

Supporting Social-Emotional and Behavioral Needs Procedure

Purpose

This document tells site teams how to access a mental health consultant, and how to create a social and emotional climate where children learn, practice and apply skills that support attachment, self-regulation and initiative.

Procedure

Children enrolled in Early Head Start, Head Start and ECEAP have a high probability of having adverse childhood experiences that may result in mental health concerns or challenging behaviors.

Screening children

- Listen and ask questions about any concerns a parent may have about their child's development and behavior and discuss the information provided on the application and developmental enrollment forms.
- Make sure that the DECA (Devereux Early Childhood Assessment) behavioral screening is completed with the parent within 45 calendar days of the child's entry into the program.
- Consult with a PSESD Mental Health Coordinator about any child whose score is in re-screen or refer range. Child Development coordinators complete the *Triage Support Form* with teachers.
- Observe children regularly and share assessment information with parents.

Curriculum

Site teams are responsible for implementing the *Second Step Curriculum*.

- Teach children the skills that strengthen their ability to learn, make friends, have empathy, problem solve and manage emotions.
- Support children to listen, pay attention, remember directions and control their behavior.
- Support children in developing children's self-regulation skills and social competency.

Individualizing

- Identify any accommodations or adaptations made to the environment or activities, which are needed to keep a child safe and included. Seek assistance from PSESD in providing these.
- Plan for the social-emotional needs of children in all aspects of the curricula.
- Collaborate with families to develop at least one social-emotional school readiness goal for each child.
- Plan curriculum experiences to support the child's progress on the child's Individual School Readiness Goals.
- Request an observation or consultation of the PSESD Mental Health Coordinator when there are concerns about a specific child. The PSESD Mental Health Coordinator will make recommendations to staff and parents. The family completes and signs the *Request for Mental Health Observation/Consultation Form* and it is sent to the Regional Mental Health Coordinator prior to the consultation.
- Request by email or telephone the attendance of the Mental Health Coordinator at a staffing on individual children to support the development of specific strategies, to effectively engage families or to assist with an appropriate referral for additional services.

Positive Child Guidance

Site teams use a positive guidance approach.

- Build and maintain positive relationships with children.
- Adapt the environment, routine and activities to the needs of individual children.
- Establish consistent, reasonable and predictable expectations.

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- Involve children in defining simple, clear rules for the classroom and outside play area.
- Observe, facilitate and supervise children's activities.
- Establish and post a predictable classroom schedule that includes pictures.
- Use effective transition methods such as reminding children with environmental and verbal cues and manage the length of transitions.
- Model and teach social skills, such as turn-taking, cooperation, waiting, treating others respectfully and conflict resolution.
- Model and teach emotional skills, such as identifying, recognizing and expressing feelings.
- Give directions and instructions and offer replacement behaviors to children.
- Be proactive - anticipate problems and develop plans to avoid them.
- Remember - behavior that gets noticed is repeated.
- Temporary touching or holding for the purpose of guiding a child to walk to a safe location is acceptable.
- Provide brief physical guidance, instructional prompting, physical support and comforting.

Family engagement

- Communicate with families about any concerns they have regarding a child's social emotion development or behaviors.
- Be sensitive to emotions and culturally competent when talking about possible concerns and referrals to service and respect families' choices.
- Be knowledgeable about family issues that affect the social and emotional development of young children, such as maternal depression, substance abuse or parental incarceration.
- Know basic strategies to support parent-child interactions.
- Request a PSESD Mental Health Coordinator or other mental health professional from a community agency to present to parent groups on topics related to child and adult mental health.

Referrals for mental health counseling

- Help families to access mental health counseling services in the community.
- Contact a PSESD Mental Health Coordinator to access resources to provide mental health services through a contracted therapist if necessary as payer of last resort. Site leadership or Family Support Staff email or telephone the Mental Health Coordinator for information regarding mental health services.
- Staff have parents sign a Release/Exchange of Confidential Mental Health Information to release information to PSESD and fax a copy to PSESD Mental Health Coordinator.

Related Documents

Release/Exchange of Confidential Mental Health Information
Request for Mental Health Observation/Consultation Form
Triage Support Procedure
Triage Support Form

Resources

Second Step Curriculum (see kit in your classroom)