



# Colorado's Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program

Empowering Caregivers to Support the Healthy Social-Emotional Development of Infants & Children

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Consultation?

ECMH consultants have deep expertise in early childhood, social-emotional development and mental health. Directors, early childhood professionals and caregivers of children age birth to six are eligible to receive no cost support and training on-site from consultants at the program, remotely, or another convenient location. Through the consultative relationship, caregivers build skills that foster strong adult-child relationships, build healthy environments, and prepare them to effectively respond to challenging behaviors. Consultants support and strengthen early childhood professionals in their role as caregivers; consultants do not work directly with children, make a diagnosis, or provide therapy.

Curious what it is like to work with an ECMH consultant? Take the eLearning course, [Working With an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant](#) on the Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System (PDIS) or view the short video [Early Childhood Mental Health - The Results are Extraordinary](#).

### Why is it important to focus on social-emotional and mental health for infants and young children?

Social and emotional development begins at birth. Research indicates that children's development and mental health can be negatively impacted by the influences around them (e.g., early adversity, trauma). Fortunately, children's development and mental health can be positively impacted by influences around them, as well. Research shows that quality, evidence-based practices in the early years of life can increase resilience and dramatically improve outcomes for young children.

### What are the benefits of ECMH consultation?

The benefits of ECMH consultation include improved classroom or other learning and care environments, reduced incidents of behaviors adults find challenging, increased understanding of typical child development, and reduced caregiver stress and teacher turnover which, in turn, can increase staff retention and reduce the likelihood that a child will leave a program.

Over the long term, research shows that children who attend early childhood programs that promote their social and emotional development are more likely to graduate from high school and enter college, and are less likely to repeat grades or become involved in the criminal justice system.

### Who is eligible for ECMH consultation services?

ECMH consultation is available to any adult who cares for children ages birth to 6 years, including the prenatal and postpartum periods. ECMH consultation is typically delivered in early childhood settings including child care, home visiting, medical home and other locations as appropriate both in-person or via telehealth by trained mental health professionals.



## When should I work with an ECMH consultant?

The best time to begin working with a consultant is now! Working together proactively, over time increases the confidence and ability of early childhood professionals and caregivers to promote social-emotional health for all children in their care.

Consultants serve as a social and emotional resource, providing trainings for professionals and family caregivers on social-emotional topics, and connecting them to needed services. Consultants can also work with caregivers to develop approaches to support individual children, including those who may be struggling.

## How can I begin working with an ECMH consultant?

Consultation starts with a brief exploratory conversation with a consultant to identify appropriate and desired supports. Search this link for nearby [ECMH Consultants](#). For immediate assistance call the ECMH Support Line during business hours at 303-866-4202 or [submit a request for services](#) online to get social-emotional or other resources for yourself, or for a family or child in your care.

## How much does ECMH consultation cost?

Consultation services are available at no cost to early childhood professionals and caregivers across Colorado; the cost of the program is covered by the State of Colorado and philanthropic partners.

## What is involved in ECMH consultation?

Consultants partner with the important adults in children's life. This could look like parents/families, teachers, directors as well as early intervention specialists or home visitors. Together, these adults meet, set and work toward specific goals aimed at promoting the healthy social-emotional development and mental health of the children in their care. These meetings can take place on-site or virtually. Services often include observation, assessment of the learning environment, provision of resources such as professional development and/or connection to additional resources and referrals.

Consultation can be as brief as two months or up to twelve months based on identified need and the time needed to meet mutually agreed upon goals.

## How can I use what I learn from consultation in the classroom and other settings?

Consultants can provide parents and caregivers, teachers, directors, early intervention specialists or home visitors with training and tools that can be applied immediately. However, these skills become more automatic with practice. Ongoing consultation provides support for effective implementation of evidence-based skills, tools, curriculum and frameworks.

## How long does the consultation process take?

Services may be brief, but on average take about 4-6 months to complete with each session lasting 1 to 1.5 hours.

## How can I commit to meeting a consultant during the workday?

Many providers find it beneficial to schedule consultation sessions during naptime, very early in the morning, or late in the day when ratios are low. Working with team teachers, floaters or substitutes may also support providers to receive a consultation. Others find it helpful to carve out professional development time to meet with a consultant. As resources may vary, it is important to discuss this with your team/director to determine how best to support your engagement with consultation services.

## What additional support, referrals, and resources can ECMH consultants provide?

Consultants can support and guide early childhood professionals in communicating with and supporting parents in addressing their children's social-emotional needs. Consultants can also provide referrals to community services and resources for education, health, and basic needs. Consultation services can be provided in person or virtually.

