



Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

Early childhood mental health consultation (ECMHC) is one of the five required community-level interventions for Project LAUNCH. ECMHC serves as a powerful tool for supporting young children's social and emotional health and development.

Studies show that **ECMHC** improves the ability of staff, programs, and families to prevent, identify, treat, and reduce the effect of mental health problems among children from birth through age eight. This indirect approach to fostering social and emotional well-being achieves positive outcomes for infants and young children.

Project LAUNCH programs use ECMHC in two settings: interventions in early education programs or consultation based in primary care settings.



ECMHC in Early Childhood Settings

Professional consultants with mental health expertise can work collaboratively with early childhood education staff, programs, and families to provide ECMHC. Project LAUNCH grantees using ECMHC draw on a variety of research-based strategies to improve child outcomes, including engaging skilled mental health practitioners to:

- **Train staff** to conduct behavioral and other developmental screening and assessment tools and use results for classroom planning
- **Build capacity of early education staff** to create classroom environments that support healthy social and emotional development
- **Observe children** in the classroom when social, emotional, or behavioral concerns are identified
- **Support teachers and parents** in using strategies to promote children's positive behavioral changes
- **Provide one-on-one therapy** (if qualified) or **refer children** to experienced child therapists
- **Identify alternate child care placements** for children who require more support than is available in their early education settings

ECMHC in Primary Care Settings

Primary care settings that provide mental health consultation increase children's and families' capacity to access appropriate mental health services. Project LAUNCH grantees implement ECMHC interventions in which primary care practices employ mental health clinicians as staff or consultants to:

- **Reduce barriers** by developing trusting relationships with families to address parent concerns about a child's development, behavior, emotional state, or social relationships and skills
- **Assess children and families** and **provide treatment** when indicated, or help make referrals to community-based services and providers for appropriate care
- **Provide telephone consultation or case conferencing** with early education, early intervention, or other providers to promote coordinated care and treatment for children