

## What is early childhood mental health consultation?

Early childhood mental health consultation (ECMHC) connects early childhood professionals, families, and young children with qualified professionals with expertise in early childhood development and mental health. Depending on the audience, consultants provide support and guidance in areas such as behavior management, emotion regulation strategies, classroom management, skill building, and social emotional development.

ECMHC is a prevention-based service that has resulted in less classroom burnout for early childhood educators and a decrease in suspensions and expulsions for children in early childhood settings. It has also led to an increase in emotional regulation skills in young children and an increase in early identification of mental health or developmental delays.

## What is the current capacity of the system?

Colorado uses a combination of federal and state funds to support 34 FTE early childhood mental health consultants to support more than 400,000 children under the age of six in the state. It is estimated in order to serve children in child care setting who are ages birth to eight years old, the state needs 438 early childhood mental health consultants to support children in early care and education settings (for a 1 consultant per about 15 classrooms ratio). This estimate does not include services for expecting families or for children who do not receive care through a licensed childcare program.

## What changes are needed to improve early childhood mental health consultation in Colorado?



### *Ensure Sustainable Funding*

- Ensure there is sustainable funding for early childhood mental health consultation to meet the needs of families and early childhood professionals across the state.



### *Define and Enhance the Statewide ECMHC Structure and Design*

- Develop a standard model of consultation in the state and ensure quality standards for consultation across a diversity of settings are implemented with fidelity
- Ensure the availability of services for children birth to age 8 and expecting families, providers, and caregivers during the prenatal to age 8 period across a diversity of settings.
- Meet families where they are by allowing early childhood mental health consultants to support professionals including home visitors, child welfare caseworkers, early care and education providers, and health care providers, including pediatricians, obstetricians and gynecologists, and maternal behavioral health professionals.



### *Maintain a Qualified Workforce*

- Establish professional qualifications, job expectations, and guidance on ratios and outcomes for early childhood mental health consultants.
- Authorize an open RFP process to place state-funded early childhood mental health consultants within organizations that can demonstrate they can implement the program effectively and can best meet local community need.
- Require CDHS to create a statewide professional development system or plan that supports ECMHCs to meet expectations as defined in the state model.
- Establish a statewide certification process for ECMHCs and publish an associated list of qualified ECMHCs who voluntarily agree to be included on the list.



### *Support Quality Services for our Children and their Caregivers*

- Require an independent, third-party evaluation of the impact of the ECMHC program using standard evaluation measures across programs.
- Require the state to analyze implementation data and outcomes in order to identify areas for improvement, promote accountability and provide continuous quality improvement.