



5 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

of Effective Professional Development for Mental Health Consultants

A COMPREHENSIVE REPORT HIGHLIGHTING THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS REQUIRED FOR EFFECTIVE PD IN A PRACTICAL CHECKLIST FORMAT

In 2021, the Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (CoE) conducted a consensus-building research study to determine the essential activities of IECMHC. Data gathered through this DELPHI process specifically questioned IECMHC consultants and supervisors about their actions and activities in promoting equity and cultural sensitivity in their respective programs. The predominant response highlighted an active engagement in professional development (PD) opportunities that bolster equity and cultural sensitivity.

Furthermore, the field has seen an escalating demand among consultants for PD opportunities that equip them with skills and confidence to navigate challenging conversations, especially those surrounding race, power, gender diversity, and bias. Such opportunities not only enable consultants to

manage their emotional responses but also cultivate a deeper self-awareness about equity-related issues.

With these findings in mind, we sought out to enhance equity-focused PD for mental health consultants through two in-depth studies. The first study questioned the methods employed by consultants to advance equity when working with racially or ethnically diverse children. The feedback revealed that through reflective supervision and PD opportunities, consultants developed key skills and strategies for engaging in anti-bias practice. Next, key informant interviews sought to identify recommendations from eight experts in IECMHC TA and PD. The experts' feedback coalesced around finding ways to expand our current content and innovate our andragogical methods.

This comprehensive report details findings from these studies, highlighting the essential elements required for effective PD in a practical checklist format. We delve into the overlapping findings, providing a comprehensive roadmap for those looking to invest wisely in PD, build a more equitable IECMHC field, and better serve children and families. Reflective supervisors and PD-providers can provide effective PD for mental health consultants through the following strategies.

1. Shift beliefs and thinking

Ask follow-up or probing questions:

Where do you think that's coming from?

Why do you think that's coming up for the teacher when the child is presenting these types of behaviors?

Tell me more.

Instead of focusing on what's "wrong" with the child, what do you think happened to the child?

How do the ways you identify show up in your work?

RESOURCES

- [IECMHC Foundational Modules: Intro Video Applying the FAN Model to Integrate Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health](#)
- [Exploring Culture, Race, and Ethnicity in Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation: The Role of the Consultative Alliance](#)
- [Going Deeper to Increase Self-Awareness and Culturally Responsive](#)

2. Explore positionality

Implement regular practices of mindful self-reflection and self-regulation.

Recognize and understand how one's social positioning influences interactions with others.

Engage in continual self-assessment of development in key equity skills/competencies.

Understand personal biases, cultural worldview, and experiences with privilege and disadvantage.

Learn about historical and structural systems that have disadvantaged certain groups, and understand how these systems influence current environments and relationships.

RESOURCES

- [Cultural and Linguistic Competence Self-Assessment Checklist for Early Head Start and Head Start Program Administrator and Managers](#)
- [Cultural and Linguistic Competence Self-Assessment Checklist for Early Head Start and Head Start Programs](#)
- [Best Practice Tutorial 10: Cultural and Linguistic Competence in Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation](#)
- [Beyond the 101: Equity, Disparity & Bias](#)
- [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Heart of the Consultative Stance](#)

3. Provide diverse opportunities to reflect on equity topics

Help consultants self-reflect on equity topics.

Ask how the topic affects consultants.

Embrace different ways of knowing, learning, and teaching, for example, incorporating storytelling, poetry, music, and art.

Allow consultants with shared backgrounds to share their experiences and perspectives.

RESOURCES

- [Consultant Self-Assessment](#)

4. Provide opportunities to practice having difficult conversations

Offer space to lean into difficult conversations and contexts.

Increase capacity to manage feelings of discomfort.

Promote strategies to embed equity into the organizational culture and work environment, allowing consultants to apply their learnings not only with consultees, but also with management, supervisors, and related staff.

Increase colleague support for consultants.

RESOURCES

- [The Differences are Between and Around](#)
- [Equity Chat on Systemic Racism and the Consultative Stance](#)

5. Embody anti-biased practice

Intentionally select tools (such as assessments, for example) that are bias-conscious.

Interrogate cultural norms influenced by whiteness and white supremacy and how that plays out in ECE environments.

Develop awareness of non-normative social influences on parenting and children's behaviors, such as culture, gender, race, etc.

Raise equity issues by asking questions, for example, "Does it seem harder to have that talk, because this is a male teacher? Would it be easier to talk about tone of voice if it were a female teacher?" or "How is this issue impacting your work?"

Explore untaught histories from a decolonized lens, learning about events such as genocide, forced assimilation, and slavery in resource-denied communities.

Understand the historical foundations of structural racism and systems that uphold inequalities, such as policing and preschools.

Study the history of the IECMHC field with a critical examination of the influence of racism, elitism, and Western thought.

RESOURCES

- [Advancing Anti bias Practices in IECMHC Through Reflective Supervision](#)
- [Unlocking Our Implicit Biases Regarding Parenting Practices to Deepen Relations With Families](#)
- [Applying a systems lens to decolonize IECMHC from the 'inside out'](#)
- [Webinar: Centering Latin American children, families, and communities through an anti-racist, trauma-informed, and culturally-responsive lens in IECMHC](#)
- [Advancing Equity in Early Care for Families of Infants and Toddlers with Complex Needs](#)
- [Affirmed, Valued, Esteemed: AVeNue to Equity in ECE Workforce](#)
- [Centering Families and Children Who Are Racially, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse](#)
- [Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children & Families](#)
- [Equity in IECMHC Webinar Series – Webinar 5: Culture, Identity, and History as Sources of Strength and Resilience for Asian American & Pacific Islander Children & Families](#)
- [Equity in IECMHC Webinar Series: Webinar 1 – How Did We Get Here? An Overview of the Root Causes of Disparities in Child Outcomes, and the Role of Child Serving Systems](#)
- [Equity in IECMHC Webinar Series: Webinar 2 – Culture, Identity, and History as Sources of Strength and Resilience for Tribal Communities](#)

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