



Social & Emotional Health in Early Childhood

Building Bridges Between Services & Systems

edited by

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Appendix A

Self-Assessment Guide



Early childhood mental health is the social-emotional and behavioral well-being of young children birth to 5 years and their families. Infants and very young children, as well as their families, are served in a variety of community environments and by diverse agencies and providers—both formal and informal. Primary care environments, child care, Head Start, foster care, playgroups, and home visitation programs provide states and communities with opportunities to enhance early mental health. A mental health perspective, services, and supports can be infused into the early childhood system in ways that promote healthy social-emotional development, identify risk factors and intervene early, and treat children and families with more significant challenges.

This self-assessment guide is based on an early childhood system of care framework (see Figure A.1) developed to help states and communities conceptualize, organize, and integrate services and supports to meet the mental health needs of young children and their families. Because every state and community is unique with differing needs and capacities, this system of care construct is meant to be used flexibly by your state or community. It provides an illustration of the interdependence and complexity of a system, the need for multiple stakeholders and partners, and the building blocks (infrastructure development) that underpin services and supports. An early childhood system of care approach can be built on existing collaboration efforts with services and supports delivered in environments where young children and families are already served. Early childhood providers and mental health agencies are often unfamiliar partners that may not have worked closely together; yet, each offer specific skills, expertise, and access to services and environments that when combined meet

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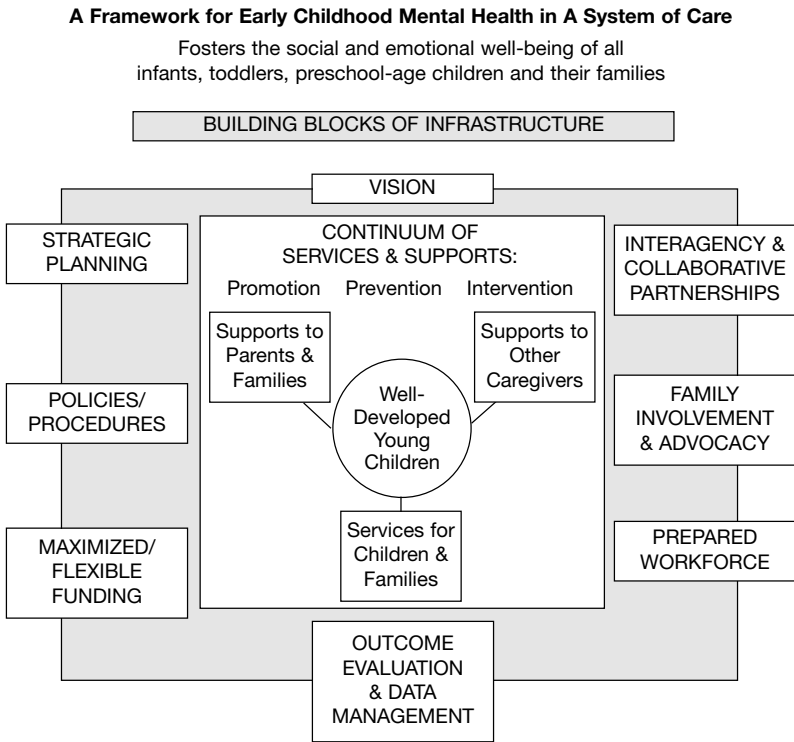


Figure A.1. Diagram of early childhood mental health in a system of care.

the increasingly prevalent needs for preventive and early behavioral health interventions for children birth to 5 years and their families.

VISION, VALUES, AND GUIDELINES

- Has your state or community developed a vision, values, and/or guidelines for early childhood mental health? Who was involved in the process?
- Have you determined the population(s) to be served? Be very specific with regard to age of children, how at-risk is defined, and whether a diagnosis is needed to serve children.

POLITICAL AND BUDGET ENVIRONMENT

- Has your state or community experienced changes to the budget that have an impact on early childhood, mental health, or related programs?

- Has the political will to address these early childhood issues changed recently?

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND/OR POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- Are there formal or informal planning processes in your state or community related to early childhood mental health? What is the focus of the initiative(s), which agencies and partners are participating, and which agency is the “lead agency” (if appropriate)?
- What, if any, key legislative or policy initiatives existed prior to your state’s early childhood mental health planning? What, if any, key legislative or policy action has occurred as a result of your initiative (e.g., legislation on serving children with multiple risk indicators, a governor’s order, changes in Medicaid reimbursement)?

INTERAGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

- Has your state or community developed formal interagency agreements or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between early childhood agencies, mental health, and other agencies that guide the planning or delivery of services?
- Has your state developed strong informal interagency partnerships?
- How are state and community partnerships cultivated and maintained?
- What are the interagency issues that you are struggling with currently, if any?

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND ADVOCACY

- What family advocacy groups are involved in the planning of your initiative, and what roles have they played in the development and implementation of system-building efforts?
- Are you including families of young children in your planning efforts?
- How are you reaching out to a diverse representation of families—families of color, non-English speakers, and different income groups and families served by different service sectors?
- What supports are provided to facilitate family involvement (e.g., transportation costs, child care, stipends, training)?

- Have you had difficulty in identifying and approaching families of young children with mental health needs? If yes, how are you addressing this issue?

SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

- To what extent does your state or community have a comprehensive array of services and supports for young children and their families? What are the major services and supports for children and for families? Are they available statewide or communitywide?
- How do families and children access early childhood mental health services? Are there multiple points of entry for early childhood mental health services?
- What family supports, such as respite, parent-to-parent support, and family resource centers, are available? How are families informed about these?
- What services and supports are available to other caregivers (e.g., mental health consultation, mentoring, training, reflective supervision, crisis support)?
- Is your state or community funding pilot or demonstration projects? Are they being evaluated?
- What is your state's or community's current service capacity in the areas of 1) promotion, such as the use of mental health screening in physician's offices and library corners with social-emotional health information; 2) preventive services, such as prenatal screening for high-risk mothers, home visiting, and mental health consultation; and 3) intervention services, such as play therapy or dyadic intervention?

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

- Do you have a plan or initiative to address cultural competence in your state or community?
- Is cultural competence being addressed at multiple levels, including policy, system planning, and service delivery?
- What are the major ethnic and racial groups in your state or community?
- Are different ethnic and racial groups involved in your planning efforts?
- Is training available to providers and families on cultural and linguistic competence?

PREPARED WORK FORCE

- How is your state or community addressing the need for well-trained providers (e.g., early childhood mental health in-service and pre-service training, preparation for early childhood and mental health professionals, certification requirements)?
- Do service providers include nontraditional as well as credentialed professionals?

MAXIMIZED AND/OR FLEXIBLE FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Is there an inventory of the major federal, state, and local funding being used for early childhood mental health services and supports, noting eligibility criteria?
- How are you organizing funding (e.g., blended, braided, or pooled funding), and are any of the funds flexible?
- Have you been able to redeploy or reinvest funds from restrictive environments (hospitals, residential intervention)?
- Does your state have a managed care initiative, and, if so, are mental health services carved out? Are developmental services bundled?
- Do you have a sustainability plan? If so, please specify.
- Is Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment being used in your state or community? How?
- Have you reached out to include multiple agencies, foundations, and community organizations to gain broad ownership in your system?

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- How do you evaluate the progress and effectiveness of your system development and implementation?
- How do you ensure quality services and supports and measure outcomes for children and families?
- How are you using data to advocate for system change?
- Does your state or community have a cross-system data collection mechanism?

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