Preschool Expulsion Prevention: Parent and Practitioner Perspectives on Putting Policy into Practice
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Objectives: To understand...
- How Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation puts policy into practice to promote student wellness and support positive and safe learning environments.
- How ECMHC prevents expulsion from early learning environments, promotes positive preschool climate and builds adult competencies.
- How parent perspectives inform how best to overcome challenges when using ECMHC strategies to address early childhood mental health.

This session is about a transformation underway thanks to:
- the wisdom of Ohio’s decision makers to listen to their communities.
- the wherewithal of the local community team members to recognize the opportunity for change.
- the visionary LEADERSHIP that has made it a priority to expand the reach ECMHC to prevent expulsion and invest in the mental health of the youngest children in Ohio.

Opportunity for Improvement

- Expulsions and suspensions occur at high rates in early childhood environments
- Some children are pre-diagnosis or misdiagnosed, or unable to access services
- This raises compliance questions with 504, ADA, IDEA, Civil Rights Act, Title IX
- Help with challenging behavior is the TOP professional development request
- BOTH families and early learning professionals are frustrated
- As a result, early childhood classrooms are disrupted and unsafe
- There are racial and gender disparities, with boys of color disproportionately being kicked out of early learning programs

Helping Young Children Beat the Odds

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants help caregivers support healthy growth and development in our young children

- It’s not about “fixing” children or providing therapy.
- Promote strong relationships and a supportive environment for caregivers, such as home visitors and child care professionals, along with families and communities
- Partner with parents and caregivers to understand what babies and young children are telling us with their behaviors, and co-create solutions
- Equip caregivers with the tools and insights to develop healthy emotional and social behaviors in young children
- Help our children feel safe, supported and valued

The Role of the Mental Health Consultant

Help adults understand and address the child’s needs for determining on both individual plan, with the parents, providers, and home visitors.

Work with child care providers, teachers, and home visitors to implement strategies that all children by helping to strengthen the child, the child care setting, and the early childhood relationships between adults and children.

Support administrators, directors, home visitors, and other program leaders in making changes to the early childhood learning environment that are developmentally appropriate and consistent with the child’s needs.
4 buckets of Ohio’s Core ECMHC components

- Expulsion Prevention Statewide Hotline
- ECMH Consultant Workforce Expansion
- ECMH Statewide Program Evaluation
- ECMH Training Institute TOT in EBP's

Putting Policy to Practice

Expulsion- the quick fix?

ECMHC supports careful consideration of multiple perspectives.

Challenges from the Parent Perspective

- Parental stress
- Teacher stress, burnout
- Relational disconnect
- Mistrust & Blame
- Emotional intensity, hurt feelings
- Apathy, "not my problem"
- Avoidance
- Professionalism (or lack of)
- Advocacy access
- Shame & stigma

"My heart is broken."
"I feel like a failure as a parent"
"I know he acts up- do I have to hear about it every day?"
"I have to work, what do they expect me to do?"
"All day I worry."
"I can tell she doesn’t like him."  "She wants him out."  "Nonstop mom shaming me."

Helpful

- Provide situation specific self regulatory training (coaching and consultation)
- Teach specific executive function skills
- Teach strategies for re-assessing stressful situations and consider alternatives
- Teach strategies for recognizing and interrupting automatic (often emotional) reactions to allow for time for intentional self regulation in stressful situations.
- Strengthen intentional self regulation by building skills that override automatic responses
Hopeful

- Help caregivers identify their own motivators, goals and dreams for the child and family
- Help caregivers see how small changes make a difference
- Reinforce a cycle of positive emotional responses and successes
- Build confidence along with competence

ECMHC Solutions & Strategies

- Communication
- Trusting relationships
- Promotion of Mental Health & Wellness
- Training, PD & TA
- Family-School-Community Partnerships
- Policy change
- Community wide commitment
- Early & often

To learn more about ECMHC

- ECMHC Ohio Model  
- ECMHC- Ohio Certification  
  https://www.occrra.org/documents/ECMH_Credential_Information.pdf
- OCCRRRA Website  
  https://login.occrra.org/  
- OhioMHAS ECMHC  

Resources

- IECMHC.org
- Expulsion Prevention-  
- Ohio Mental Health & Addiction Services- Whole Child Matters
- Center For Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development
- OCAI - ASD Strategies in Action, Many Faces of Autism and Toddler & Preschool Age- autismcertificationcenter.org
- Harvard  
  http://developingchild.harvard.edu
- Yale  
  Edward Zigler Center in Child Development & Social Policy

Thank you for your interest on behalf of the many talented and dedicated people involved in Ohio’s statewide ECMHC effort!

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