

Mental Health Consultation: Connecting Early Childhood Learning Renewal Efforts in Your School District

This document summarizes considerations and best practices for the successful implementation of Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC). We hope this information answers key questions about how I/ECMHC may support local early childhood programs while implementing district-wide learning renewal efforts.

What is I/ECMHC and how can it support Early Childhood Block Grant Programs?

- I/ECMHC offers an exponential impact via the promotion of social-emotional well-being in Prevention Initiative (PI), Preschool for All (PFA), and Preschool for All-Expansion (PFA-E) programs, primarily by engaging and supporting staff in strength-based consultative conversations and activities that build their capacity to support children and their families.
- This I/ECMHC approach offers proactive supports that build the capacity of program leaders (principals, directors, and supervisors), direct service providers (teachers, assistants, home visitors, intake coordinators, doulas, family workers, parent educators, parent coordinators, family engagement specialists, etc.), and ultimately the entire early childhood workforce (Early Intervention, Special Education, Child Welfare, etc.), impacting young children and their families in a variety of settings. The approach is NOT about “fixing” the child.
- Key I/ECMHC Resources:
 - Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation ([infographic](#))
 - Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation – It’s Time ([video](#))
 - A Day in the Life of an Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant ([video](#))

Benefits of I/ECMHC

- Increased reflective capacity.
- Lower emotional exhaustion.
- Results in higher job satisfaction and increased retention of staff.
- PI/PFA/PFA-E staff are empowered to respond to challenging situations by using natural supports within the program with increased confidence.
- I/ECMHC has been shown to reduce preschool expulsions, improve parent-child relationships, increase the development of positive social skills, and increase retention rates of early childhood professionals.

How can my program use I/ECMHC? (PI, PFA, PFA-E)

- For Consultation to be effective, there needs to be buy-in by all levels of staff in PI, PFA, or PFA-E programs.
- I/ECMHC can be used as job-embedded professional development for program staff (principals, directors, supervisors, teachers, home visitors, and doulas).
- [The Chapin Hall Evaluation of the Illinois Model of I/ECMHC](#) recommends at least 10-12 hours of consultation per month; however, the enhanced social-emotional capacity among staff actively collaborating with I/ECMHCs are more evident over a prolonged partnership of 12-18 months.

Where do I find a qualified Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant?

- [INCCRRA's Gateways I/ECMHC Database](#) (search by county, language, or program expertise).
- **The Illinois Model of I/ECMHC and the I/ECMHC State Leadership Team** have adapted the following required qualifications to be listed on the Gateways-approved Statewide I/ECMHC Database:

A Master's Degree or higher: (Social Work, Counseling, Psychology, Marriage and Family Counseling, and Psychiatry)
OR A Master's Degree in a related field: (Education, Public Health, Nursing or Child Development, etc.)
<i>Optional</i> -Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Certificate/Endorsement/Credential
Required-Work Experience with children (0-5 years old) <i>recommendation is 2-3 years</i>
Additional mental health professional development
Additional early childhood (0-5) professional development or coursework
Ability to demonstrate reflective capacity

Funding to Support I/ECMHC

- I/ECMHC is an allowable expense for Early Childhood Block Grant programs, including PI, PFA, PFA-E, and amendments can be made in alignment with the [ISBE Fiscal Policy and Procedure Manual](#).
- The [funders of home visiting](#) support I/ECMHC as a critical, proactive support for home visiting and other early childhood programs in Illinois.
- [Learn](#) how early childhood programs utilize public funding to support I/ECMHC.
- [View](#) funding scenarios to consider when budgeting for an I/ECMHC.
- Other ISBE resources include the [ISBE Early Childhood website](#), the [ISBE State and Federal Grant Administration Policy, Fiscal Requirements and Procedures manual](#), or email earlychi@isbe.net.