

Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Competencies



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

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Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation— Competencies

Over the last decade, infant and early childhood mental health consultation (IECMHC) has emerged as an effective and evidence-based strategy to promote young children’s positive social and emotional development and behavioral health. IECMHC has also been shown to play an important role in helping to prevent, identify, and reduce the impact of mental health problems among young children and their families.

Increasingly, states, tribes, communities, and programs have adopted IECMHC in early care and education settings as well as in other settings typically frequented by young children and their families (pediatric offices, hospitals, homeless shelters, etc.). Several states, tribes, and regions have a long history of successfully implementing IECMHC and have developed their own guidelines related to job-related qualifications, education, and training. As the field expands, there is a growing need and desire for a national consensus on IECMHC competencies.

A first version of IECMHC national competencies was developed by Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development faculty and colleagues in 2015 as part of a training and technical assistance grant from the Office of Head Start, provided under the auspices of the National Center on Health. The IECMHC competencies presented here represent an updated version of national competencies for IECMH consultants. They include a review from a wider number of professionals in the field and a fine editing of the language offered in the 2015 version.

These competencies represent an important step toward building a national consensus on the array of foundational skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to be a highly qualified IECMH consultant. They focus primarily on competencies related to IECMHC in early childhood education and home visiting (ECE/HV) programs. However, they can be extended to apply to other settings where IECMHC is conducted (e.g., pediatric settings, homeless shelters, child welfare programs).

The competencies are not meant to replace those that have been developed by local or state IECMHC programs. They can be used in two ways: to supplement, extend, or guide existing efforts to build a qualified IECMHC workforce, or to be of use in new efforts to create and support such a workforce in places where one does not yet exist. In addition, they may help to further distinguish guidelines connected to IECMHC from those that have been developed for interdisciplinary fields, such as infant mental health,¹ and to clarify the difference between IECMHC and other types of services offered in support of young children and families.² For more information

¹ Korfmacher, J. (2014). Infant, Toddler, and Early Childhood Mental Health Competencies: A Comparison of Systems. *Zero to Three* [Website]. Retrieved from <http://www.zerotothree.org/public-policy/pdf/infant-mental-health-report.pdf>

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (n.d.). *A Guide to Effective*



about differentiating between IECMHC and other types of services, please see the Crosswalk of Early Childhood Mental Health Services.

These IECMHC competencies may also help to do the following:

- ◆ Influence the hiring, supervision, and evaluation of IECMH consultants
 - Guide professional development, training, and coursework
 - Promote enhanced quality and increased professional credibility of IECMHC

These newly developed IECMHC competencies should be viewed as a specialization of infant mental health competencies and other consultation competencies. They represent the most up-to-date compendium of attributes, knowledge, and skills needed to become a competent IECMH consultant. In addition, these competencies have been reviewed using an Equity Rubric to help ensure respect and inclusion for diverse populations. Ultimately, through refinements over time, they may be used to create increased clarity in the field, resulting in specialized training and enhanced or new financing mechanisms to support IECMHC in a variety of settings serving young children and their families. The competencies may also be the first step toward developing a national credentialing system and academic programs specifically designed to train IECMH consultants.

Competencies at a Glance

Categories	Summary of Skills
Role of the IECMH Consultant	Understands and can convey how IECMHC is a mental health specialization that is distinct from other activities in which mental health professionals may engage. Demonstrates an ability to strengthen families' and ECE/HV staff's capacity to support the social, emotional, and relational health of children and families in a range of settings. Partners with families and ECE/HV staff in working to prevent mental health problems from developing or increasing in intensity and/or in responding effectively to existing mental health concerns.
Foundational Knowledge	Draws from a broad and diverse knowledge base to understand children, families, and ECE/HV staff and how they relate to one another. Turns to a variety of disciplines and theories to inform the direction of consultation.

Consultation with Settings Serving Infant, Toddlers, and their Families: Core Knowledge, Competencies, and Dispositions.

Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/effective-consultation>



Categories	Summary of Skills
Equity and Cultural Sensitivity	Describes and demonstrates how culture (beliefs, values, attitudes, biases, and experiences), equity, and environment shape relationships and behaviors, and how they influence settings and communities in important and meaningful ways.
Reflective Practice	Thinks about and questions personal influences and actions before, during, and/or after consultative interactions. Considers the influences on and perspectives of others (e.g., child, family, staff) in the context of consultation (i.e., “What must this experience have been like for the child, staff member, or parent?”). Promotes reflective practice with consultees, using this experience-based learning to support consultees’ professional growth and development.
Child- and Family-Focused Consultation	Collaborates with families and/or ECE/HV staff to understand and respond effectively to a child’s or parent’s mental health needs, behavioral difficulties, and/or developmental challenges. Partners respectfully with families and ECE/HV staff to understand the context and nature of a particular family’s life in order to enhance the child’s and family’s well-being
Classroom- and Home-Focused Consultation	Collaborates with families and ECE/HV staff to promote warm and trusting relationships, steady routines, and development-enhancing interactions that positively impact classroom and home climates. Explores how elements of classroom and/or family life can play a powerful role in supporting all children’s social and emotional development.
Programmatic Consultation	Maintains a systemic approach and aims for program-wide impact through a focus on multiple issues that affect the overall quality of an ECE/HV setting. Works to enhance programmatic functioning by assisting ECE/HV program administrators and/or staff in considering the setting’s overall social and emotional climate and in solving issues that affect more than one child, staff member, and/or family.
Systems –Wide Orientation	Works within and across systems, integrating mental health concepts and supports into the environments where young children spend time. Maintains awareness of the systems within which IECMHC occurs, and considers these contexts when seeking to understand factors that promote or hinder the process of change.



1. Role of the IECMH Consultant

Understands and can convey how IECMHC is a mental health specialization that is distinct from other activities in which mental health professionals may engage. Demonstrates an ability to strengthen families' and ECE/HV staff's capacity to support the social, emotional, and relational health of children and families in a range of settings. Partners with families and ECE/HV staff in working to prevent mental health problems from developing or increasing in intensity and/or in responding effectively to existing mental health concerns.

Category	Core Skills
<p>1A. Distinguishes IECMHC from Other Related Endeavors</p>	<p>1A.1. Demonstrates an understanding of IECMHC as an indirect service that helps to build the reflective capacities and relational health of families, ECE/HV staff, and others who care for or provide services to young children. Grasps and can convey the difference between IECMHC and modes of intervention that involve direct mental health treatment for children and/or families.</p> <p>1A.2. Understands and can convey the distinction between the role of the IECMH consultant and that of other professionals who support the development of ECE/HV staff and family capacities (e.g., professional development coaches, health service managers, health care consultants, home visitors, early interventionists, therapists, disability coordinators).</p> <p>1A.3. Embraces the idea that IECMHC focuses on promoting mental health and social and emotional development using a wide-ranging knowledge base that draws from numerous fields of study. (See Section 2. Foundational Knowledge” for further explication.)</p> <p>For more information about promotion strategies and tools, see the Communications section of the toolbox.</p>
<p>1B. Exhibits an Ability to Work in Natural Settings</p>	<p>1B.1. Demonstrates an ability to work in natural settings, including homes and early care and education environments.</p> <p>1B.2. Considers the influence of setting and organizational functioning on providers, families, children, and service provision.</p> <p>1B.3. Suggests and/or supports interventions that reflect the particular setting in which IECMHC is delivered, which may include programmatic and/or child- and family-specific activities.</p> <p>1B.4. Offers consultation that reflects and respects the philosophy and model of the program in which IECMHC takes place and the community and cultural context in which that program resides and/or functions.</p>



Category	Core Skills
1C. Understands and Engages in the Consultative Process	<p>1C.1. Demonstrates an organized approach to the stages of the consultative process (e.g., entering the new environment, establishing mutual expectations for the work, gathering information from and the perspectives of all involved, facilitating the establishment of goals, supporting and assessing progress, righting the course of consultation when necessary, transitioning, ending).</p> <p>1C.2. Demonstrates an ability to support the emotional well-being and relational health of infants and young children, and the adults who care for them, and promotes a shared and accurate understanding of child, family, and provider needs.</p> <p>1C.3. Maintains accurate and timely records, provides professional documentation, and engages in substantive data collection in accordance with a program’s or setting’s requirements.</p> <p>1C.4. Recognizes when additional mental health and/or other services are warranted, and is able to make appropriate and effective referrals across multiple systems.</p>
1D. Embraces the Consultative Stance and Reflective Practice	<p>1D.1. Can articulate the elements of the “consultative stance,”³ and demonstrates the demeanor and skills embodied by this stance.</p> <p>1D.2. Demonstrates the ability to engage in a flexible and varied “use of self” based on the unique needs of a setting, its context, and the relationships involved (i.e., in a range of situations, is able to serve as an observer, listener, facilitator, problem-solver, and/or educator).</p> <p>1D.3. Recognizes and maintains appropriate professional boundaries and role as defined by discipline (e.g., psychology, social work, counseling) and scope of practice.</p>
1E. Deepens Knowledge and Skills Through Active Participation in Supervision or Consultation	<p>1E.1. Actively participates in clinical consultation and/or reflective supervision that is characterized by a focus on interpersonal and systems issues and on child and family dynamics. Willingly engages in supervision that includes analysis of the dynamic interactions between participants (e.g., family members, teachers, administrators, service providers, consultants, institutions). Engages in explorations of the possible challenges to developmentally supportive activities.</p> <p>1E.2. Participates in regular administrative supervision that includes discussion of job-related responsibilities, work quality, documentation, data collection, etc.</p>

³ Johnston, K., & Brinamen, C. (2006). *Mental Health Consultation in Child Care: Transforming Relationships with Directors, Staff, and Families*. Washington, DC: Zero to Three Press.



Category	Core Skills
1F. Adheres to Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct	<p>1F.1. Adheres to the ethics and standards of professional conduct (e.g., the National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics), and, if licensed, adheres to the requirements for maintenance of licensure.</p> <p>1F.2. Discusses confidentiality and the limits of confidentiality with ECE/HV staff and families at the start of services, and, as circumstances indicate, revisits these topics during the course of consultative work.</p> <p>1F.3. Carries out the mandate to report suspected child abuse and neglect, and supports others in their responsibilities as mandated reporters.</p> <p>1F.4. Seeks continuing education experiences to enhance knowledge and skills, and stays apprised of new research, scholarship, and promising practices in IECMHC.</p>
1G. Collaborates Respectfully with Other Agencies	<p>1G.1. Establishes and maintains partnerships with relevant child- and family-serving agencies within the community (e.g., those involving Early Head Start, Head Start, child care, family support, early intervention, mental health treatment, child welfare) in order to collaborate on behalf of children and families.</p>

2. Foundational Knowledge

Draws from a broad and diverse knowledge base to understand children, families, and ECE/HV staff and how they relate to one another. Turns to a variety of disciplines and theories to inform the direction of consultation.

Category	Core Skills
2A. Understands the Multidisciplinary Body of Knowledge that Informs Consultation	<p>2A.1. Appreciates and embraces multidisciplinary approaches to working with young children, families, non-familial caregivers, and ECE/HV staff, drawing on areas of study that include professional consultation, psychology, social work, health, behavior, early education, IECMH, family and/or systemic functioning, and organizational psychology.</p> <p>2A.2. Understands that a child's physical environment, experience of attachment, social relationships, culture, life circumstances (e.g., poverty and domestic violence), temperament, and developmental capacities all impact behavior and social and emotional well-being. Uses this knowledge to support change in one or more of these realms to improve child outcomes.</p> <p>2A.3. Understands mental health concepts and psychological processes related to adults and adult functioning (e.g., parallel process [how the relationship between an IECMH consultant and the staff or caregivers impacts the relationships between the staff or caregivers and the children and families], the ways in which experiences from a caregiver's past and present can distort how a child's behavior is interpreted, experiences of or responses to trauma).</p>



Category	Core Skills
	<p>2A.4. Understands the impact of trauma (including historical trauma and family violence) on child and family development, and can educate others about trauma-informed approaches as needed.</p> <p>2A.5. Understands how the attitudes and behaviors of primary caregivers influence young children, and works to ensure that parents and caregivers understand the potential of their influence.</p> <p>2A.6. Understands the root causes of the disparities that exist in expulsion rates and disciplinary practices. Understands how discrimination negatively impacts the social and emotional well-being of young children and their families.</p> <p>2A.7. Has a broad knowledge base of social and emotional curricula, screening tools, frameworks, and resources.</p> <p>2A.8. Understands adult learning theory (i.e., concepts related to how adults learn best) as it relates to families and staff.</p> <p>2A.9. Understands basic principles of organizational or systems psychology as they relate to the programs in which consultation takes place.</p> <p>2A.10. Recognizes and respects non-dominant ways of knowing, bodies of knowledge, sources of strength, and routes to healing within diverse families and communities.⁴</p>
<p>2B. Understands the Nature of and Influences on Development</p>	<p>2B.1. Understands the importance of the development of self-regulation, social relationships, communication, representational thinking, and executive function abilities for school readiness.</p> <p>2B.2. Understands the interplay of genes and experiences on development—that both the child’s constitutional nature (including temperament) and aspects of the environment (e.g., the functioning of parents and other caregivers, the presence of risk and protective factors) play a role in determining the course of development.</p> <p>2B.3. Understands that development is a transactional phenomenon, within which young children experience attachment relationships with primary caregivers that play a critical foundational role in development. Understands the potential negative impact of parental history, multiple separations, relational disruptions, parental depression, and loss.</p> <p>2B.4. Understands the potentially positive and protective role of siblings, peers, and group interactions on early development and emotional well-being.</p>

⁴ Irving Harris Foundation. (2012). *Diversity-Informed Infant Mental Health Tenets*. Retrieved from <https://imhdivtenets.org/tenets/>



Category	Core Skills
	<p>2B.5. Understands typical and atypical growth and development of young children. Has an in-depth knowledge of the general sequence of developmental milestones in all domains, including those connected to cognitive and social and emotional development, communication, sensory-motor processing, self-regulation, physical development, and play.</p> <p>2B.6. Recognizes risk factors associated with trauma in regard to environmental, situational, and interpersonal contexts, and understands the role of protective factors in ameliorating impacts on the developing child and caregiver relationships.</p> <p>2B.7. Understands the many ways in which current and historical inequities (racism, homophobia, sexism, able-ism, and other forms of institutional oppression) can negatively impact adult-child relationships and children’s development.</p>
<p>2C. Understands the Importance and Power of Culture</p>	<p>2C.1. Understands and supports cultural variations in development, child-rearing practices, and caregiver expectations.</p> <p>2C.2. Recognizes the biological, psychological, social, and spiritual context of culture and its influence on values, beliefs, child-rearing practices, child development, and social and emotional health and well-being.</p>
<p>2D. Understands the Importance of Self-Awareness and the Nature of Reflective Practice</p>	<p>2D.1. Understands the importance of examining personal values, beliefs, biases, and experiences to ensure that misinterpretation or judgment is not imposed on others’ intentions and actions.</p> <p>2D.2. Understands the impact of unconscious bias in interpersonal interactions.</p> <p>2D.3. Understands the importance of assisting others in reflecting on and examining their own values, beliefs, assumptions, and experiences; supporting them in regulating their emotions; and helping them accurately perceive the meaning of others’ behavior (specifically, the behavior of children, families, and co-workers).</p> <p>2D.4. Recognizes the value of remaining curious and attentive to visceral and emotional responses to consultees and families, and the importance of understanding these reactions as personal information to be processed and explored.</p> <p>2D.5. Embraces the importance of seeking to understand the perspectives and experiences of others in the context of consultation.</p> <p>2D.6. Understands the importance of clinical supervision, consultation, and reflective supervision, and values them as critical components that support the provision of effective consultation.</p>



Category	Core Skills
<p>2E. Understands the Functioning of and Relationships Between Families, Caregivers, IECMH Consultants, and Systems</p>	<p>2E.1. Understands the value of support networks. Recognizes barriers and challenges to service acquisition for families, especially those who are isolated or face discriminatory practices due to race or immigration status.</p> <p>2E.2. Understands parallel process (i.e., that the relationship between an IECMH consultant and the staff or caregivers impacts the relationships between the staff or caregivers and the children and families).</p> <p>2E.3. Understands that the quality of relationships among adults (between staff members and/or between staff members and families) influences children’s experiences in their classrooms and homes.</p> <p>2E.4. Understands the importance of self-care and the value of offering information to families and staff on the connection between self-care and the ability to build successful relationships with others.</p> <p>2E.5. Understands a program’s methods for screening and assessment, and is aware of the ways in which those systems are used to identify young children who exhibit challenges in the social and emotional domain.</p> <p>2E.6. Understands that program-level challenges exist within the context of larger systems.</p> <p>2E.7. Understands the role of the consultant within the context of multiple systems, and considers how interventions in one system may impact others.</p>

3. Equity and Cultural Sensitivity

Describes and demonstrates how culture (beliefs, values, attitudes, biases, and experiences), equity, and environment shape relationships and behaviors, and how they influence settings and communities in important and meaningful ways. For more information, please see the Equity section of the toolbox.

Category	Core Skills
<p>3A. Demonstrates an Awareness of Diversity, Cultural Variation, and Normative Differences in Family Structure</p>	<p>3A.1. Understands how culture (beliefs, values, linguistic expression, styles of communication, behavioral norms, and attitudes) shapes relationships, family structures, behaviors, and development.</p> <p>3A.2. Can define and demonstrate cultural sensitivity (including an understanding of issues related to linguistic diversity), and is able to describe its relevance to IECMHC. Appreciates culture as a source of resilience.</p> <p>3A.3. Demonstrates an appreciation of the unique values and beliefs of each family and each family’s structure, and can work effectively with children and families from a range of cultural backgrounds.</p>



Category	Core Skills
	<p>3A.4. Demonstrates the skills to identify and address implicit bias in practice. Identifies and can effectively discuss program, local, state, or other system policies that disproportionately disadvantage one group of children or families (including expulsion and suspension policies and language access).</p> <p>3A.5 Can identify specific strategies to address inequities in practice and in systems. Can support others to recognize and address inequities.</p> <p>3A.6. Demonstrates the ability to explore and negotiate cultural differences, to value and adapt to the diverse cultural contexts of programs and communities served, and to work effectively with individuals, groups, organizations, and systems that vary in cultures, perspectives, and priorities.</p>
<p>3B. Demonstrates the Capacity for Self-Awareness</p>	<p>3B.1. Explores personal background, attributes, knowledge, and skills in a way that enhances the effectiveness of consultation in diverse communities.</p> <p>3B.2. Demonstrates the capacity for self-awareness in regard to cultural issues (i.e., the ability to recognize how culturally influenced experiences shape personal and professional behavior and attitudes, including those connected to how interactions with others unfold and are perceived).</p> <p>3B.3. Demonstrates the capacity to recognize and address personal biases (including potentially implicit bias).</p> <p>3B.4. Demonstrates the ability to recognize personal limitations in knowledge of particular cultures, and seeks to gain a greater understanding.</p>
<p>3C. Promotes Cultural Responsiveness in Practices, Policies, and Procedures</p>	<p>3C.1. Supports ECE/HV staff in speaking with families in their preferred language and in using culturally responsive professional interpreters when same-language communication is not an option.</p> <p>3C.2. Works with programs to promote cultural sensitivity so that language and culture are respected, families are provided with culturally and linguistically appropriate materials, and staff are offered training opportunities focused on increased cultural responsiveness.</p> <p>3C.3. Supports the capacity of others to work cross-culturally with the goal of positively influencing practice, policymaking, administrative functioning, and service delivery. Works to systematically involve families, key stakeholders, and communities in these efforts.</p> <p>3C.4. Demonstrates the capacity to help ECE/HV staff recognize and assess their own implicit biases. Assists others to explore how biases may inadvertently influence perceptions and behavior.</p>



4. Reflective Practice

Thinks about and questions personal influences and actions before, during, and/or after consultative interactions. Considers the influences on and the perspectives of others (e.g., child, family, staff) in the context of consultation (i.e., “What must this experience have been like for the child, staff member, or parent?”). Promotes reflective practice with consultees, using this experience-based learning to support consultees’ professional growth and development.

Category	Core Skills
4A. Uses Self-Reflection to Enhance Consultation	<p>4A.1. Understands, can describe, and values the importance and benefits of reflective practice.</p> <p>4A.2. Regularly reflects on personally held values, beliefs, biases, and assumptions as they influence interactions, relationships, and the directions that consultation may take.</p> <p>4A.3. Reflects on personal biases and can recognize when biases may negatively impact effective consultation. Works to explore personal implicit biases, and takes steps to make objective decisions.</p> <p>4A.4. Reflects on culture, values, and beliefs and on the personally experienced impact of racism, classism, sexism, able-ism, homophobia, xenophobia, and/or other systems of oppression in order to provide diversity-informed and culturally attuned services.⁵</p> <p>4A.5. Uses self-reflection to maintain awareness of thoughts, emotions, and visceral reactions that regularly inform and can enhance the quality of consultative work.</p> <p>4A.6. Reflects on and explores a wide variety of approaches to working with staff, families, and children, and understands that there is no one correct strategy (nor any “quick fixes”) in regard to possibilities for change and growth.</p>
4B. Assists Others in Reflecting	<p>4B.1. Encourages staff and families to become aware of behaviors that stir up strong feelings and reactions, and assists them in identifying the origins of those responses so that they can respond to families, caregivers, and/or children compassionately and effectively.</p> <p>4B.2. Supports staff and families in understanding how their values, beliefs, experiences, and feelings—along with factors connected to specific settings—have a role in influencing children’s behavior.</p>

⁵ Irving Harris Foundation. (2012). *Diversity-Informed Infant Mental Health Tenets*. Retrieved from <https://imhdivtenets.org/tenets/>



Category	Core Skills
	<p>4B.3. Seeks to engender curiosity through carefully timed, nonjudgmental inquiry. Uses listening, patience, and reflection to encourage others to explore possibilities for approaching challenges and supporting growth and well-being.</p> <p>4B.4. Collaborates with others to explore how they can regulate their emotions, engage in self-care, reduce stress, strengthen coping mechanisms and resilience, and aim for life balance even in the face of difficult circumstances.</p> <p>4B.5. Provides individual and group opportunities for staff to engage in reflection in regard to personal values, experiences, ethics, and biases when they are working in a supportive role with families.</p> <p>4B.6. Assists others in reflecting on the strengths and limitations of the setting in which they work or live (e.g., an agency, classroom, program, or home) and to explore how that setting impacts possibilities for and approaches to supporting children, families, and/or staff.</p>

5. Child- and Family-Focused Consultation

Collaborates with families and/or ECE/HV staff to understand and respond effectively to a child’s or parent’s mental health needs, behavioral difficulties, and/or developmental challenges. Partners respectfully with families and ECE/HV staff to understand the context and nature of a particular family’s life in order to enhance the child’s and family’s well-being.

Category	Core Skills
<p>5A. Values and Promotes the Power of Relationships and the Importance of Relationship-Building</p>	<p>5A.1. Demonstrates an ability to honor family strengths, perspectives, and expertise, and assists others in valuing and supporting family relationships as the first and primary relationships in a child’s life.</p> <p>5A.2. Supports ECE/HV staff in developing trusted and respectful relationships with families.</p> <p>5A.3. Gathers (or supports ECE/HV staff in helping to gather) family- and child-related information in a manner that is nonthreatening, respectful, collaborative, and supportive.</p> <p>5A.4. Facilitates understanding, mutual respect, and direct communication between families and ECE/HV staff and among members of the ECE community.</p> <p>5A.5. Engages warmly and flexibly with ECE/HV staff and families in order to consider the meaning of a particular behavior.</p>



Category	Core Skills
5B. Works Collaboratively to Understand a Child’s Behavior	<p>5B.1. Collaborates with families and ECE/HV staff to develop a working hypothesis about the meaning of a child’s behavior, including social and emotional, relational, cultural, and family factors; physical and/or medical issues; environmental factors and setting events (such as a history of exposure to trauma); and/or developmental vulnerabilities that may play a role in that behavior. Recognizes the need to revise that hypothesis, over time, as new information emerges and in the face of conflicting and/or additional information.</p> <p>5B.2. Demonstrates an ability to pay close attention to the relationships and interactions between ECE/HV staff, family members, and the child—and between that child and his or her peers—and to consider how those interactions may impact child and family well-being.</p> <p>5B.3. Considers and encourages others to consider information from families (including information about family history and culture), from ECE/HV staff and from observations and documentation (e.g., health records, anecdotal notes, assessments, reports).</p> <p>5B.4. Uses a variety of observation strategies, tools, and recording techniques to gain insight into a child’s behavior and the relational influences on his or her functioning.</p> <p>5B.5. Helps families and ECE/HV staff understand all the influences on their view of the child (e.g., cultural, historical, and interpersonal factors; exposure to trauma; programmatic and bureaucratic issues).</p>
5C. Supports and Facilitates Plan Development and Implementation	<p>5C.1. Integrates information and, considering both context and available resources, collaborates with ECE/HV staff and families to develop a plan that addresses child, family, and ECE/HV staff needs in a culturally sensitive manner.</p> <p>5C.2. Assists and supports families and ECE/HV staff so that collaboratively developed plans for children involve interventions that reflect best practice (i.e., are developmentally appropriate and, when possible, evidence-based).</p> <p>5C.3. Works in collaboration with other service providers to support families and ECE/HV staff (e.g., Part C, Early Intervention).</p>
5D. Supports and Facilitates Referrals, Service Provision, and Community Collaboration	<p>5D.1. Partners with ECE/HV staff and families in order to identify and facilitate appropriate referrals for specific children and families, whether in regard to medical, developmental, mental health, and/or other needs.</p> <p>5D.2. Works to see that referrals meet the diverse needs of families, with particular consideration given to issues concerning resources, culture, and language.</p>



Category	Core Skills
	5D.3. Establishes and maintains positive relationships with other professionals and agencies within the community, tribe, or state, and collaborates (or helps ECE/HV staff to collaborate) with all parties involved to facilitate referrals and coordinate services.

6. Classroom- and Home-Focused Consultation

Collaborates with parents and ECE/HV staff to promote warm and trusting relationships, steady routines, and development-enhancing interactions that positively impact classroom and home climates. Explores how elements of classroom and/or family life can play a powerful role in supporting all children’s social and emotional development.

Category	Core Skills
6A. Promotes Secure and Supportive Relationships Between Children and Adults	<p>6A.1. Helps families and ECE/HV staff deepen their understanding of how the quality of adult-child relationships impacts the way that children experience themselves in various settings, learn expectations, and understand how to interact and get along with others.</p> <p>6A.2. Helps families and ECE staff understand and use (or, in the case of HV staff, support families in using) the power of positive relationships and adult-child interactions to support growth and development.</p> <p>6A.3. Offers insight into the role of positive sibling, peer, and group interactions in promoting children’s growth and well-being. Supports families and ECE/HV staff in promoting, fostering, and/or engaging in such interactions. Suggests, as needed, a range of strategies that promote successful give-and-take with peers.</p> <p>6A.4. Supports the development of and addresses impediments to positive relationships between (1) families and ECE/HV staff, (2) ECE team members, (3) ECE teachers or providers and ECE administrators, and/or (4) HV staff and their peers and supervisors.</p>
6B. Supports Families and Staff in Understanding the Nature of Development and Possibilities for Developmental Support	<p>6B.1. Shares information about how young children learn and develop in a way that families and ECE/HV staff can understand, embrace, and use.</p> <p>6B.2. Fosters families’ and ECE staff’s abilities to promote and facilitate (or, in the case of HV staff, to help families facilitate) the development of children’s relational capacities and social and emotional mastery, including their capacities for connection, self-regulation, communication, problem-solving, and impulse control.</p>



Category	Core Skills
6C. Supports Families and Staff in Providing or Encouraging Consistent Routines and Developmentally Appropriate Interactions and Practices	<p>6C.1. Supports families and ECE staff (or, in the case of HV staff, helps staff to support families) in initiating, modifying, and/or supporting routines in order to promote safety and consistency.</p> <p>6C.2. Collaborates with families and ECE staff (or, in the case of HV staff, helps staff to collaborate with families) to promote practices and interactions that are responsive to the needs of individual children and groups of children.</p>
6D. Fosters a Deepened Understanding of Mental Health Issues and Related Interventions	<p>6D.1. Assists ECE/HV programs and staff in selecting, suggesting, and/or implementing observation strategies, tools, assessments, and recording techniques to gain insight into the functioning and social and emotional climate of homes or classrooms.</p> <p>6D.2. Helps families and ECE staff to integrate (or, in the case of HV staff, helps staff support families in integrating) ideas, activities, and resources that infuse mental health principles into the daily routines and interactions of a particular home or classroom.</p>

7. Programmatic Consultation

Maintains a systemic approach and aims for program-wide impact through a focus on multiple issues that affect the overall quality of an ECE setting. Works to enhance programmatic functioning by assisting ECE program administrators and/or staff in considering their setting's overall social and emotional climate and in solving issues that affect more than one child, staff member, and/or family.

Category	Core Skills
7A. Understands and Attends to Program Design and Infrastructure	<p>7A.1. Initiates consultation services with an agreement outlining roles, scope of work, frequency, duration, etc.</p> <p>7A.2. Establishes a relationship with the program leadership in a manner that supports their ability to champion social and emotional wellness in center functioning; to promote the relational health of children, families, and staff; and to foster children's healthy social and emotional development.</p> <p>7A.3. Learns about a program's organizational structure, including staff roles and responsibilities and lines of authority. Shares information about the role of the consultant, including its parameters and limitations. Uses established pathways to engage members of the organization as indicated.</p> <p>7A.4. Becomes familiar with and works within a program's mission and policies, especially those impacting staff development, family engagement, and positive behavioral supports.</p>

Category	Core Skills
	<p>7A.5. Pays particular attention to program policies that may disproportionately disadvantage certain groups of children, such as children of color or dual language learners.</p> <p>7A.6. Facilitates the discovery of gaps between policies and program practices that impact the provision of a healthy social and emotional climate and that are related to child outcomes.</p> <p>7A.7. Identifies factors (including policies, practices, leadership style, and professional development) that influence the social and emotional climate of a center or program.</p> <p>7A.8. Evaluates the efficacy of program-level intervention strategies, and revises them as needed.</p> <p>7A.9. Elicits and explores multiple perspectives in understanding concerns within a program, encourages the development of clear lines of communication between program staff, and represents the perspective of consultees to others across all levels of the institutional hierarchy. Fosters solutions that build collaborative relationships and support common goals.</p> <p>7A.10. Facilitates effective interventions to address relational difficulties that are negatively impacting the mental health climate of a program. Understands interpersonal dynamics associated with diversity and inclusion issues (especially in regard to groups experiencing discrimination) and how they may manifest in conflicts, tensions, misunderstandings, and/or opportunities. Understands the context of the community in which a center functions, including factors related to its history, culture, language, values, capacities, etc.</p>
<p>7B. Supports and Facilitates Program-Wide Approaches to Supporting the Mental Health of Children and Families</p>	<p>7B.1. Coordinates with and among external quality enhancement efforts and internal program resources (e.g., instructional coaches, training and technical assistance efforts, program leadership).</p> <p>7B.2. Shares information about resources and best practices in order to support programmatic decision making and effective implementation of center-wide approaches to healthy social and emotional development.</p> <p>7B.3. Provides guidance related to resource selection and adaptation in a manner consistent with a specific program’s philosophy, needs, and culture.</p>
<p>7C. Engages in Group Facilitation</p>	<p>7C.1. Facilitates group processes that support staff in working toward and maintaining a focus on established goals. Attends to and manages complex group dynamics.</p> <p>7C.2. Promotes perspective taking, communication, and/or activities that facilitate mutually respectful relationships, interactions, and teamwork.</p>



Category	Core Skills
	7C.3. Offers direction during times of ambiguity, maintaining a focus on both promoting young children’s healthy social and emotional development and supporting caregivers’ capacities.
7D. Supports and Facilitates Plans for Mental Health Support During Crises or Disasters	<p>7D.1. Facilitates or links programs to appropriate resources when developing and implementing plans to prepare for or respond to disasters or crises.</p> <p>7D.2. Provides guidance related to the manner in which crisis drills are implemented. Considers developmentally appropriate explanations, procedures, advance preparation, and debriefing for staff, families, and children. Anticipates potential negative impacts of crises on individual children, and proactively establishes plans to address concerns.</p> <p>7D.3. Recognizes the nature and parameters of the consultant’s role during crises, and is familiar with available crisis services. Considers the importance of the timing of the consultant’s entry or reentry into a center recently impacted by crisis.</p>

8. Systems-Wide Orientation

Works within and across systems, integrating mental health concepts and supports into the cultures and environments where young children spend time. Maintains awareness of the systems within which IECMHC occurs, and considers these contexts when seeking to understand factors that promote or hinder the process of change. For a more in-depth discussion on systems, please see the Systems section of the toolbox.

Category	Core Skills
8A. Evaluates the Complexity of Working Within Multiple Systems	<p>8A.1. Demonstrates the ability to articulate basic concepts of systems theory, and understands how they inform the process of IECMHC.</p> <p>8A.2. Demonstrates the ability to work concurrently within two or more systems, and understands that changes in response to IECMHC may influence multiple systems.</p> <p>8A.3. Works within and across systems, integrating mental health concepts and supports into the cultures and environments where young children spend time.</p> <p>8A.4. Considers the historical and cultural contexts of communities and their member, and recognizes cultural influences on values, perspectives, and actions.</p> <p>8A.5. Demonstrates awareness of and sensitivity toward existing attitudes and strengths of community members (e.g., community leaders, agencies, service providers).</p>



Category	Core Skills
8B. Bridges Services to Promote Cohesion for Young Children and Families	<p>8B.1. Gains entry into and engages effectively with child-serving centers or programs where consultation services are delivered.</p> <p>8B.2. Maintains up-to-date information about community resources. Limits unnecessary barriers for families to obtain services by making effective referrals.</p> <p>8B.3. Establishes relationships with professionals in other early childhood and mental health disciplines, including those providing counseling and treatment services.</p> <p>8B.4. Encourages networking between ECE/HV settings and programs and other child- and family-serving organizations within a community.</p> <p>8B.5. Uses and shares current information about standards (i.e., professional, program, and licensing standards), resources, and other child- and family serving systems.</p>
8C. Promotes Mental Health and Social and Emotional Well-Being	<p>8C.1. Promotes healthy social and emotional development through the creation and/or distribution of informational materials and resources that can be disseminated to a range of audiences, using a mix of methods informed by the community.</p> <p>8C.2. Maintains visibility as a resource for promoting healthy social and emotional development and mental wellness.</p>

Tribal Considerations

Though some tribes will have IECMH consultants who are from the community and are tribal members themselves, due to both the newness of the IECMH field and the general lack of IECMH consultants nationally, tribal programs may obtain the services of a consultant who is new to tribal work. In the latter case, programs can do some or all of the following to integrate a consultant into ongoing efforts to support young children and the adults who care for them:

Provide a cultural guide or mentor—someone the IECMH consultant can go to in order to ask questions, learn more about the community, and engage in ongoing reflection. A simple explanation of why things happen in a certain way may clear up potential misunderstandings, and consultants will appreciate the opportunity for guidance so they may avoid inadvertent errors. Consultants may also find their own previously held assumptions or perceptions shifting, and an opportunity to discuss, question, and ponder those assumptions and perceptions will support their personal development.

- ◆ Provide a tour of the community, including housing areas and the places most frequented by young children and their families (e.g., the Youth Center, the Family Resource Center).
- ◆ Provide the consultant with the history of the tribe or tribal community in question, and share any historical factors that may be relevant to the work the consultant will do. Knowledge of the historical context can aid



consultants in understanding present-day dynamics. For example, information about the Indian Relocation Act and its consequences would be helpful for a consultant in an urban Indian Center.

- ◆ Provide the consultant with culturally based resources that would be appropriate for them to use. For example, if consultants are aware that a traditional dance troupe includes young children, they may recommend participation for a child who becomes better regulated by the proprioceptive input obtained from this type of physical activity.
- ◆ Increase the consultant's awareness of potential referral sources by providing a list of tribal service providers and tribal child- and family-serving agencies, including wrap-around services and county-based services used by tribal families.
- ◆ If the consultant will provide program-level or organizational-level consultation, describe the governing structure of the tribe or Indian Center (e.g., Tribal Council, Governing Board, organizational divisions), and make clear how the program fits within this overall framework.

