

Consultant's Handbook



for
Consultation in Child Care Centers

co-sponsored by
Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and
Substance Abuse Services

Oklahoma Department of Human Services

Oklahoma State Department of Health

Purpose

Provide a trained professional to visit child care facilities over an extended period of time, support the staff in dealing with children and families under stress, and ultimately enhance the well-being of everyone in the child care setting.

Values Inherent In Mental Health Consultation To Child Care

1. All young children deserve to spend their days in a safe, stable, caring, nurturing environment.
2. Families are full participants in all aspects of services for their children.
3. Practices build upon, promote, and enhance individual, family, and child care staff strengths, rather than focus solely on weaknesses or problems.

Goals

1. To maintain children in child care who are in danger of being expelled.
2. To stabilize the staff in child care settings by expanding their competencies in understanding challenging behavior.
3. To emphasize the importance of early relationships.
4. To encourage positive social and emotional development.
5. To be available to caregivers and families in times of stress or crisis.



Basic Steps

1. Regardless of where you got the referral, be sure that the center has been approved by the Warmline, 1-888-574-5437.
2. As soon as possible, call the director of the center and set up an initial appointment.
3. During the first appointment, sit down with the director and be sure you understand exactly what he/she is asking you to do, and be sure the director understands exactly what these services entail, including the number of times you plan to visit and the variety of services you might provide. This is your first opportunity to establish a respectful and trusting collaborative relationship.
4. Be as flexible as possible in setting up your schedule of visits. While you want to be clear about expectations and boundaries, you want them to know that you can be called on in times of emergency or crisis.
5. Leave something with the director each time you visit - a fact sheet, brochure about challenging behavior, a reprint of an article - something that speaks to their concerns and reinforces your sharing partnership.
6. Ask the director to take you around the center and introduce you to every person who works there. This assures teachers and support staff know who you are, why you are there, and how they can use your services.
7. When you are observing a classroom, tell the children that you are there to help the teacher. Try to fit in with routine procedures until you have an opportunity to talk with the teacher and learn how you can best be used.
8. Look for ways to praise staff for something before you start offering suggestions for change. Remember our original words of wisdom from Kyle Pruett, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto others."

DO

- Make a strong, supportive relationship with the child care providers, especially the center director. To be successful, you must win the trust of the staff and be willing to form a partnership where respect and learning are a two-way street.
- Be prepared to help in a classroom when asked and use the experience to model positive and therapeutic techniques with all the children.
- Team up with the staff to design classroom layout and structure that promote social skill building and predictable routines for the children.
- Ask to be included in any parent conference where caregivers are recommending referrals for behavioral health services. Your training has prepared you to provide positive non-threatening input and a supportive perspective on appropriate services.
- Offer to be the speaker for staff and/or parent meetings where behavioral health issues are to be discussed. Outlines, videos, and brochures are available for this purpose.





DON'T

- Be afraid to spend some time alone with a particular staff person who has some personal crisis if the director requests this. Make it clear that what you are doing is enhancing the competencies of a caregiver, not providing therapy. If a staff person wants therapy, help that person find the needed services at the appropriate site.
- Feel that you have to have an answer to every question. If you are unsure about your response, tell them you will research the issue and get back to them with the answer—and then do it!
- Do any on-the-spot assessment and diagnosis. If people ask you specific questions about a diagnosis or a medication, try to help the caregiver understand how we work and the requirements of our professional ethics.
- Forget that we must model and practice a service that is responsive to the cultural, racial, and ethnic differences of the populations we serve.
- Feel that you must report every infraction of a licensing requirement. If you see something that you feel is endangering the children, call the Warmline and discuss it with them. They will report where necessary and try not to damage your relationship with the child care program.

Available Resources

Books

THE MAGIC YEARS: Understanding and Handling the Problems of Early Childhood by Selma Fraiberg

UNSMILING FACES: How Preschools Can Heal by Lesley Koplou

THE CRISIS MANUAL by Karen Miller

MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD by Paul Donahue, Beth Falk & Anne Provet

CARING FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS IN VIOLENT ENVIRONMENTS: HURT, HEALING AND HOPE by Joy Osofsky and Emily Fenichel

PROMOTING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN: The Role of Mental Health Consultants in Early Childhood Settings by Paul J. Donahue

RELATIONSHIPS, THE HEART OF QUALITY CARE: Creating Community Among Adults in Early Care Settings by Amy Baker and Lynn Manfredi/Petitt

CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS: Creating a Place for All Children by Susan Bell, Victoria Carr, Dawn Denno, Lawrence Johnson, Louise Phillips

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR IN YOUNG CHILDREN; Understanding, Preventing, and Responding Effectively by Barbara Kaiser & Judy Sklar Rasminsky

THE POWER OF GUIDANCE: Teaching Social-Emotional Skills in Early Childhood Classrooms by Dan Gartrell

Videotapes

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE MAD THAT YOU FEEL featuring Fred Rogers (Includes a trainer's manual)

COPING WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR where teachers describe positive guidance

PAINTING A POSITIVE PICTURE: Proactive Behavior Management with teachers demonstrating examples

MEETING THE CHALLENGE: Child Care & Mental Health Collaboration with Kyle Pruett

DAILY DILEMMAS, Coping with Challenges: with examples and discussion by teachers

UNDERSTANDING CHILDHOOD TRAUMA with Dr. Bruce Perry

Brochures, Fact Sheets And Reprints

From our two favorite brochures, "Helping Children Learn Self-Control" and "Love & Learn: Positive Guidance for Young Children," to a series of fact sheets ranging from the Warm-line to biting and toilet learning, this program offers a wide variety of resource materials that are available to consultants by contacting the Center for Early Childhood Professional Development (CECPD) at 1-888-446-7608 or Warmline at 1-888-574-5437. Whatever you encounter, please take advantage of the support and materials available.

*Call the Child Care Warmline at
1-888-574-5437*

The Child Care Consultation project is co-sponsored by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Oklahoma Department of Health and Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

This initiative supports a movement for the early childhood community to make more room for the social and emotional growth of children in care. In the words of Lesley Koplow, author of one of our texts, *Unsmiling Faces*, "The only walls that will need to be torn down to accommodate this project are psychological walls the walls between the disciplines of early childhood education and mental health, which have stayed erect for decades in spite of our commitment to the 'whole child'." She goes on to suggest that just as young children love to knock down block towers of their own making, we will feel liberated by breaking through these divisions of our own design. And, indeed, as our project grows, this is our experience.

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