


TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Bernard J. Sadusky, Ed.D. 
DATE: July 19, 2011
SUBJECT: Maryland's Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an overview of Maryland's Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project that supports the academic and social-emotional success of preschoolers.

BACKGROUND:

The Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) Project was established in 2006 by the Ehrlich administration in an effort to expand mental health services to young children, many of whom are enrolled in licensed child care programs. Following pilots on Baltimore City and on the Eastern Shore, MSDE created and funded 12 ECMHC sites across the state with the mission to identify and provide early intervention services to children with behavioral challenges.

The scope of the ECMHC work includes support services for the children, their families, and the child care program. Some children also benefit from more intensive therapy session with licensed family therapists. Support services include:

- observation and assessment of the child and the classroom environment;
- referring children and families to Maryland's Infants and Toddlers program, Child Find, and other appropriate mental health services;
- training and coaching of early care and education providers to meet children's social and emotional needs;
- assisting children in modifying behaviors;
- engaging the family; and
- helping providers retain and serve children with behavioral and other mental health needs

In Fiscal Year 2010, 724 children under five years old received ECMHC services. Consultation was provided to 350 classrooms in preschool programs, including family child care, child care centers, Head Start programs, and prekindergarten programs, allowing 3,720 early care and education staff to benefit from a program-wide approach of support for social and emotional wellness in young children.

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In Maryland, only 3% of children who received child-specific consultation (in FY10) were expelled, and 81% remained in their current early childhood program. All children who receive child-specific ECMH consultation were determined to be at risk of expulsion. An average of 1.2 children per 1,000 was expelled from Maryland ECE programs since the implementation of ECMHC. This compares to a rate of 6 expulsions per 1,000 children in a national survey of state-subsidized pre-schools (Gilliam, 2005).

For the past two years, MSDE, in collaboration with the Center for Child and Human Development at Georgetown University, has been developing statewide standards and a guide to implementation for all ECMHC services statewide. An ECMHC Summer Institute was held on June 28 and 29, 2011 to launch the publication of the documents and provide training for participants working in the field of early childhood mental health consultation.

ACTION:

For information only. No action required. The project information is available on http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/program/ECMH