

Tip Sheet: Funding Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation for Home Visiting Programs

What Is Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC)?

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) is a prevention-based service that pairs a mental health specialist with families and professionals to build their capacity to support the healthy social and emotional development of all children ages 0–5 across child-serving systems (early care and education, home visiting, primary care, etc.).¹

In home visiting programs, IECMH consultants may:

- ◆ Help home visiting programs strengthen their policies and procedures for supporting and linking families to services for mental health
- ◆ Build home visitors' capacity to recognize, interpret, and support the mental health needs of children and families
- ◆ Help home visitors support families in creating emotionally safe home environments that foster children's learning and growth
- ◆ Provide ongoing and regular opportunities for reflection, so that home visitors may sort out and cope with the strong feelings brought on by their complex work with families
- ◆ Train home visitors on specific mental health issues
- ◆ Join the home visitor as they meet with families to observe and provide support

Why Is IECMHC within Home Visiting Important?

Home visiting is shown to be an effective service delivery model for at-risk children and their families. However, home visitors are often in need of additional training and support to meet the complex needs of families with risk factors such as substance use, mental illness, and domestic violence.

By embedding IECMHC into home visiting, programs can build a layer of support within their existing evidence-based home visiting models to address the social and emotional needs of young children and their families.

¹ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, & U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings (p. 12). Retrieved from

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/eecd/expulsion_suspension_final.pdf



Research has linked IECMHC within home visiting with these potential outcomes:

- ◆ Increased capacity of home visitors to recognize and address mental health needs, and link families to mental health supports
- ◆ Reduction in home visitor stress and rates of turnover
- ◆ Improved social and emotional health of children and adult caregivers
- ◆ Improved family engagement

Tips for Funding IECMHC within Home Visiting

Although IECMHC has been found to be a cost-effective and influential strategy for offsetting later mental health concerns, as a prevention service in home visiting, it is often challenging to fund and financially sustain.² Here are some tips to help you navigate your way through the process of seeking funding.

Learn what federal, state, local, and private funds may be available to support an IECMH consultant. While there is no single dedicated funding source available for IECMHC, a number of federal funding streams can be paired with state and local funds to support this important service for young children and their families. Ensure that your team is also aware who administers the funds, how they are currently being allocated in your state or region, and any eligibility criteria.

When considering which funding sources to use, take into account the following questions:

- ◆ How stable is each funding stream?
- ◆ Over what time period will the funds be available?
- ◆ Will the funding be long-term or short-term?
- ◆ Will the funds be automatically renewed?

For more information about potential federal and state funding sources, see the [Financing section](#) of SAMHSA's Center of Excellence for IECMHC Toolbox, and [Supporting Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation](#) from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

² Mackrain, M. (2015). Project LAUNCH: Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health. Cohort Three: A Community-Driven Opportunity. Unpublished manuscript.



Maximize the use of resources, and avoid duplication of services. Leverage home visiting funds with funding from other programs that have overlapping missions, such as Head Start, Early Head Start, the Child Care Development Block Grant, the Title V Maternal and Child Health Services block grant, and the Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act. See the video clip [Systems: Funding Streams and Strategies, and Overcoming Barriers to Promote Success](#) for creative ways to use multiple funding streams.

Understand the difference between *braiding* and *blending* funds:

- ◆ *Braiding funds* involves coordinating two or more funding sources to support the total cost of services to individual children, but revenues are allocated and expenditures are tracked by categorical funding source. Each funding source is still identifiable, and it is easy to allocate and track expenditures by source and to make distinct reports on uses of funds as required by the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV).

MIECHV funding is being used to build the capacity of home visiting staff through IECMHC. The Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership provides IECMHC, along with training and technical assistance, to all MIECHV home visiting and Coordinated Intake programs throughout Illinois, with the goal of increasing the capability of home visiting program staff to identify and address the social and emotional needs of young children and families, helping instill reflective practices into their organizational culture.

Leslie Schwartz, IL MIECHV, Governor's Office of Early Childhood

- ◆ *Blending funds* is when dollars from two or more separate funding sources are wrapped together within one full-workday, full-year program budget to pay for a unified set of program services for a group of children. These costs are not necessarily allocated and tracked by an individual funding source. Home visiting programs that are not funded through MIECHV may be able to blend funds to support IECMHC.

Investigate whether private funding (such as foundations) or community-based philanthropic organizations (such as United Way) might be available to support an IECMHC initiative. Do your research. The online [Foundation Directory](#) is a good source of information on grant-makers' funding priorities. Most funders have specific types of initiatives or geographic areas that they prefer to fund. Find out whether the funder has a request for proposal (RFP) that can tie to IECMHC or if the funder accepts unsolicited proposals. The [Communications section](#) of the IECMHC Toolbox includes a sample presentation template that you can customize with your own program information. If you've already been implementing IECMHC, provide data on its impact on your program. Clearly outline how the initiative will benefit the community it serves. If funding is likely to be short-term, describe how you will sustain it once the short-term funding has ended.



Our program, Milwaukee Mental Health Consultants, has been funded for many years by United Way. It started years ago as a way to consolidate training dollars for non-profit mental health providers, and gradually changed over the years to providing consultation and training for community-based programs that do not specialize in mental health, but are challenged by some of the mental health concerns of the children and families they serve. This provides our baseline funding. These agencies, in turn, direct some of their resources, often targeted for staff development, to help cover their costs of our service.

In the case of Head Start and home visitation partners, they have been able to utilize some of the state or federal funds for this purpose. We really believe that the combination of funding – especially including some commitment from the agency receiving consultation, is crucial for “buy in” of those partners as empowered consumers.

Kevin O’Brien, Milwaukee, WI

Know what the funder is looking for. No matter what type of funding you are applying for, it is very important to understand the metrics of success for each potential funding source to ensure a “goodness of fit.” One of the most frequent reasons for turning down requests is that they do not mesh with the funder’s interests. You are more likely to receive funds from an organization or entity for which there is a close match in mission and objectives. If you are responding to an RFP, be sure to gear your proposal to the specific criteria requested.

Conduct a needs assessment to identify the key gaps in services that you aim to fund. For instance, will your consultation model focus on child and family consultation, programmatic consultation, or both? A needs assessment can help you look at both the external and internal landscapes and clarify the scope of the project you would like to fund. It can also help you identify resources that you already have and additional resources that you need to bring on board. For instance, do you already have qualified staff who might become IECMH consultants? Do you need to pursue credentialing? A needs assessment can help you develop your model and identify your budget priorities. For a sample needs assessment and more about types of consultation services, see the [Models section](#) of the IECMHC Toolbox.

Spell out in detail the costs associated with your funding request. For example, line items in a budget might include the consultant’s salary plus fringe benefits, rent or occupancy for the consultant’s office within the organization, telephone/connectivity, supplies and office equipment, travel to and from home visits, training costs, general and central administrative supervision, reflective supervision, and endorsement or licensure fees to maintain the consultant’s credentials.

Collect and share data to show that your IECMHC program is effective. Measure and report not only on how much you do (your effort), but also on how well you do it and whether anyone is better off (your effect or impact). Consider including funding for a third party evaluation in your funding request, which can provide an objective look at how well your initiative is meeting its goals and objectives and can help you measure long-term impact.

Conclusion

IECMHC is a valuable way to strengthen a home visiting program. IECMH consultants can help programs put in place practices and/or policies that benefit all children and adults in their setting. These consultants can help build the capacity of home visitors to support the complex needs of the families with whom they work. Seeking funding for IECMHC may seem like a daunting task, but there are many resources available to support your search. The information in this Tip Sheet can help you put a process in place to seek and apply for funding from a variety of public and private funding sources. Once you receive the funding and implement an IECMHC model, your continued use of data can help you sustain the initiative. Throughout your efforts, regularly visit SAMHSA's Center of Excellence's [IECMHC Toolbox](#), as this go-to resource addresses all aspects of IECMHC.

