities, with 55% being STARS 1 or 2

Why Were Services Provided?

- 43% of requests for services were for aggression
- Other reasons included self-regulation (33%), interaction (14%), communication (8%), and attachment (2%)

What Linkages Were Made to Other Services?

- 59% of cases (255) were referred to community agencies for more intensive services
- Of the cases referred:
 - 50% were referred to early intervention (26% to EI 0-3; 23% to EI 3-5)
 - 28% were referred to child mental health
- 61% of cases were accepted for service, with 21% pending approval



"All children have needs. Behaviors are sometimes not viewed as a symptom of what the child needs. This program helps get the focus in the right place so the child's needs can be addressed."

Signs of Progress in 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 educators and parents to understand the nature of children's behavior. With this kind of understanding, adults in the child's life can respond more sensitively to a child's needs, design strategies that will help the child be successful in the classroom, and ultimately reduce the number of children who are expelled from child care.

How We're Doing

- 70% of cases were closed with positive outcomes (successful referral to another level of service or met goals).
- 25% of cases were closed due to the child/family moving, child changing program, or child moving to kindergarten.
- 61% 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

While the ECMH Consultation Project provides child-specific consultation, the overarching goal is to increase the capacity of practitioners to understand and support the social and emotional development of all children.

How We're Doing

- 82% of directors and teachers reported that they were able to use the information and strategies provided by the consultants to support all children in their program.
- More than 75% of directors and teachers reported improvement in their ability to foster the healthy social and emotional development of children in their program.
- 403 hours of professional development were offered to the early care and education community; 523 participants attended 33 sessions on the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, 215 directors and teachers received training on Mind in the Making, and 50 participants attended 4 sessions on Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS).



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. Members of the team become more empathetic to each other's needs during this process.

How We're Doing

- ECMH consultants participated in 366 hours of systems-building activities with other child-serving agencies.
- Consultants provided 153 hours on resourcing and referral (warm-lines, calls from parents and providers).
- 74% of directors and teachers rated the ECMH consultants as very or extremely helpful in referring children to other services.
- 68% reported improvement in referring children to appropriate services.



"The consultant was a blessing. We have three children in one group that we referred. We evaluated our programming asking, "Is it us?" The consultant assisted us in finding the help we needed for all the children."

"ECMH consultation has been the most valuable resource I have experienced in my 10 years directing this center."