

Support HB20-1006: Creation of a statewide program of early childhood mental health consultation

Sponsors: Reps. McCluskie and Sirota / Sens. Pettersen and Story

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.

Results of early childhood mental health consultation services:

- Less classroom burnout for early childhood educators
- Decrease in suspensions and expulsions in early childhood settings
- Increase in emotional regulation skills in young children
- Increase in early identification of mental health or developmental delays

What is the current capacity of the system?

In Colorado, there is a state-managed ECMHC program that funds 34 early childhood mental health consultant positions using a combination of federal and state resources to support more than 400,000 children under the age of six in the state. In order to serve children in early care and education settings who are ages birth to eight years old, it is estimated that the state needs 438 early childhood mental health consultants (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 child care program. In the future, and as the program grows, the goal is to expand the early childhood mental health consultant program to better meet the needs in local communities.

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



Ensure Sustainable Funding

- Ensure there is sustainable funding for the state ECMHC program 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 ECMHC for the state program and ensure quality standards for consultation across diverse settings are implemented with fidelity.
- Ensure the availability of services for children birth to age eight and expecting families, healthcare providers, and caregivers during the prenatal to age eight period across a diversity of settings.
- Meet families and professionals working with young children where they are by allowing early childhood mental health consultants to support home visitors, child welfare caseworkers, early care and education providers, and health care providers, including pediatricians, perinatal healthcare providers, and maternal behavioral health professionals.



Maintain a Qualified Workforce

- This bill sets up a process to determine professional qualifications, job expectations, and guidance on ratios and outcomes for ECMHCs in the state program.
- Authorize an open RFP process to place ECMHCs 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.
- Determine a statewide qualification 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 early childhood mental health consultation program using metrics that incorporate the diversity of settings in which the consultants practice.
- Require the state to analyze implementation data and outcomes in order to identify areas for improvement, promote accountability and provide continuous quality improvement.

Supporters

Bell Policy Center
 Children's Hospital Colorado
 Clayton Early Learning
 Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children (COAEOYC)
 Colorado Children's Campaign
 Colorado Head Start Association
 Colorado Jewish ECE Initiative
 Community Partnership for Child Development (CPCD)
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 Florence Crittenton Services
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 National Association of Social Workers, Colorado Chapter
 Parent Possible
 Raise Colorado Coalition
 Spring Institute
 WorkLife Partnership

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