THE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR
Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

Contents

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Glossary and Definitions for IECMHC

A

American Indian/Alaskan Native: a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.[1] Throughout the Toolbox, the words "tribe, tribal and Tribal Nations" are meant to be inclusive of all tribes, consortia of tribes, tribal organizations and urban Indian organizations.

Administrative supervision: A type of workplace management, oversight, or direction in which a supervisor provides supervisees with information and/or guidance regarding administrative or programmatic issues (e.g., program policies and updates, record-keeping requirements, human resources issues).[1]

B

Bias: A tendency to interpret experiences in terms particular to an individual's own (personal, familial, or societal) culture and to judge people or situations based on race, class, ethnicity, region of origin, tribal affiliation, sexual orientation, etc. A lack of bias, on the other hand, reflects a commitment and ability to consider information about people and situations based on objective criteria.

Burn-out: The psychosocial/emotional fatigue and disillusionment from a job (resulting in feeling cynical, overworked, and/or stressed).

C

Capacity building: Efforts to improve the infrastructure, reach, and scalability of programs to address the social and emotional needs of young children and their families, and to improve and increase the ability of early childhood educators, program staff, and community partners to effectively address the social and emotional needs of young children.[2]

Caregivers: Any adults who tend to children (in this case, infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children), including parents, family, non-family or foster family members, and early childhood education program staff.

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Challenging behaviors: Behaviors that create difficulties for a particular child and/or for other children and adults with whom that child interacts, and that inhibit or interfere with opportunities for learning. Such behaviors may involve tendencies toward "internalizing" (i.e., demonstrating signs of significant withdrawal) or "externalizing" (i.e., acting out and/or being physically aggressive) and almost always suggest a need for further assessment and social and emotional support or intervention.[1]

Child care: supervising, educating, and/or watching over, or supervising another's child, in either a private, home-based, center-based, or public setting.

Child/family-focused consultation: Consultation centered on addressing concerns related to a particular child and/or family.[3]

Clinical supervision: A type of oversight or direction in which a supervisor provides the supervisees with information and/or guidance focusing on the client within the context of mental health theories, diagnostic guidance, internal psychological processes, relational dynamics, etc.

Collaborative relationship: A relationship in which two or more people or agencies work together in order to achieve a goal or mission.[4]

Compassion Fatigue (Caring Fatigue): The experience of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion connected with long exposure to emotionally demanding situations, such as caring for those who have experienced trauma.

Consultees: The families, program administration, and program staff who engage and collaborate with a consultant. Depending on context, this term can also refer to a variety of other leaders, professionals, and para-professionals, such as medical personnel, child welfare and case workers, family advocates, and shelter staff.

Continuity of care: The provision of relational stability in which a child maintains the same caregiver for as long as possible in order to foster emotional well-being and developmental mastery by reducing the need for adjustment to multiple and changing caregivers in his or her early years.[5]

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI): A management process that encourages all team members and staff involved in work with a particular population or program to continually ask self-improvement questions of their programs, clients, and themselves (for example, "How are we doing?" and "Can we do it better?").[6]

Cultural awareness: The state of being cognizant, observant, and conscious of similarities and differences among cultural groups.[1]

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Cultural competence: A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and practices that represent acceptance of respect for differences, continuing self-assessment, careful attention to the dynamics of difference, continual expansion of knowledge and resources, and adaptation of services to better meet the needs of diverse populations.[1]

Cultural context: The environment or situation that is relevant to the beliefs, values, and practices of a particular culture or cultures, including the context in which an individual, family, program, or community lives or functions.[1]

Cultural sensitivity: The ability to understand the needs and emotions of one's own culture and the cultures of others.[7]

Culturally responsive: The way in which either individuals or service design and implementation demonstrate a respect for cultural differences and accommodate the cultural identity of those with whom they are engaged or for whom services are being provided.[1]

Culture: An integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communication, languages, beliefs, values, practices, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting, role definitions, relationships, and expected behaviors of a particular racial, ethnic, religious, or social group. Included in the phenomenon and definition of culture is a group's ability to transmit this pattern to succeeding generations.[1]

D

Data (singular and plural): Factual information (e.g., measurements or statistics) used as a basis for reasoning, discussion, or calculation.[8]

Discrimination: The behavioral manifestation of prejudice or racism involving the limitation of opportunities and options based on particular criteria (race, sex, age, class, etc.).[9]

Diversity: The way in which people, places, services, or a plethora of other entities may differ. When referring to people, this term applies not only to race, ethnicity, and gender—factors that most often come to mind when it is used—but also to age, national origin, religion, disability status, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. This term may also be used to reference different ideas, perspectives, and values.[10]

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E

Early care and education (ECE): A widely used designation that refers to (1) the range of programs that care for and provide education to infants, toddlers, young children, and their families, and (2) the field relating to the care and education of infants, toddlers, and young children. In regard to the former, the ECE designation encompasses but is not limited to the following: settings providing infant, toddler, and/or child care, military child care, faith-based programs, preschool programs, Early Head Start/Head Start (EHS/HS) programs, and family child care settings.

Early care and education staff (ECE staff): Individuals working in all aspects of ECE programs (see above), including but not limited to those providing direct care for and education of children from birth to age 5, those offering supervision and mentoring to staff directly involved in caregiving and teaching, those providing educational oversight and guidance within programs, and program administrators. This term can also encompass staff who, as part of the overall assistance offered by an ECE program, provide supportive services to infants, toddlers, young children, and their families.

Early childhood mental health: The social, emotional, and behavioral well-being of young children and their families, including the developing capacity of children to experience, regulate, and express emotions, to form close and secure relationships, to explore their environments, and to engage in age- and stage-appropriate learning, all in the context of family, community, and cultural expectations for young children.[11]

Early Intervention (EI): A system of services that helps babies, toddlers, and young preschoolers (i.e., children from birth to age 3) with developmental delays or disabilities. EI services focus on helping eligible families support their children in learning a range of important skills that typically develop during the earliest years of life.

early intervention (lowercase): The process of identifying children and families who may be at risk of running into difficulties and, in response, providing timely and effective support early on, prior to the difficulties lasting years or interfering with their development. The process of early intervention typically begins with observation and referral followed by assessment and substantive evaluation, with the potential that a formal diagnosis will be established and, with or without such a diagnosis, services will be provided.[12]

Emotional development: The emergence of a child's experience, expression, understanding, and regulation of his or her feelings.

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Empowerment: A condition or mode of being in which individuals, including parents and families, believe they have the power and authority to share comments, concerns, and beliefs, and to use two-way communication to provide important information and perspectives in regard to their or their children's situations. In regard to IECMHC and/or ECE, the experience of empowerment can allow families to gradually become more comfortable in understanding their child's needs, resulting in stronger relationships between themselves, the programs their children attend, and their communities.[13]

Equity: The quality of being fair, unbiased, and just. In other words, equity involves ensuring that everyone has access to the resources, opportunities, power and responsibility they need to reach their full, healthy potential as well as making changes so that unfair differences may be understood and addressed. Equity-based solutions often involves a strategy of different or tailored treatment to ensure fairness and justice.[14]

Ethnicity: The state of belonging to or being affiliated with a group of people classified according to common racial, Tribal, religious, or linguistic factors and/or to culture of origin or cultural background.

Evaluation: A process that helps parents and educational programs determine whether a child has a specific disability and/or a set of unmet needs that would benefit from additional support. Note that under IDEA (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) a "child with a disability" is one who qualifies for special education and related services, and children with identified disabilities cannot receive special education services without an evaluation. In such cases, an evaluation is completed in regard to all areas of suspected disability, during which information is gathered from a variety of sources about a particular child's functioning and development, and the child's strengths and needs in all areas of development are identified.[15]

Evidence-based practice: The act of (1) seeking and appraising scientific knowledge about the impact of particular service practices, and (2) applying that information to create and sustain best practices in the realms of health care, mental health-related interventions, education, etc.[16]

F

Families: A group of people who are related to one another and/or various social units in society. This term can be used to refer to a range of basic units in society—those that include two parents rearing their children, those that are headed by single parents, those that consist of extended family or are anchored by children's guardians, etc. The term can also reference ancestors—people who lived in the past.[8]

Family cultural context: The values, beliefs, practices, and customs that influence family life. Such contexts can include the influence of community as well as the impact of living in poverty, immigration or refugee status, etc.

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Federal partners: Government agencies serving as advisors to, collaborators with, and/or funding agents for the implementation of grants and contracts.

Fidelity: The degree to which a program model and/or set of interventions adhere to a previously developed, clearly outlined, and often evidence-based protocol.[17]

Funders: Individuals or organizations that provide income sources to programs, for example, foundation grants, government grants, and contracts.[18] The funders for the Center of Excellence for IECMHC are SAMHSA, ACF, and HRSA.

G

Grants: Offerings (by both governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations) of financial resources for specific purposes, often applied for and used by nonprofit charitable organizations to gain additional funding that does not require repayment. Grants are usually conditioned on certain qualifications as to use, including the maintenance of specified standards and/or proportional contributions by grantees.[19]

H

Head Start/Early Head Start: Comprehensive early childhood development programs serving low-income children from birth to age 5 and their families. Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) are federally funded programs that are operated by local entities. Children who attend HS/EHS programs participate in school-readiness curricula that focus on literacy, language, science, mathematics, and/or social-emotional development. They also receive medical and dental services, have healthy meals and snacks, and enjoy playing safely indoors and outdoors. In addition to educational services, family engagement is at the core of HS/EHS success.[20]

Historical trauma: The collective and historical accumulation of psychological and emotional wounding resulting from group trauma experiences across generations.

Home Visiting: A service offered in the home on a voluntary basis to pregnant women and/or at-risk families with children from birth to age 5. The goal of home visiting is to support families in honing the skills they need to promote healthy practices for themselves and the healthy development of their children.

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I

Implicit bias: The attitudes or stereotypes that affect people's understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Implicit bias, also referred to as implicit social cognition, involves associations that develop from a very early age and over the course of a lifetime as a result of exposure to direct and indirect messages. In addition to early life experiences, exposure to the media and/or news programming is often cited as a factor that can spur the development of implicit associations.[9]

Indicator (see also Measure): A measure, benchmark, or statistic used to test progress. The overriding purpose of an indicator is to characterize the nature of a system through its components—how they are related and how they change over time. This information can then be used to judge progress toward a goal or standard, to measure a change in relationship to a past benchmark, or to offer a comparison with data from another institution or country.[21]

Individualized service plans: Plans that mental health consultants develop in partnership with others and that outline strategies and recommendations for children, families, and/or ECE providers and programs. Some local ECMHC programs refer to these plans as "action plans."[1]

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC): IECMHC is a multi-level preventive intervention that teams mental health professionals with people who work with young children and their families to improve children's social-emotional and behavioral health and development. IECMHC builds the capacity of providers and families to understand the powerful influence of their relationships and interactions on young children's development. [2]

J

K

L

Logic model: A visual representation of the assumptions and action-related theories that underlie the structure of an education program. Logic models show the connections linking a program's resources, activities, outputs, and outcomes. They can help practitioners and evaluators better understand a program's mechanics and structure and chart a course toward improved policy and practice.[22]

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Longitudinal study: An observational research method in which data are gathered in relationship to the same subjects repeatedly over a period of time. Longitudinal research projects can extend over years or even decades. In a longitudinal cohort study, the same individuals are observed over the study period. Cohort studies are common in medicine, psychology, and sociology, where they allow researchers to study changes over time. [23]

M

Measure (see also Indicator): An indicator, benchmark, or statistic used to test progress. The overriding purpose of a measure is to characterize the nature of a system through its components—how they are related and how they change over time. This information can then be used to judge progress toward a goal or standard, to measure change in relationship to a past benchmark, or to offer a comparison with data from another institution or country. [23]

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU or MoU): A formal agreement between two or more parties. Companies and organizations can use MOUs to establish official partnerships. They are not legally binding but carry a degree of seriousness and mutual respect. Often, an MOU reflects the first step toward a legal contract. [24]

Mental health: A state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. [25]

Mental health promotion: Efforts that target and enhance the capacity of individuals and communities to take control over their lives and to improve their mental health. [24]

Mental health treatment: Services for people diagnosed with a mental illness or behavioral health disorder. [26] Treatment services typically have goals such as relieving symptoms; improving social, behavioral, or vocational functioning; or facilitating personal growth.

Mentoring: A personal and developmentally focused relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps and guides a person with similar interests. Most notably, mentoring involves communication, is relationship-based, and provides both knowledge and psychosocial support over a sustained period of time.

Multicultural education: A structured process designed to foster understanding, acceptance, and constructive relations among people of many different cultures. This type of diversity-sensitive education encourages people to see different cultures as sources for learning and to respect diversity in local, national, and international environments. [27]

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N

O

Observation: Overall, the act of careful, nonjudgmental watching and listening in order to gain information and insight about someone or something. In regard to IECMHC and ECE, this term refers particularly to the phenomenon of paying close attention to children's feelings and behaviors, to the back-and-forth of relational exchanges of all sorts, and to the overall functioning of ECE classrooms, ECE programs, home visiting programs, family systems, and the communities in which children and their families live. It is worth highlighting that as they engage in the process of observation, IECMH consultants strive to gather detailed and wide-ranging information in an accurate and objective way.[8]

Outcome evaluation: The process of reviewing and measuring the specific changes in the targeted recipients' behaviors, knowledge, skills, status, and level of functioning in response to particular activities or interventions.[28]

Outcomes: The specific changes in program participants' behaviors, knowledge, skills, status, and level of functioning in response to targeted interventions.[29]

P

Parallel process: A central concept in mental health consultation positing that all relationships influence one another and at all levels. Parallel process takes place, for example, when a positive experience in the relationship between a consultant and an ECE provider positively influences the relationship between the ECE provider and the children in his or her care and/ or the relationship between a parent and his or her child.

Partnership agreements: Formalized, written documents of concurrence between an IECMHC program and the ECE provider or program that its consultant(s) will serve, in which roles and responsibilities are clearly laid out.[1]

Pilot sites: States and Tribal Nations that will receive intensive training and technical assistance provided by the Center of Excellence (CoE) for IECMHC, with the goal of supporting these sites in successfully implementing, funding, evaluating, and sustaining IECMHC programs or services in their regions.

Preschool: Early childhood education offered before kindergarten (beginning at approximately age 3), with the goal of preparing young children for school readiness and success.

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Prevention: Action delivered prior to the onset of a disorder, with the intention of preventing or reducing the risk of individuals (in this case, young children) developing behavioral health problems. [30]

Process evaluation: A method used to analyze how program activities are delivered, enabling practitioners to assess the quality of service implementation. Process evaluations provide the information needed for programs and practitioners to strengthen their effectiveness by making adjustments to strategies for implementation and intervention. [29]

Programmatic IECMH consultation: Early childhood mental health consultation services that support directors and other program leaders by allowing a consultant to provide input on improving child care practices and/or polices to benefit all the children and adults in their settings. [3]

Protective factors: Individual qualities, capacities, coping strategies, and/or other environmental features (family, school, community, and other affiliations) that make a positive contribution to an individual's resilience.

Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children: A conceptual framework of evidence-based practices developed by two national, federally funded research and training centers, the Center for the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) and the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI). Based on evaluation data over eight years, the Pyramid Model has been shown to be a sound framework for ECE systems to use in support of social-emotional well-being and school readiness. [31]

Q

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Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS): A method to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in ECE and after-school settings. [32, 33]

R

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Racial equity: A system in which one's racial identity is not a predictor of their educational, health, economic, or other outcomes. [34] [35]When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities not just their effects. This includes eliminating policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce unequal outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.

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Referral: The process of offering or directing a family to an appropriate specialist or service, for example, the name of and contract information for a therapist or a social services agency. A referral can also be from an ECE administrator and/or supervisor to the IECMH consultant. Effective referrals include providing a personal introduction when possible.

Reflective practice: A means of developing a greater level of self-awareness about and insight into the nature and impact of one's actions and interactions, in which such deepened understanding provides an opportunity for personal and professional growth and development. In the field of ECE, reflective practice helps staff members understand their own reactions to the children and families with whom they engage, and assists them in using this self-awareness as a springboard for developing strategies to enrich their work.

Reflective supervision: A type of workplace management, oversight, or direction that supports the supervisee's developing skills in regard to reflective capacity. Reflective capacity helps the supervisee explore thoughts, feelings, actions, and reactions that are evoked in the work of IECMHC.

Relationship-based: A descriptor that refers to the theoretical/developmental perspective that relationships and the interaction between caregiving adults and children have a primary role in the social-emotional development and mental health of young children. This descriptor also may be used to highlight the ways in which the work between a mental health consultant and consultee relies on and is ideally imbued with a warm, collaborative, and trust-filled connection.

Resilience: An individual's developed capacity to cope with stress and adversity, enabling him or her to "bounce back" from difficult experiences and return to effective functioning.

Risk factors: Factors or circumstances that may contribute individually or collectively to and/or be associated with potentially negative effects on an individual's healthy growth, development, adaptation, or resilience (e.g., premature birth, health or housing problems, poverty, and "toxic stress").

S

Scaffolding: A type of interactional support in which adults mediate a child's attempts to take on new learning by building on information the child already knows or skills the child has mastered. Scaffolding involves the helpful interactions between an adult and child that enable the child to do something at the next development level that he or she could not accomplish independently. It is often part of a set of interventions that support emergent learning in areas of challenge, whether those are pre-academic, academic, or social-emotional in nature. Interactional support is lessoned once the child has mastered the skill on his or her own.

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Social-emotional development: Social-emotional development is synonymous with early childhood mental health. It encompasses a child's growing ability to regulate emotions, attention, and impulses and to slowly build a repertoire of social skills that allow the child to engage successfully with peers for play and problem-solving. This realm of development is particularly important to the work of IECMHC because it is now understood that the ongoing and successful development of social-emotional skills in the early years is linked to the development of higher-order cognitive functioning and school readiness. [36]

State administrators: Individuals who are elected, assigned, or hired to manage and oversee the use of state property and funds. [8]

Supervision: The act of providing guidance, oversight, or shared responsibility in the work or tasks of another in a work, professional, or personal context. In IECMHC, a mental health consultant may experience the following forms of supervision:

> *Administrative supervision:* Includes guidance on organizational structure, policies, procedures, and employee performance.

> *Clinical supervision:* Focuses on the client within the context of mental health theories, diagnostic guidance, internal psychological processes, relational dynamics, etc.

> *Reflective supervision:* Supports the supervisee's developing skills in regard to reflective capacity. Reflective capacity helps the supervisee explore thoughts, feelings, actions, and reactions that are evoked in the work of IECMHC.

T

Theory of Change: A rationale of how and why an initiative works, which can be empirically tested by measuring indicators for every expected step on a hypothesized causal pathway to impact. Ideally, theories of change are developed in collaboration with stakeholders. They are modified throughout the process of an intervention's development and evaluation, and are illuminated through an ongoing process of reflection that explores the nature of change—how it starts, unfolds, and can be sustained. [37]

Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA): Multi-faceted efforts, including the provision of training, advice, systemic support, etc., which (in the case of T/TA in support of EEC and IECMHC initiatives) assist program staff in delivering high-quality services to support ECE and/or home visiting programs. [38]

Trauma: Severe mental or emotional stress or physical or psychological injury. Child traumatic stress occurs when children and adolescents are exposed to traumatic events or situations, and when this exposure overwhelms their ability to cope with what they have experienced. [39]

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Trauma-Informed Approach: An intentional way of considering the behaviors and feelings of individuals and families, and/or the functioning of classrooms, in which an understanding of the impact of trauma is infused into all types of responses and all aspects of intervention. According to SAMHSA, a "program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed:

1. "*Realizes* the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery;
2. "*Recognizes* the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system;
3. "*Responds* by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and
4. "Seeks to actively resist *re-traumatization*." [40]

Note that a trauma-informed approach can be implemented in any type of service setting or organization and is distinct from trauma-specific interventions or treatments that are designed to address the consequences of trauma and to facilitate healing. [39]

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Projects/Organizations/Agencies

Administration for Children and Families (ACF): A division of the Department of Health and Human Services that promotes the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals, and communities.[41]

Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (CoE-IECMHC): A national center that helps states, Tribal Nations, and communities ensure the success of the next generation through increasing access to IECMHC, an approach that improves child behavior and development through partnering mental health professionals with early childhood providers and families.

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS): An agency whose mission is to enhance and protect the health and well-being of all Americans. HHS fulfills that mission by providing for effective health and human services and fostering advances in medicine, public health, and social services.[42]

Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC): A learning-oriented organization that designs, implements, and evaluates programs to improve education, health, and economic opportunity worldwide. Collaborating with both public and private partners, EDC strives for a world where all people are empowered to live healthy, productive lives.[43]

Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development (GUCCHD): An interdisciplinary department within Georgetown University established more than four decades ago to improve the quality of life for all children and their families.

Head Start National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness (NCECHW): A T/TA center that advances best practices for linking health and ECE systems, health care professionals, and families. NCECHW's goal is to maximize resources for developing comprehensive and coordinated health and wellness services within ECE settings. The Center's work includes, but is not limited to, providing support on such topics as medical and dental home access; health promotion and disease prevention; emergency preparedness and environmental safety; trauma and toxic stress; developmental, behavioral, vision, and hearing screening; and nutrition.[44]

Health Services and Resources Administration (HRSA): An agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which is the primary federal agency for improving health and achieving health equity through access to quality services, a skilled health workforce, and innovative programs. HRSA's programs provide health care to people who are geographically isolated and/or economically or medically vulnerable.[45]

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Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV): A home visiting program that supports pregnant women and families and helps at-risk parents of young children (from birth to the age of kindergarten entry) tap the resources and hone the skills they need to raise children who are physically, socially, and emotionally healthy and ready to learn.[46]

Project LAUNCH (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health): A program that promotes the wellness of young children from birth to age 8 by addressing the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of their development. The long-term goal of Project LAUNCH is to ensure that all children enter school ready to learn and able to succeed.[47]

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): The agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.[48]

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