

## What's New in Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC)

According to the Office of Head Start, the Mental Health & Social Emotional Well-Being Newsletter published by the [National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness](#), recently highlighted the Head Start Program Performance Standard (HSPP) that requires Head Start and Early Head Start programs to utilize IECMHC in their program models. The standard that was highlighted is embedded in the program operations section of the HSPPS, called the [Child Mental Health and Social Emotional Well-being, 45 CFR § 1302.45](#). This section outlines what a program must do in order to support and promote a culture of wellness and defines how a mental health consultant will work within the program. According to the standard, in order to support children's mental health, social and emotional well-being, and overall health programs must: have effective supports for classroom management and positive learning environments, utilize mental health consultation (MHC) as needed, collaborate with parents by obtaining consent for MHC and building community partnerships to access MHC providers. Mental Health Consultants can use the following types of consultation: programmatic and direct support to children/parents. To learn more you can access an [overview video](#) that describes the HSPPS related to health nutrition, mental health and safety.

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### Child Trends News Service

The [Child Trends News Service](#) (CTNS) produces video news reports, aired by local news stations nationwide and featuring social science research on child development and parenting practices. This month, hear the [story of a young girl](#) whose family members are undocumented immigrants, and how families can mitigate children's stress from the fear of deportation or family separation. Also learn how [chaos in the home](#) can harm a child's emotional development, and how parents can reduce chaos to mitigate children's stress.



## Risk Factors & Warning Signs of Suicide

The [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention \(AFSP\)](#) offers a resource for providers that details the signs and symptoms that parents may be at risk of a suicidal crisis. This resource provides psychoeducation on the causes of suicide, lists multiple warning signs, as well as discusses the complexities of risk factors. The AFSP indicates that there is no single cause for suicide and can occur when stressors exceed a person's coping abilities. Warning signs are broken down into three categories: talk, behavior, and mood. AFSP states that most people who take their lives exhibit one or more warning signs, either through what they say, or what they do. Risk factors are also broken down into three categories: health, environmental, and historical. AFSP writes that risk factors are conditions that increase the change that someone may take their life. To read more click [here](#). If you or someone you know is in crisis please access the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or contact the [crisis text line](#) by texting TALK to 741741.

## Talking to Children about Disabilities

October is Disabilities Awareness Month. This particular resource is one of many examples of how teachers can utilize activities to talk to and teach other children about disabilities. [The Disability Awareness Activity Packet](#) was written by Ben Adcock and Michael L. Remus in 2006 and gives providers some ideas for helping students understand different disabilities. The authors remind readers that disabilities look different in different people and some students may have some of the disabilities described here, but are not at all similar to what is described. That is not uncommon but important to heed while using these activities. To access the activity book in its entirety, click [here!](#)

## Mental Health Consultation and Suicide Prevention

Mental health consultants can play a role in suicide prevention. Research demonstrates that depression and addiction can increase risks for suicide. It is also noted in the literature that children whose parent exhibits depression or addiction issues have higher rates of behavioral problems. Since mental health consultant's work on challenging behaviors within the context of the family, they have the opportunity to address and support a parent who is experiencing issues of depression or addiction. One way to provide support is by accessing screening tools that can assist the parent in identifying their own mental health issues and referring them to needed services. There are two screening tools mental health consultants may find helpful when identifying parental depression or addiction. The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) is a nine-item multipurpose instrument for screening, monitoring and measuring the severity of depression. In addition to being offered in 27 languages, this easy to use validated tool screens for depression and measures response to treatment in adults. One of the PHQ-9's questions asks about suicidal thoughts, and this item has been found to have reasonable sensitivity as a suicide risk screening item. The CAGE Questionnaire is a four-item screening tool used to assess the likelihood of problematic alcohol and drug use. Although it is not a diagnostic tool, questions focus on the behavioral effects of alcohol and drug use on the parent. The tool can be administered through a brief interview process and takes less than two minutes to complete. Mental health consultants can use screening tools to help bridge communication with families and assist in making referrals to the appropriate agency for services. Mental health consultants should communicate their interest in partnering with families to get all of their needs met, and clearly communicate the recommended next steps. If there are immediate concerns that the parent could be in danger of harming him/herself or another person, the consultant should ensure the parent is safe while accessing crisis services.



### Announcement Area

The [Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics](#) just released their [2017 Report: America's Children: Key national Indicators of Well-Being](#). This marks the 20<sup>th</sup> publication of this report with 23 participating federal agencies. The report provides the most recent statistics on child well-being over 41 report indicators. To read the full report, [click here!](#)