

## INFORMATION FOR CAREGIVERS ON Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

### Young children can have mental health needs.



Infant and early childhood mental health refers to a child's developing capacities to experience, regulate and express a range of emotions, develop close relationships with other children and adults, actively explore their environments, and learn. This is sometimes referred to as 'social and emotional development.' Some young children have difficulty regulating and expressing their emotions, or understanding the emotions of others. They may have difficulty forming close relationships and may be reluctant to explore their environment. Children's social and emotional development is an important part of their being ready for and successful in school.

### Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation services support the adults in a young child's life.



Mental health consultants work in child care, preschool and school settings to make sure that all children are on track with their social and emotional development, and if some children are experiencing challenges, they help staff (and parents) learn how to address these quickly and effectively. Mental health consultants work with teachers and other staff so they know how to promote the social and emotional development of children in their care.

### Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants listen to families.



Family members are the most important teachers and nurturers in a child's life. If you are concerned about your child's social and emotional development, you can ask your child's teacher about a mental health consultant coming into the classroom to help. Your child's teacher might already be working with a mental health consultant and can share strategies they have learned with you. The more that families and teachers work together, the better children do in school. When a mental health consultant gets involved, teachers are better equipped to help children, and children are more successful academically, socially and emotionally, too.

**Ask your child's health care provider if Early Childhood  
Mental Health Consultation is available in your community.**

## Michael's Story

Michael's preschool teacher had concerns about Michael's behavior, especially how aggressive he sometimes was with other children. After getting permission from Michael's parents, the teacher requested that a mental health consultant come into the classroom to observe the children and her interactions with them. The consultant and Michael's teacher came up with a plan that included several new strategies to try: helping Michael learn to cope differently when he got frustrated, and quiet himself down when he was overwhelmed; teaching the whole class some new calming techniques; and sharing these with the parents so that they could use the same strategies at home. The teacher also decided that she would spend five minutes of quiet time with Michael in the afternoon to help him through the roughest part of his day. The teacher continued to observe Michael's behavior and began to notice that there were fewer and fewer incidents of aggression. And Michael's teacher discovered that she had a place to problem solve about other behavioral challenges when they arose.

### For additional information contact the:

**CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR  
Infant & Early Childhood  
Mental Health Consultation**  
*Growth. Advancement. Impact.*  
[www.iecmhc.org](http://www.iecmhc.org) | [iecmhc@georgetown.edu](mailto:iecmhc@georgetown.edu)

**National Early Childhood  
Family Network**  
*A place where parents connect.*  
[ecfamilyleaders@gmail.com](mailto:ecfamilyleaders@gmail.com) [fredla.org](http://fredla.org)

This product was developed [in part] under grant number 1H795M082070-01 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The views, policies and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.