



What is Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation?

IECMHC in home visiting is a prevention-based service that pairs a mental health professional with supervisors and home visitors to ensure they have the support they need to be successful in helping families nurture the mental health of infants young children, and themselves. IECMHC supports equity by providing culturally responsive, trauma-informed services tailored to each individual's unique needs and experiences.



Why is IECMHC Needed in Delaware?

Home visiting is part of Delaware's early childhood system of care that addresses all aspects of early childhood health and well-being, improves health equity, and puts family needs and experiences first. IECMHC is a critical support to home visiting because it helps address early social and emotional challenges, strengthens caregiver-child relationships, and equips families with strategies to support mental health during a key period of brain development, setting a strong foundation for future growth.

Some Benefits of IECMHC in Home Visiting

Families have access to quality, equitable, and culturally sensitive IECMHC, creating environments where child and adult mental wellness and capacity for mutually beneficial, nurturing relationships thrive.

For the Team

Provides an ongoing and regular opportunity for supervisor and home visitor reflection to sort out and cope with strong feelings brought on by complex work with families. This can reduce staff stress and burnout.

Home visitors receiving IECMHC can better address complex family dynamics effectively, such as the impact of intimate partner violence, grief and loss, and mental illness to help caregivers create a stable, nurturing environment for themselves and their children.

For the System

For the Family

Different Ways IECMHC Can Help

Education and Awareness

The IECMH consultant provides training on topics that the home visiting program identifies such as attachment, self-regulation, postpartum depression, substance use, and navigating challenging relationships. The home visiting staff gain knowledge and skills. The consultant then reinforces this information in reflective consultation and during ongoing meetings.

Support to Supervisors

The consultant meets regularly with the program supervisor/manager to provide an opportunity for reflection, problem-solving, planning staff interactions, and embedding the skills and knowledge that the consultant brings into the program, such as reflective capacity.

Individual & Group Support to Home Visitors

This consultant facilitated support, provides a safe, confidential space for home visitors to reflect on their work with other home visitors or with their supervisor and the consultant 1:1, to process challenges, build self-awareness, develop strategies to support families effectively, and strengthen their own emotional well-being, ultimately improving the quality of services provided.



Who Provides Consultation?



Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants in Delaware have a strong mix of education, skills and practice experience to be able to support home visiting effectively, including:

Educational Background: A master's in a mental health field like psychology, social work, or counseling. If a consultant has a master's in early childhood education it would be accompanied with additional education or certification in infant mental health.

Specialized Training: Expertise in infant and early childhood mental health, trauma-informed care, and family systems.

Practical Experience: Experience working with infants and young children, families, and multidisciplinary teams in settings like home visiting, or mental health services.

Cultural Competence: Skills to provide culturally responsive and equitable care to diverse families.

Reflective Practice Skills: Ability to facilitate reflective supervision and consultation with home visitors.

What are the Expectations for Participating Home Visiting Programs?

It is important for home visiting supervisors/managers to spend some initial time with their consultant to build a rapport and a foundation of trust, learn about consultation, and share information about their program, team strengths and any areas of support needed. Together the supervisor and consultant will determine a flow for consultation that is favorable for both the program and the consultant. The flow includes, duration, frequency and the location that consultation will occur. The supervisor will also partner with the consultant to introduce IECMHC to the home visitors presenting a shared message around the components and benefits that IECMHC will provide.

As consultation gets started, supervisors and home visitors will identify topics that they want to discuss in consultation and will commit to exploring with openness, any challenges and bright spots of their work with families and remain curious to new learning and growth.

How are We Learning About IECMHC in Delaware?

An evaluation team is working on a 6 month study and a 6 month follow up of the implementation of IECMHC in Delaware. Information is being collected from consultants, home visiting participants and state leaders using focus groups, surveys and regular data collection. The results will be used to modify the model to best meet the needs of Delaware home visiting programs. Results will be shared statewide at the conclusion of the study.

Where is This Service Happening Now? What is Next?

The Delaware Model for IECMHC was developed in 2023 and piloted in Parents as Teachers Home Visiting Programs. IECMHC will continue in these programs and will be expanded into all Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Programs in 2025-2026.

