

Innovative Approaches to Addressing Maternal Depression Using IECMHC

Infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH) consultants play an important role in supporting early childhood professionals in their work with mothers who may be experiencing maternal depression. IECMH consultants can help programs develop policies and procedures to support mothers with signs of maternal depression, build staff capacity to recognize the signs of maternal depression, and provide opportunities to support early childhood professionals in their complex work with families. While much of the work to date has focused on the integration of IECMHC into home visiting,ⁱ many of these approaches are equally relevant for consultants working in early care and education settings (such as Head Start) that offer mental health consultation services.ⁱⁱ

State Programs

The following are examples of innovative state efforts to integrate mental health supports into early childhood services:

- ◆ [Integrating Mental Health Supports into Home Visiting Programs—California Project LAUNCH](#) describes the implementation of an early childhood mental health home visiting model in East Oakland, California, with a focus on lessons learned, preliminary results, and recommendations to support the expansion and sustainability of this approach.
- ◆ For the [Louisiana Home Visiting Innovation Award Project](#), Louisiana was funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration to add infant mental health specialists to 17 home visiting teams across the state to increase home visitors' capacity to support clients with mental health concerns, with the ultimate purpose of developing and retaining a highly skilled home visiting workforce.
- ◆ [The Process and Promise of Mental Health Augmentation of Nurse Home-Visiting Programs](#): Data from the Louisiana Nurse-Family Partnership reviews the rationale for and process of training nurses and mental health consultants to focus on infant mental health.
- ◆ The [Utah Maternal Mental Health Collaborative Website](#) includes resources and reading lists for professionals and families.
- ◆ [ZERO TO THREE, Research to Policy Project, Maternal Depression and Early Childhood—Full Report](#) provides an overview of Minnesota's efforts to reduce the incidence and impact of maternal depression in Minnesota.



Evidence-Based Interventions

Home visitors and other early childhood professionals can use these effective tools with mothers who may be exhibiting signs of depression:

- ◆ [Depression in Mothers: More Than the Blues—A Toolkit for Family Service Providers](#) gives providers tools and techniques to identify mothers who might need a more targeted intervention to prevent them from becoming clinically depressed. The toolkit equips providers with information about depression and offers strategies for working with mothers who may be depressed.
- ◆ [In-Home Intervention for Depressive Symptoms with Low-Income Mothers of Infants and Toddlers in the United States](#) describes a pilot study of a short-term, home-based depressive symptom intervention with 16 African American and white, non-Hispanic mothers in Early Head Start programs. The intervention group showed a significantly greater decrease from baseline in depressive symptom severity at 8 and 16 weeks in contrast to the mothers receiving usual care.
- ◆ The [Maternal Depression Toolkit](#) developed by the Home Visiting Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network provides an example of improvement efforts in home visiting programs.
- ◆ [Addressing Parents’ Mental Health in Home Visiting Services in Public Housing](#) is a brief from The Urban Institute that offers strategies to develop strong home visiting services for highly distressed families battling challenges such as depression, substance misuse, or domestic violence. It also provides information on one strategy in particular—the SCRIPT model—that gives concrete instructions for better serving families’ mental health and other needs in home visiting programs.
- ◆ [The Mothers and Babies Course](#) is an approach to working with perinatal mothers at high risk for severe depression in home visiting and other settings, using strategies from cognitive behavioral therapy.
- ◆ [Moving Beyond Depression™: In-Home CBT Treatment for Depressed Mothers Served by Home Visiting](#) is a comprehensive, evidence-based, and integrated approach to identifying and treating depression in mothers participating in home visitation programs. This systemic program of In-Home Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (IH-CBT) was developed by researchers at [Every Child Succeeds®](#) and the [Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center](#).

ⁱ Goodson, B. D., Machrain, M., Perry, D. F., O’Brien, K., & Gwaltney, M. K. (2013, November). Enhancing Home Visiting With Mental Health Consultation. *Pediatrics*, 132(Supplement 2), S180–S190.

ⁱⁱ Head Start, Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center. (n.d.). 1302.45 Child mental health and social and emotional well-being. Head Start Policy & Regulations. Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start. Retrieved from <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-45-child-mental-health-social-emotional-well-being>

