



Building an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant Workforce in Colorado

*An Environmental Scan
of Training and
Professional
Development Programs*

Presented by Dr. Ashley Brock-
Baca, Butler Institute for
Families



**COLORADO
SHINES
BRIGHTER**
PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT
GRANT BIRTH THROUGH FIVE



Agenda




- Acknowledgments
- Background and Context
- Method
 - Core Team
 - Training and Professional Development Review
 - Focus Groups
- Results
- Recommendations



Acknowledgements

- Laricia Longworth-Reed, project Co-PI
- Luca Maccagno, Research Assistant
- Dr. Lisa Schlueter, Office of Early Childhood
- Core Team
- Focus group participants

Background and Context

- Increasing the availability and quality of early childhood mental health (ECMH) consultation requires establishing a pipeline of diverse, qualified ECMH professionals in Colorado.
- An environmental scan was undertaken to capture the current state and develop recommendations for preparing and training ECMH professionals in alignment with national standards.
- This environmental scan project included the following:
 -  expert input from a Core Team of 12 ECMH leaders in Colorado
 -  a review of available ECMH training and professional development programs
 -  stakeholder feedback from 62 focus group participants



Core Team

- Shannon Bekman, PhD, IECMH-E®, Director, Right Start for Colorado
- Samantha Brown, PhD, LPC, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, Colorado State University
- Charisse Dawkins, LCSW, ECMHC Supervisor, Denver Health, Early Childhood Leadership Commission Early Childhood Workforce Development Subcommittee
- Sierra Hansen, MEd, IMH-E®, ECMHC Coordinator, Healthy Child Care Colorado
- Alison Hargarten, EdS, ECMH Program Manager, Office of Early Childhood
- Noelle Hause, EdD, LPC, IMH-E Mentor (Clinical), Senior Manager, Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health, ZERO TO THREE's Professional Development and Workforce Innovations Department; Adjunct Faculty, University of Northern Colorado; Alliance for the Advancement of IECMH Training Workgroup Chairperson
- Natalie Portman-Marsh, MSW, Adjunct Professor, School of Social Work, University of Denver
- Janis Pottorff, LCSW, IMH-E® III, ECMH Supervisor, North Range Behavioral Health
- Rachel Stein, PhD, LP, NCSP, Clinical Assistant Professor, School of Education and Development, School Psychology, University of Colorado, Denver
- Vani Tangella, MPH, Racial Equity Specialist, Maternal and Child Health Workforce Development Section, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- Sarai Trujillo, MA, LPC, ECMH Team Lead, Sol Vista, ECMH Model Implementation Advisory Team
- Tracy Vojar, PhD, IMH-E®, Clinical Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Professional Psychology, University of Denver

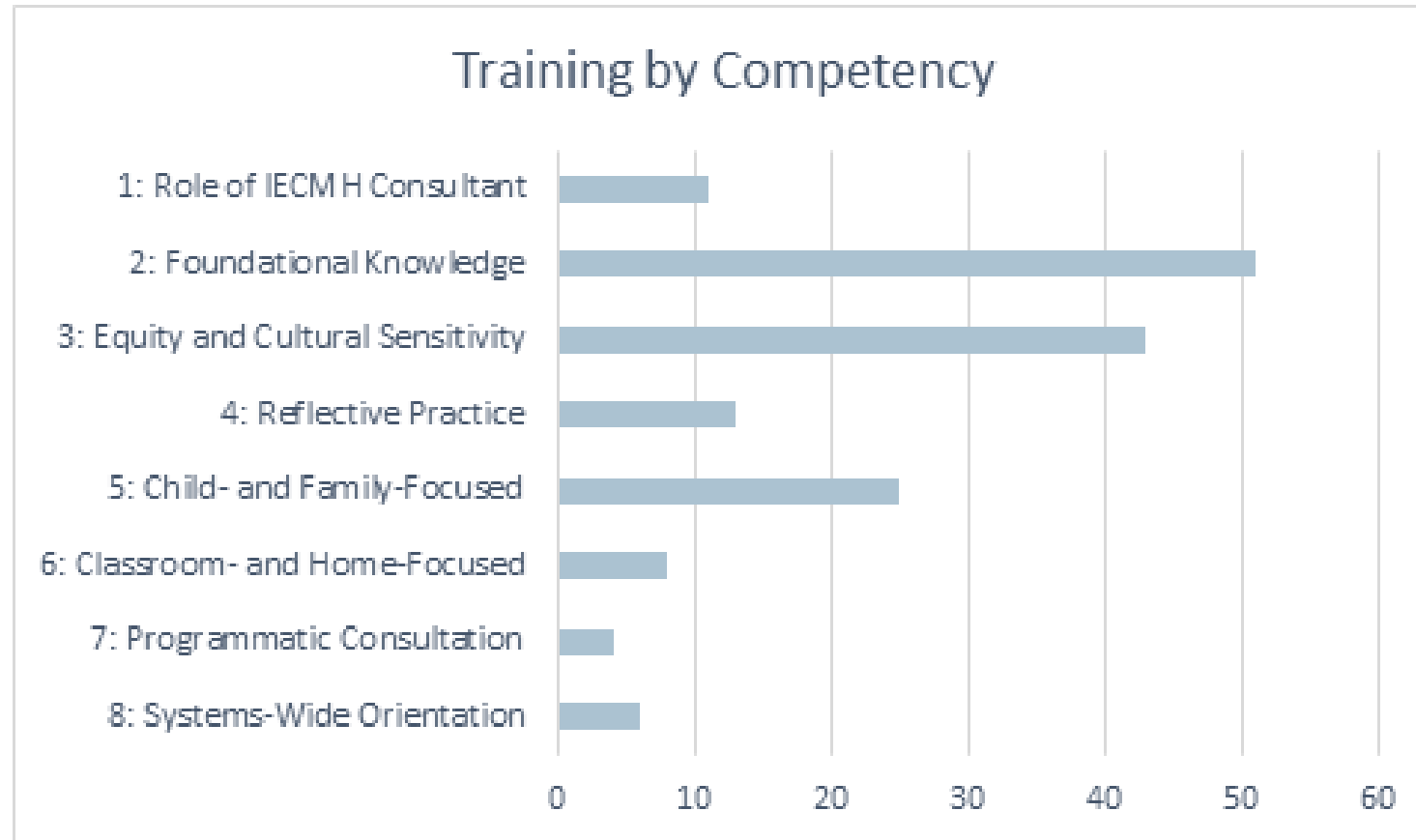


Training and Professional Development Program Review

Training Categories	Number
Multi-session, instructor-led academic courses with assignments, conducted over a period of several months (in-person or virtual)	4
Single-session or multi-session, instructor-led courses (in-person or virtual)	26
Interactive, asynchronous online courses	24
Live/synchronous webinars	5
Recorded webinars or videos	16
Online tutorials	8
Training courses with various formats or offered in more than one format	4
Curriculum designed for instructor-led training (no known instructor in Colorado)	1
Total number of training opportunities reviewed	88



Training and Professional Development Program Review





Training and Professional Development Program Review

Professional Development Program Categories	Number
Graduate-level specialty programs	1
Graduate certificate programs	5
Certificate programs from an institution of higher education, including community colleges	3
Certificate programs from institutions other than institutions of higher education	2
Endorsement programs from the Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health and its chapter organizations	2
Internships for undergraduate and graduate students, affiliated with institutions of higher education	1
Programs sponsored by institutions of higher education (no certificate conferred)	2
Total number of professional development programs reviewed	16



Focus Groups



- 62 stakeholders engaged
- 12 focus groups conducted between July 28 - October 28, 2021
- Focus group questions tailored to each stakeholder group – e.g., higher education, ECMH consultants, direct service recipients, funders



Focus Groups

Focus Group	Number of Participants
State Programs	8
Supervisors, Hiring Managers, and Team Leads	6
ECMHC Service Recipients (Early Childhood Educators and Administrators)	6
ECMHC Service Recipients (Family or Caregiver)	1
Higher Education	10
Subject-Matter Experts	5
ECMH Consultants	15
Allied Professionals	8
ECMH Funders	3
Total number of participants	62



Focus Group Results

- Recruitment
- Career Pathways
- Higher Education
- Equitable, Diverse, and Inclusive Workforce
- Qualifications and Endorsement
- Ongoing Competency-Based Training
- Training Access, Modality, and Quality
- Infrastructure



Focus Group Results: Recruitment

- Identified workforce shortages as one of the most important challenges facing the ECMH workforce
- Highlighted the need to implement strategies that address recruitment
- Included concerns on impact of compensation on recruitment
- Emphasized building awareness of the profession in early career training

"I would love it if undergraduates, or even graduate schools, knew what an early childhood mental health [consultant] is.[...] I think we're starting to get there but the process is really, really slow. I'd be thrilled if any class really in an undergraduate or even graduate institution would highlight this as an opportunity."



Focus Group Results: Career Pathways

- Pathways to becoming a consultant are complicated by differences in license-eligible master's degree requirements
- Requirements for State-funded positions can differ from positions funded by other organizations, creating difficulty in understanding the pathways to entering the field
- Consultants, allied professionals, and direct-service recipients repeatedly expressed concern that providers may not be able to access higher levels of education and suggested that the field must create pathways from the associate level to the master's level

“There is confusion around pathways and the difference in State-funded positions versus philanthropic-funded positions...And so it's really difficult to navigate. So, in this sense, when there are different qualifications and different pathways and not a specific higher education track, per se, I think it's really difficult for people to figure out.”



Focus Group Results: Higher Education

- Opportunities and interests in collaboration among higher education stakeholders
- Specific interests in creating certificates and specialization tracks for prospective IECMH students
- Innovative approaches being considered in higher education, such as “stackable graduate programs” to provide students accessible options and flexibility
- Interest in supporting continuing education

“The other thing is, I mean, there's a lot of interest around certificates, micro credentials, supporting continuing education and I know we have a lot of faculty that have expertise that touches this area in a lot of different ways.”

- Higher education stakeholder



Focus Group Results: Equitable, Diverse, and Inclusive Workforce

- Action is needed to eliminate barriers to accessing higher education in the recruitment of a diverse workforce
- Concern exists that higher education institutions, hiring organizations, and programs are not prepared to address issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion to support consultants.
 - Subject-matter experts and higher education stakeholders highlighted the need for departments in settings across the pipeline, including higher education and hiring organizations, to assess their preparedness and initiate efforts to build an environment sufficient to support a diverse workforce cohort.



Focus Group Results: Qualifications and Endorsement

- Qualifications and credentials required to practice ECMH consultation were perceived as unregulated and varied and reflected the various disciplines and career pathways.
- The *Endorsement for Culturally Sensitive, Relationship-Focused Practice Promoting Infant Mental Health (IMH-E®)* and the *Endorsement for Culturally Sensitive, Relationship-Focused Practice Promoting Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH-E®)* is key in Colorado.
 - The endorsement provides an existing framework that could help align qualifications across the field.
 - The field looks to the endorsement for guidance on key competencies.
 - Stakeholders offered feedback on some challenges and opportunities for improvement.

“When you get into infant mental health and early childhood mental health [...] to know what capacities someone is bringing with them when they call themselves infant mental health consultants, it's hard to know in fact what they bring unless they're also coming with that endorsement which is the helpful piece because then it lets us know, "Okay, we know for a fact you have these certain capacities [...]"



Focus Group Results: Ongoing Competency-Based Training

- Emphasis on the importance of providing competency-based training
- Of the eight COE for IECMHC competencies, four emerged as areas where stakeholders identified gaps in their preparation:
 - Role of the IECMH Consultant
 - Equity and Cultural Sensitivity
 - Programmatic Consultation
 - Systems-Wide Orientation

“With the settings, I think just knowing our restrictions in the center, just things that we can't necessarily do again with staff limits and that kind of stuff, and things we may not be able to provide. It's not always feasible. I think that that's where it gets a little tricky sometimes and I wish they understood.”



Focus Group Results: Training Access, Modality, and Quality

- COVID has increased training access through online training opportunities.
 - However, consultants preferred instructor-led training and emphasized that watching pre-recorded training and webinars online was not favorable.
- Consultants and subject-matter experts shared concerns about the quality of trainings
 - One-time trainings may be too low in intensity.
 - Training that is “intensive, focused and long-term” supports competency.
- Consultants would prefer to have more in-depth training with practical transfer of learning opportunities.

“If these courses [...] and the trainings [...] could be practical [and] go toward skills on the ground. How do we use these skills? Rather than theoretical, which is what we usually get in college and graduate school. I think that that would really go a long way of building the skills of people at the entry level, all the way up.”

- Consultant



Focus Group Results: Infrastructure

- PDIS provides an example of a potential way to address training infrastructure for ECMH consultants.
- There is optimism and motivation to understand opportunities to track training and credentials through a centralized state system.
- Regardless of the exact infrastructure, the system needs to be flexible and responsive to avoid creating barriers to consultant use.

“How can the infrastructure be built that someone can oversee someone who is thinking about becoming a consultant, who gets trained as a consultant, and then stays as a consultant, and how do you provide support along that whole spectrum of where someone is? How do you do it in a flexible enough manner that there's multiple access points to it but in a structured enough manner that there's accountability and that you can really measure where people are and where they need to be. That's what I'm left thinking about.”



Recommendations

- Recruitment
- Career Pathways
- Higher Education
- Equitable, Diverse, and Inclusive Workforce
- Qualifications and Endorsement
- Ongoing Competency-Based Training
- Training Access, Modality, and Quality
- Infrastructure

Recommendations

Recruitment

- Increase ECMH consultant recruitment by advancing awareness of the profession and ensuring equitable financial compensation.
- Help administrators of agencies employing ECMH consultants to understand the requirements for consultants and the role of the consultant.

Recommendations

Career Pathways

- Identify educational and professional pathways for ECMH consultants and provide clear expectations and guidance on training and career requirements.

Recommendations

Higher Education

- Enhance higher education collaboration to build programs in institutions of higher education that support clear pathways for ECMH consultant preparation at various levels.
- Invest in higher education infrastructure to support the creation of programs and align coursework across disciplines and across institutions, from the community college level to graduate programs, to provide deep knowledge and application of ECMH knowledge and skills within the context of families' culture and language.
- Increase accessibility to higher education programs to grow a diverse and representative workforce and better reflect and meet the needs of children, families, and communities.

Recommendations

Higher Education (cont.)

- Develop equitable financial support models to recruit, train, and retain professionals pursuing the profession, including scholarship and pay-back waiver programs.
- Develop community college certificate programs that align with the Family Associate endorsement requirements to advertise career options in ECMH to students and create a career pathway for them, starting with the certificate.
- Expand and replicate certificate programs that offer interdisciplinary academic credit and CEUs for professionals across disciplines in the mental health field.
- Replicate the internship opportunity available to bachelor's and master's degree-seeking students of social work at Colorado State University in Larimer County with other universities and counties, as well as across mental health disciplines.

Recommendations

Equitable, Diverse, and Inclusive Workforce

- Identify professional development and training opportunities to support programs and organizations that employ and partner with the ECMH consultation workforce to address organizational practices around equity, diversity, and inclusion to better support and retain a diverse workforce.



Recommendations

Qualifications and Endorsement

- Centralize and increase professionals' knowledge of the qualifications and credentialing processes for ECMH consultation.
- Support dedicated mental health professionals who may be missing key qualifications and competencies.

Recommendations

Ongoing Competency-Based Training

- Develop and provide accessible, competency-based, high-quality professional development to all consultants, with special attention to training that addresses identified gaps in specific areas:
 - Competency 1: Role of the ECMH Consultant
 - Competency 3: Equity and Cultural Sensitivity
 - Competency 7: Programmatic Consultation
 - Competency 8: Systems-Wide Orientation
- Develop and implement a competency model and a comprehensive approach to professional development in alignment with that model. The competency model should be integrated into hiring, onboarding, supervision, performance review, and career advancement for consultants.

Recommendations

Ongoing Competency-Based Training (cont.)

- Formalize mentoring programs that include emphasis on programmatic consultation, with infrastructure such as guidance and preparation for mentors and multiple pathways to qualify as a mentor.
- Provide support for new consultants to achieve Competencies 7 and 8 that includes a systems-wide orientation with a community-based lens, information about community factors such as system navigation and available resources, and the cultural context of the community they are working in. Create a directory for IECMH clinical treatment to support consultants' referrals.

Recommendations

Training Access, Modality, and Quality

- Provide sustainable funding to expand high-quality, instructor-led training and transfer of learning opportunities relevant to IECMH and aligned with the Alliance and Center of Excellence competencies. Training and transfer of learning activities must be designed to support ECMH consultants to attain the highest levels of learning in Bloom's taxonomy across competency areas.
- Support organizations offering high-quality, instructor-led training relevant to IECMH by assisting and financially supporting the administrative process required for their courses to offer CEUs.

Recommendations

Training Access, Modality, and Quality (cont.)

- Provide sustainable funding to support ongoing competency-based training for the IECMH workforce, including consultants, clinicians, and allied professionals, so that training is offered at no cost to participants.
- Provide training primarily through instructor-led, virtual formats to reduce travel time and costs for participants but maintain the benefits of instructor-led training. When possible, create learning communities that develop professional networks and promote peer-to-peer learning.

Recommendations

Infrastructure

- Develop infrastructure to support competency alignment and allow professionals to document their competencies from various professional experiences and preparation. Align documentation with requirements for maintaining licensure in various roles (counselors, social workers, psychologists) who may fill ECMH consultant positions.
- Embed the recommended qualifications and requirements for ECMH consultants in contracts, hiring procedures, and human resources systems, regardless of the funding source, and offer tools to all agencies employing ECMH consultants.



COLORADO
Office of Early Childhood
Department of Human Services



BUTLER INSTITUTE FOR FAMILIES
Graduate School of Social Work

Thank you!