

Maryland's Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

January 2017

What is Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC)?

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) is an intervention designed to improve the ability of early care and education (ECE) program staff and families to address mental health problems, particularly behavioral, in children ages 0-5.

ECMHC Services include:

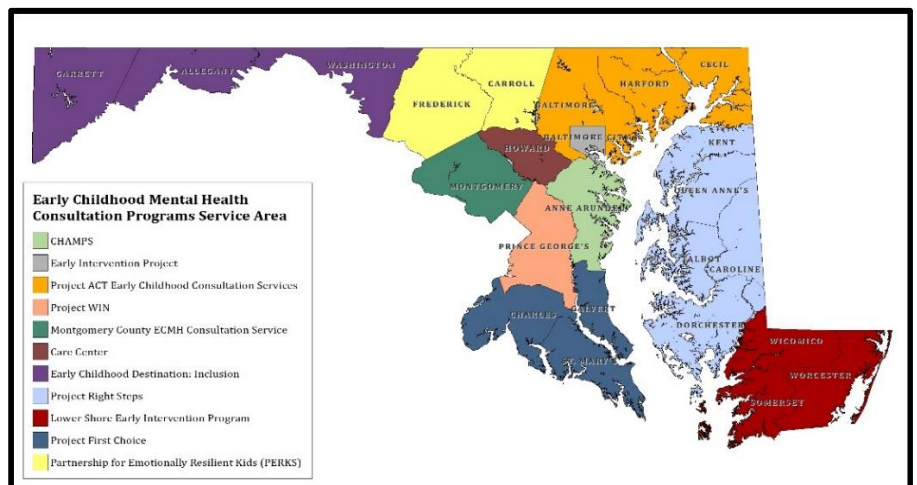
- Observation and assessment of the child and the classroom environment;
- Referring children and families to Maryland's Infants and Toddlers program, Child Find, and other appropriate mental health services;
- Training and coaching of early care and education providers to meet children's social and emotional needs;
- Assisting children in modifying behaviors;
- Helping providers retain and serve children with behavioral and other mental health needs; and
- Serving as a resource to community partners (i.e., providing trainings, connecting families and providers to resources).

Who is Receiving ECMHC in Maryland?

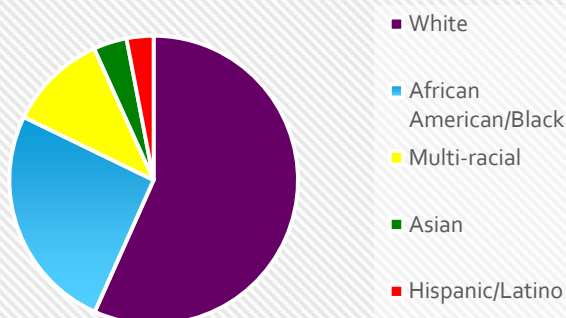
The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Division of Early Childhood Development funds 12 ECMHC programs, which serve all 24 jurisdictions in Maryland.

In FY16, 1407 cases were referred to ECMHC Programs with 930 cases being accepted for services with an average duration of 4 months. Among the total number of cases not served, **101 cases were not served due to a lack of an available consultant.**

- 81% of the cases were served in Child Care Centers.
- 96% of the children served were over 25 months.
- The majority of the cases (76%) served were boys.



Race/Ethnicity of Children Receiving Mental Health Consultation



The race of the children served by ECMHC are reflective of Maryland's demographics with just over half (56%) of children served identify as White.

- ❖ 12.69% (n=780) of children served were also receiving childcare subsidy indicating lower socioeconomic status
- ❖ 4% (n=31) children served were also in foster care
- ❖ 2% (n=13) children served had a primary caregiver that was incarcerated
- ❖ 1.15% (n=9) children served were identified as homeless

What is the Success of ECMHC?

ECMHC reduces expulsions and improves classroom climate.

- ❖ All children who received child-specific ECMHC were at risk of expulsion. *97% (n= 582) children were retained in care during consultation. Only 3% (n=27) of children who received child-specific consultation were expelled.*

ECMHC improves classroom climate and teacher confidence.

- ❖ *79% of the classrooms served in FY16 saw positive gains in classroom climate ratings from baseline to follow-up.* This includes improvements in the following areas: transitioning smoothly between activities, providing clear directions and rules, deescalating potential behavioral challenges, actively listening and interacting with children, engaging students, implementing developmentally appropriate lessons. Teachers reported they felt more capable of dealing with challenging behavior.

ECMHC decreased challenging behavior in children.

- ❖ For those children receiving child specific consultation *parents and teachers reported an increase in child protective factors such as self-regulation and teachers reported a decrease in challenging behavior.*



Why is ECMHC So Important?

A landmark study in 2005 found that young children in the U.S. are being expelled from their preschool classrooms at roughly three times the rate of expulsions from K-12 programsⁱ Moreover, boys and children of color are disproportionately impacted.ⁱⁱ

- ❖ Children of color are being disproportionately excluded from education for disciplinary reasons. In one study, 50% of preschoolers who received more than one out of school suspension were African American, even though African Americans make up only 18% of the preschool population.^{ix} Furthermore, 80% of children suspended more than once were boys.^v
- ❖ Families with children at risk for expulsion often miss work due to problems related to disruption of childcare services.ⁱⁱⁱ
- ❖ In addition, assistance with children's "challenging behaviors" is the greatest need identified by preschool administrators and educators, who often have had little training in behavior management or ways to promote children's success within a supportive environment.
- ❖ The importance of early learning is not limited to academics. In fact, research has shown that *social and behavioral competence in young children can predict their academic performance in the first grade over and above their cognitive skills and family backgrounds.*^{iv}

The Maryland State Department of Education is committed to ensuring all children have access to high quality early care and education to benefit their school readiness and life success. If the problems of at-risk children are ignored, the state will incur additional financial and social costs.

ⁱ Gilliam, W. S. (2005). *Prekindergartners left behind: Expulsion rates in state prekindergarten systems*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Child Study Center.

ⁱⁱ <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/Downloads/CRDC-School-Discipline-Snapshot.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Van Egeren, L. A., Kirk, R., Brophy-Herb, H. E., Carlson, J. S., Tableman, B., & Bender, S. (2011). *interdisciplinary evaluation report of Michigan's Child Care Expulsion Prevention (CCEP) initiative*. Lansing: Michigan State University.

^{iv} Raver, C., & Knitzer, J. (2002). *Ready to enter: What research tells policymakers about strategies to promote social and emotional school readiness among three- and four-year old children*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty. nccp@columbia.edu