



**Learning
Empowered.**

One Child At A Time



The Path to Equity in Florida

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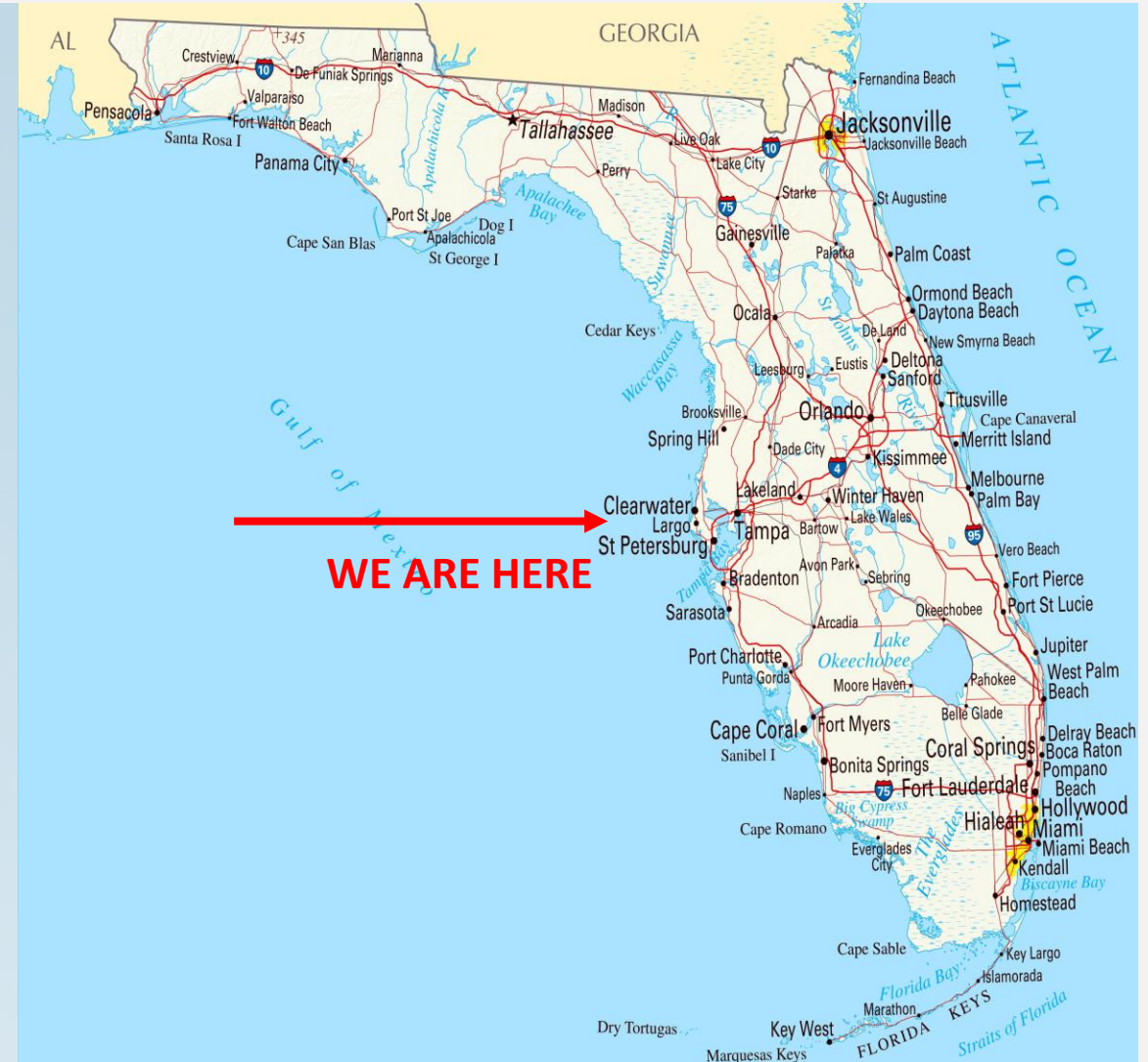




Learning Empowered®

WHO WE ARE

- Operate on the gulf coast of Florida
- Nonprofit in business for over 40 years
- Primarily serving the community through:
 - Early childhood education programming
 - Mental health services to children birth to five and their families
 - Citizenship and immigration services
- Two locations:
 - Learning Empowered Campus (LEC) houses MH programming, administration, specialized classrooms, citizenship and immigration offices, Head Start classrooms, the Baby House, and regular childcare programming: capacity 120+
 - Children of the World serves 50+ primarily children from different countries or who speak ESL



QUICK POLL

How would you describe your involvement in an IECMHC program?

- Looking to begin a program- seeking funds
- In pre-planning stage of implementation
- Implementing a new IECMCH program
- Offering IECMHC services for at least one year
- Offering IECMHC services for 1-5 years



PINELLAS COUNTY: QUICK FACTS

Just under 1 million permanent residents
26% of Black individuals and households live in poverty.
compared to 11% of White individuals and households who are White.
Infant mortality is 2.6x as high for Black babies.
compared to infant mortality rates for White babies.

White: 72%
Black: 11%
Latino: 11%
Asian, Native American, Bi/Multi-racial: 4%
Most densely populated county in Florida
Within Pinellas County, only 69% of kids pass Kindergarten.
These findings are disproportionate by race (Black) and geography.

Active community initiatives led by black leaders in partnerships together to advocate for equity in education and anti-racist practices
Community/race relations have been strained for decades with some movement in recent years
Equity initiatives are very active in the community

Sources:

Pinellas Population Hits New Heights - Forward Pinellas
U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Pinellas County, Florida
Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg (healthystpete.foundation)

THE PATH TO EQUITY IN



2014

- SAMHSA funded the L.A.U.N.C.H Project (Linking Actions to Unmet Needs for Children's Health) to state located in Pinellas County
- IECMHC practices are discussed among participants as a viable model to serve families; no funding available
- Concerned Organization for the Quality Education of Black Students (COQEBS) creates the School Readiness Committee – Baby Talk created

2015

- Dr. Neal Horen and Amy Hunter from the CoE were invited to speak to funders and clinical agencies about IECMHC
- Local Children's Council (taxation agency) - Juvenile Welfare Board (JWB) that funds youth programming shows interest in IECMHC model
- Florida Association for Infant Mental Health (FAIMH) begins to promote IECMHC practices and develop training offerings

2016

- USF received funding from state legislature to provide first IECMHC to (6) childcare programs in south part of county: Midtown Project for one year
- COQEBS SR Committee presents to school district on the IECMHC model to recognize and embrace model to promote equity and improve SR outcomes.
- Annual Baby Talk event under COQEBS SR committee to target families with babies

2018

- Dr. Horen and Amy returned to speak at USFSP to advance understanding of the model – provided one year consultation with IMH team
- COQEBS continues to develop community initiatives to recognize equity gaps and recommend solutions in partnerships with multiple agencies and advocates

2022

- United Way funded Learning Empowered for (1) IECMHC to provide services to children in our centers under the **Empowering Babies and Families Program**
- JWB funds a grant request to Learning Empowered to **expand Empowering Babies and Families Program** to serve the community

2023

- JWB funds the **Triangles Program** to provide IECMHC throughout the community and provide a specialized classroom setting for children who are not able to function in a typical classroom setting.
- Triangles operates (2) specialized classrooms onsite at Learning Empowered (1) - 3 y.o.'s (1) - 4 y.o.'s
- IMH Team has expanded from 1 employee to 15

TO FUNDING

BARRIERS

TO EQUITY

- Limited exposure to model statewide
 - Services are not reimbursable
- Inconsistent support by ELCs in state
- Inadequate support by child-serving agencies
- Governmental funding priorities targeted away from serving children birth to five
- Governmental mental health programming budgets cut progressively in decades prior to COVID
- Limited programming = limited evaluation prospects
- Governmental philosophies centered on parent choice versus funded supports or “interventions”

- Deep south steeped in historical traditions that promote inequity and systemic racism
- School district segregation and taxation creates profound inequity in schools serving BIPOC communities
- Current representation of local funders and lawmakers are white males
- Slow shift in BIPOC and other minority groups represented in child-serving programs and school system
- Inequitable thinking has plagued our educational system
- Child opportunities are Low – Very Low throughout the county



QUICK POLL

How would you rate the level and impact of racism in your community?

- Very high racism and impact to your community
- Moderately high racism and impact to your community
- Not sure
- Moderately low racism and impact to your community
- Very low racism and impact to your community

FUNDING



ZERO state funding for IECMHC!

**Zero indication of state initiating
MH funding for kids under five**

**Florida legislature current focus
is on MH is on addressing silos**

**Some local funding due to years
of exposure, training and presentation**

**Pinellas county MH programs are
forging their own paths to
develop funding streams**

**Hoping to replicate or expand our
IECMHC throughout the county**

STEPS TOWARDS EQUITY

COQEBS v. Pinellas County Board of Education

[Concerned Organization for Quality Education for Black Students, Inc. \(COQEBS\) | University of South Florida Research | Digital Commons @ University of South Florida \(usf.edu\)](#)

Failure Factories: Tampa Bay Times

[Investigation: How Pinellas County is failing its black students | Failure Factories | Tampa Bay Times](#)
[Miami Herald original report 2017](#)

Demographic Shifts

- [Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg \(healthystpete.foundation\)](#)
funding programs with mission to advance anti racist policies and practices
 - Steady rise in younger residents/more diverse
- Number of minority youth higher than number of white senior citizens
- Number of jobs that require college degree increased by 41% since 2013
 - Number of black professionals with higher degrees increased steadily since 2010

[UNITEPinellas-Summary-Report.pdf](#)



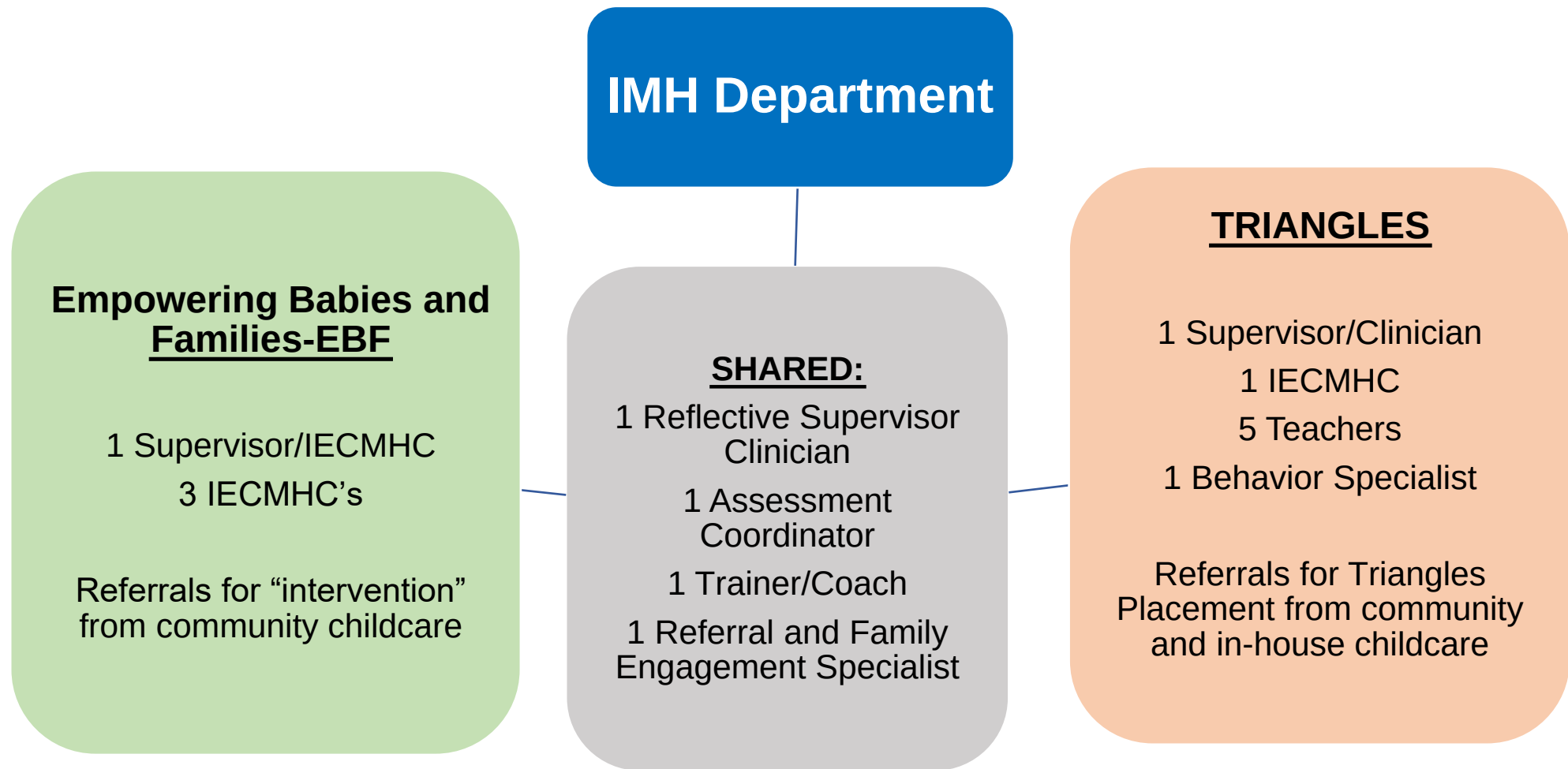
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LE's IECMHC efforts How and Why

- Long term planning to access funding to implement the only IEMCHC program in our county
- Commitment to contributing to major shifts in equity
- Oppressive racism consistently affecting outcomes for children of color
- Societal upheavals: BLM, deaths, inequitable practices continue in systems, pandemic that exacerbated family stress and outcome
- Children with more complex and continuous trauma-based behaviors with poor access to support
- Strong belief in the model and the outcomes

NEW IECMHC PROGRAMMING



Total Department Staff: 16

Program Development: Pre-Service Phase

- Building the Team with equity at the core
- **Relationships – Relationships – Relationships**
- Internal Processes Discussion
- Frequent formal and informal meetings
- Authentic team contributions to program development
- Developing the hierarchy v. team approach
- Designing and Re-designing Training
- Incorporating Equity into all processes
- Developing Equity processes into ENTIRE AGENCY
- Reflective Supervision and Reflective Process



Emphasis on training, team building and reflective practice in pre-planning and planning stages

Onboarding training
reflect equity

Annual IMH
department training
week with courageous
conversations

Development of Equity
Committee in agency
for CQI

Cultural Humility
in person trainings

Polling staff for
honest feedback

Willingness to process
suggestions, ideas,
negative responses

Reassessing
needs continually

Planning training
with the team: from
the inside out

EQUITY – HOW TO CREATE REAL CHANGE?

Beach Equity!



A real commitment is required
to invest in seeking true equity
in...

- Service Delivery
- Treatment of clients
- Hiring practices
- Supervision and management
- Environment
- Messaging
- Activities
- Communications
- Diversity of service providers
- Commitment to equitable supervision of minority employees

Educate and train - - generate awareness

Engage in real conversations

Promote Reflective Practice

Create diverse teams

Create safe space for conversations

Promote cultural humility

Join local partnerships

Engage employees from the E.D. to the janitor

Engage clients/families for input and participation

Create an internal CQI Group to review practices and services for equitable practices

Stand with families against racism or exclusionary tactics that impact them

Include equity in all program development

Engage in trainings and discussions





DISCUSSION-QUESTIONS

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