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# Making the Most of Your Mental Health Consultation Services

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## National Center on Health

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## Presentation Objectives

- Define “effective” early childhood mental health consultation (ECMHC)
- Describe core components of effective consultation programs
- Increase awareness of strategies to assess your mental health consultation
- Highlight resources for further guidance



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# Table Discussion

- What do you think of when you think of early childhood mental health consultation?
- What do parents think?
- What do stakeholders think? (e.g. board, policy council, community agencies/referral sources, etc.)



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## **Definition of Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation:**

“A problem-solving and capacity–building intervention implemented within a collaborative relationship between a professional consultant with mental health expertise and one or more individuals with other areas of expertise - primarily child care, child development, and families – or individuals with child care responsibilities.”

(Cohen & Kaufmann, 2000)



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## Defining ECMHC (cont'd)

- Culturally sensitive
- Family focus/  
Engaging families





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## Defining ECMHC (cont'd)

- Promotes social emotional development
- Addresses children's challenging behavior
- Primarily indirect services
- Impacts child, family, staff, and outcomes



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## Child- and Family- Centered Consultation

- Child observations
- Parent consultation
- Staff support for individual and group behavior management
- Modeling/coaching
- Link to community
- Training on behavior management
- Modeling and supporting individual child
- Education on a child's mental health
- Advocacy for family



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## Programmatic Consultation for Staff and Programs

- Classroom observation
- Strategies for supportive environments
- Training on behavior management
- Support for reflective practices
- Promote staff wellness
- Address communication issues
- Promote team building
- Training on cultural competence





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## What ECMHC “Isn’t”



- Formal diagnostic evaluations
- Therapeutic play groups
- Individual therapy
- Family therapy
- Staff therapy
- Family support groups



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# Summary of Findings: Does it make a difference?

Child Outcomes

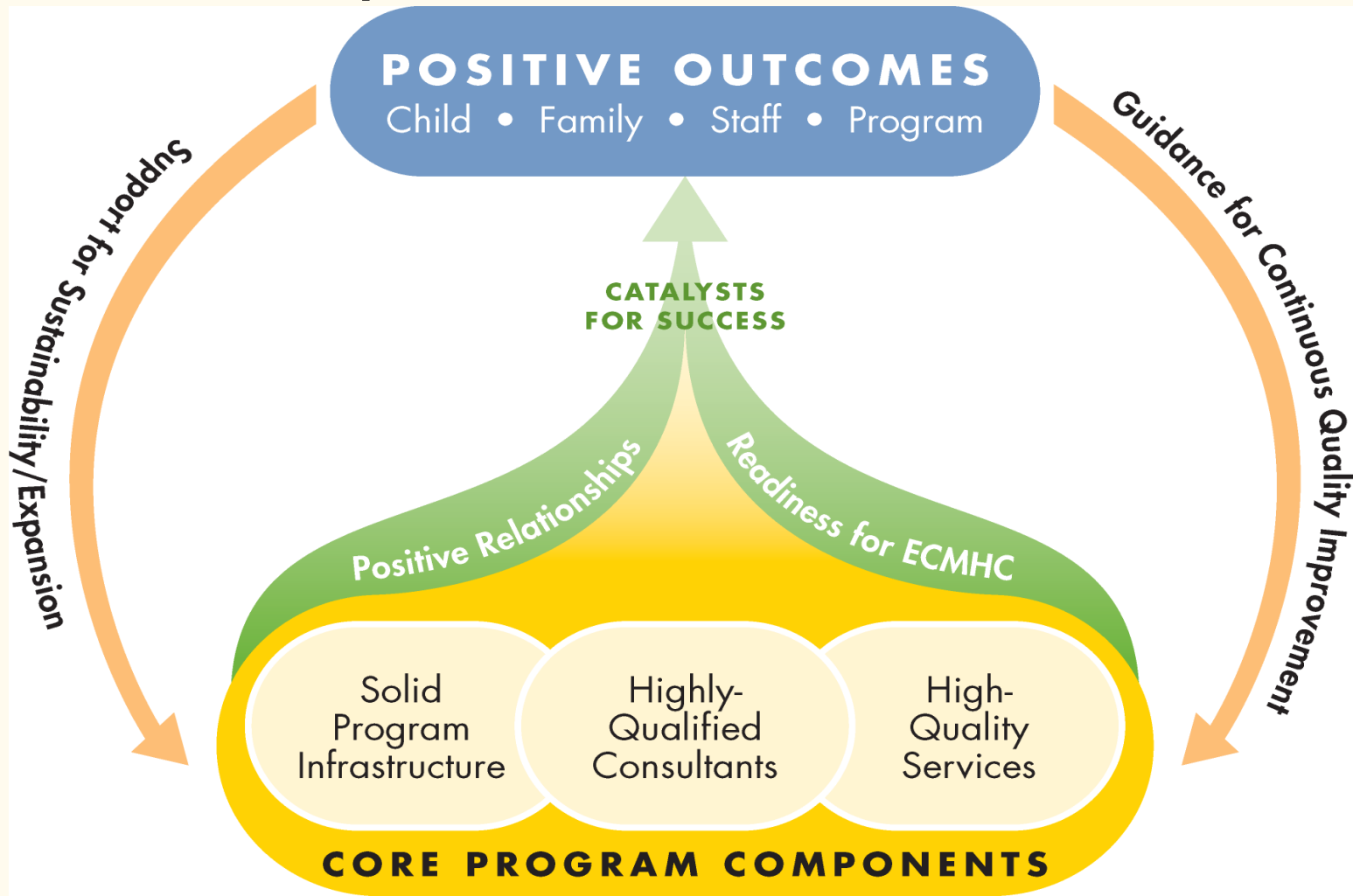
Staff Outcomes

Program Outcomes



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# Conceptual Model of Effective EMCHC

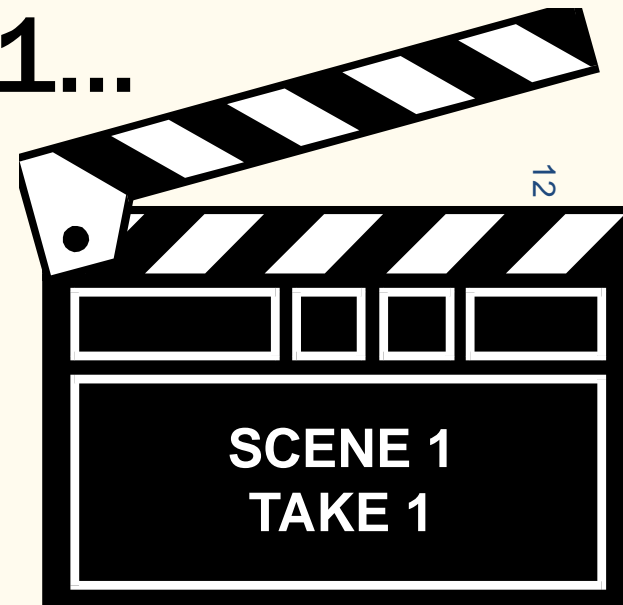




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# SCENE 1...TAKE 1...

1. Read the Scene on  
The front of the card.
2. Discuss your Take on  
the scene and decide:
  - What type of consultation is indicated?
  - What might be the role of the  
Mental Health Consultant?





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## IMAGINE AND CREATE...

Think about desirable qualities  
or traits ...

What are some important  
attributes?

Represent these traits on the  
poster paper figure.





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# The Effective Consultant: Qualifications & Characteristics

- Education/Knowledge
  - Masters degree in a related field, e.g., social work, psychology
  - Core content knowledge
  - Respectful
  - Trustworthy
  - Open-minded/non-judgmental
  - Reflective
  - Approachable
  - Good listener
  - Compassionate
  - Team player
  - Flexible
  - Patient



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## Consultant Knowledge

- Child development
- Typical and atypical behavior including:
  - Attachment
  - Separation
- Medical and genetics information
- Cultural understanding
- Treatment alternatives
- Family systems
- Early childhood systems
- Adult learning principles



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# Skills and Experience







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## Specialized Experience

- Separation and loss
- Substance abuse
- Maternal depression
- Abuse and neglect
- Teen motherhood
- Working with fathers
- Early childhood mental health including:
  - Aggressive behavior
- Medical concerns including:
  - Prematurity and low birth weight
  - Failure to thrive
- Developmental delays including:
  - Speech and language
  - Learning
  - Developmental disabilities



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## Elements of the Consultative Stance

- Mutuality of endeavor
- Avoid position of expert
- Wondering not knowing
- Understanding another subjective experience
- Consider influence
- Hearing and representing all voices
- Centrality of relationships
- Parallel process
- Patience

— Johnston &  
Brinamen, 2006



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## **Roles and Responsibilities**

- Support staff in addressing individual challenges that effect work
- Provide crisis stabilization
- Work with families on resolving behavioral challenges
- Refer when indicated



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## Getting Off to a Good Start

- Clarify roles and expectations up front
  - Written agreements
  - Widespread communication
- Integrate into ECE program
  - Attend activities/events
  - ECE program-level accommodations



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# Philosophy



- Individuals select two cards
- Chose your best one
- As a group reach consensus on your philosophy



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# Create a Want-Ad



- Use your philosophy to create a want –ad for the perfect consultant
  - Knowledge, experience, skills, duties to perform, attributes



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# Finding a Consultant





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# Where Have You Looked?







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## Delivering High-Quality Services

- Provide an array of services/activities
  - Information gathering
  - Individualized service plan development
  - Plan implementation support
  - Provider/family education
  - Provider/family emotional support
  - Linkages to services beyond consultation
  - Staff training and support



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## Delivering High-Quality Services

- Include both types of consultation
  - Child/family-centered consultation:  
*Focuses on a particular child with challenging behavior and/or the family of that child*
  - Programmatic consultation:  
*Focuses on a general program or classroom issue that impacts the mental health of staff, children and/or families*

*Cohen & Kaufmann, 2000*

# Strategy Examples

Classroom-Based Strategies	Specific Examples
Improve classroom functionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Rearrange furniture to get rid of “run ways”</li> <li>•De-clutter the classroom to cut down on overstimulation</li> </ul>
Promote social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Introduce social stories or “feelings” books that teach social/emotional concepts and skills</li> </ul>
Improve transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Introduce “5 minute warnings”</li> <li>•Use a transitional object to help a child move from one activity to another</li> </ul>
Home-Based Strategies	Specific Examples
Support positive behavior support practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Explore setting limits and boundaries</li> <li>•Post visual reminders around the home</li> <li>•Create a “time-in” space for child to calm him/herself</li> </ul>
Help parents meet children’s specific social/emotional needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Create photo books to help children with attachment issues</li> <li>•Promote children’s understanding of caregiver permanence through games like peek-a-boo</li> </ul>



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Excerpted from *What Works?* – Table 5, page 73



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## **Tips on High-Quality Service Delivery**

- Strong service initiation process
- Collaboration
- Family involvement
- Cultural and linguistic competence
- Individualization of services/strategies
- Consistency across home & classroom



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## **Tips on High-Quality Service Delivery (cont'd)**

- Utilization of hands-on, practical materials
- Consistency in consultants
- Availability of consultants
- Integration of consultant into program routines and operations
- Facilitation of ECE program requirements and goals



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# Head Start Performance Standards 1304.24(a)(2)

- “secure the services of mental health professionals on a schedule of sufficient frequency to enable the timely and effective identification of and intervention in family and staff concerns about a child's mental health; and...”



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# Head Start Performance Standards 1304.24(a)(2)

- “Mental health program services must include a regular schedule of on-site mental health consultation involving the mental health professional, program staff, and parents on how to:...”



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## Continued 1304.24(a)(2)

- “(i) Design and implement program practices responsive to the identified behavioral and mental health concerns of an individual child or group of children;
- (ii) Promote children's mental wellness by providing group and individual staff and parent education on mental health issues;
- (iii) Assist in providing special help for children with atypical behavior or development; and
- (iv) Utilize other community mental health resources, as needed”





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# Homework: Assess Your MH Consultation

- **Adopt a Process: Consider**
  - Survey staff
  - Survey families
  - Survey your consultant
  - Survey community members



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## Quick Survey Tools

- *How is the Mental Health Consultation in the Program?* Survey for Families
- *How is the Mental Health Consultation in the Program?* Survey for Staff
- *Assessing Your Program's Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation: How do you know if your mental health services are effective?*



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## Group Discussion

- Is it Effective?
- Is it Sufficient?
- How do you know?



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## **Additional Considerations in Developing/Refining ECMHC Models**

- Caseloads
- Intensity of services
- Use of best/evidence-based practice(s)
- Local resources/capacity



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## Key Partners for Effective Consultation

- ECE program administrators
  - Strong influence on “readiness” for ECMHC
- Local resources/referral sources
- Consultation “champions”
- Evaluators



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## Resources

- Center for Effective Mental Health Consultation

<http://www.ecmhc.org/>

- *What Works?* study

<http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/78358.html>

- *Mental Health Consultation in Child Care*  
(K. Johnston & C. Brinamen)

- *Mental Health Consultation in Early Childhood*  
(Donahue, Falk, & Provet)

# A Day in the Life of an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant

*A Series of Real-life Vignettes  
Illustrating the Early Childhood Mental Health  
Consultation Process*

By MARY MACKRAIN



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## Wrap-Up- Follow-Up

- **E-mails (subject line: ECMH Consultation)**
  - *Within the week:* tools and resources (subject: mh consultation)
  - MH Consultation Webinar- Jan. 28, 2014
  - *Spring* Follow-up Survey





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# Wrap-Up Next Steps

- What stood out for you from what you heard or experienced today?
- What excites you or concerns you about what you learned?
- Any insights from the session?
- How might you use what you heard today?



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