Building an Effective System of Supports for Young Children’s Mental Health

A Webinar for the ECCS Community

Presenters
Judy Walruff
First Things First Arizona
Gaylord Gieseke
Voices for Illinois Children
Dawn Melchiorre
Voices for Illinois Children

NCCP Staff
Sheila Smith
Director, Early Childhood
Louisa Higgins
Coordinator, Project Thrive
Shannon Stagman
Research Analyst, Project Thrive

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National Center for Children in Poverty
Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University
Overview

♦ Defining Early Childhood Mental Health

♦ A review of key components of a strong system of supports for young children’s mental health

♦ Leaders from two states – Arizona and Illinois – describe their efforts to build such a system

♦ Discussion of how states can coordinate separate components that support ECMH
Early Childhood Mental Health
A young child is able to...

- trust that adults will offer comfort and positive responses to their needs and interests
- use social skills that help in making friends and having positive interactions with peers
- understand others’ feelings and intentions; use emotion vocabulary
- express positive feelings (enthusiasm) and manage negative feelings (anger, frustration)
Early childhood mental health provides the foundation for children’s development

- ECMH means that young children can enjoy positive relationships with others

- ECMH means that young children can explore and learn from their social and physical environment
Young children’s mental health depends on:

- the well-being, resources, and knowledge of adults who care for young children in the home and childcare settings

- a system that helps adults in their role of supporting young children’s mental health
Key Elements of an Effective System

- Promote ECMH in home-visiting programs and community-based parent programs
  - Include guidance about healthy social-emotional relationships in all types of home-visiting and parent programs – make it prominent and include focus in fidelity checks
Key Elements of an Effective System

- Promote ECMH in child care and early childhood education programs:
  - Use teacher/provider training and curricula that help teachers/caregivers intentionally support infant, toddler, and preschoolers’ social-emotional growth
  - Mental health consultation
Key Elements of an Effective System

- Screening for parental depression in multiple settings using a validated tool and referral for treatment:
  - Primary care settings (OB/GYN, Pediatric settings)
  - Early care and education settings
  - Family support and home-visiting programs
Key Elements of an Effective System

♦ Social-emotional screening of children using validated tools in multiple settings and appropriate response (e.g., referral to Part C Early Intervention, EC mental health consultation)
  - Primary care settings
  - Early care and education settings
  - Family support and home-visiting programs
Key Elements of an Effective System

♦ Evidence-based interventions (e.g., Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, Incredible Years parent training)

♦ Basic supports for families (e.g., help meet basic needs for housing, food, health care for parents; social support)
Key Elements of an Effective System

♦ Ensure that highly vulnerable children and families receive strong ECMH supports
  - homeless children
  - children in homes with domestic violence
  - children in foster care
The Outcomes of Investment in ECMH

- Academic success
- Prevention of mental illness
- Reductions in behaviors associated with high costs to individuals and society
  - substance abuse
  - violence and crime
  - intergenerational child abuse