

# Self-Assessment Guide

*Early childhood mental health is the social, emotional, and behavioral well being of young children birth through five and their families. Infants and very young children, along with their families, are served in a variety of community settings, and by diverse agencies and providers – both formal and informal. Primary care settings, childcare, Head Start, foster care, playgroups, and home visitation programs provide states and communities with opportunities to enhance early mental health. A mental health perspective, services, and supports can be infused into the early childhood system in ways that: promote healthy social and emotional development; identify risk factors and intervene early; and treat children and families with more significant challenges.*

*This **Self-Assessment Guide** is based upon an early childhood system of care framework (see below) developed to help states and communities conceptualize, organize, and integrate services and supports to meet the mental health needs of young children and their families. Since every state and community is unique with differing needs and capacities, this system of care construct is meant to be used flexibly by your state or community. It provides an illustration of the interdependence and complexity of a system, the need for multiple stakeholders and partners, and the building blocks (infrastructure development) that under-pin services and supports. An early childhood system of care approach can be built upon existing collaboration efforts with services and supports delivered in environments where young children and families are already served. Early childhood mental health agencies and services are often unfamiliar partners that may not have worked closely together, yet each offer specific skills, expertise, and access to services and environments that when combined, meet the increasingly prevalent needs for preventive and early behavioral health interventions for children birth through five and their families.*

## **Vision, Values, and Guidelines**

- ◆ Has your state or community developed a vision, values and/or guidelines for early childhood mental health? If yes, please share. Who was involved in the process?
- ◆ Have you determined the population(s) to be served? Be very specific with regard to age of children, how at-risk is defined, whether a diagnosis is needed to serve children.

## **Political and Budget Environment**

- ◆ Has your state/communities experienced changes to the budget impacting early childhood, mental health, or related programs?
- ◆ Has the political will to address these early childhood issues changed recently?

## **Strategic Planning/Policy Development**

- ◆ Are there formal or informal planning processes in your state/community related to early childhood mental health? What is the focus of the initiative(s), which agencies and partners are participating, and identify a “lead agency” (if appropriate).
- ◆ What, if any, key legislative or policy initiatives existed prior to your state’s early childhood mental health planning. What, if any, key legislative or policy action has occurred as a result of your initiative? (e.g. legislation on serving children with multiple risk indicators, a Governor’s Order, changes in Medicaid reimbursement, etc.).

## **Interagency Partnerships**

- ◆ Has your state/community developed formal interagency agreements or Memorandum of Understandings (MOU’s) between early childhood agencies, mental health, and other agencies that guide the planning or delivery of services?
- ◆ Has your state developed strong informal interagency partnerships?
- ◆ How are state and community partnerships cultivated and maintained?
- ◆ What are the interagency issues that you are struggling with currently, if any?

## **Family Involvement and Advocacy**

- ◆ What family advocacy groups are involved in the planning of your initiative, and what roles have they played in the development and implementation of system-building efforts?
- ◆ Are you including families of young children in your planning efforts?
- ◆ How are you reaching out to a diverse representation of families – families of color, non-English speakers, and different income groups, families served by different service sectors?
- ◆ What supports are provided to facilitate family involvement (e.g., transportation costs, childcare, stipends, training, etc.)?
- ◆ Have you had difficulty in identifying and approaching families of young children with mental health needs? If yes, how are you addressing this issue?

## **Services and Supports**

- ◆ To what extent does your state/community have a comprehensive array of services and supports for young children and their families? What are the major services and supports for children and for families? Are they available statewide/community-wide?
- ◆ How do families/children access early childhood mental health services? Are there multiple points of entry for early childhood mental health services?
- ◆ What family supports such as respite, parent-to-parent support, and family resource centers are available? How are families informed about these?
- ◆ What services and supports are available to other caregivers (e.g., mental health consultation, mentoring, training, reflective supervision, crisis support)?
- ◆ Is your state/community funding pilot or demonstration projects? Are they being evaluated?
- ◆ What is your state/community’s current service capacity in the areas of: a) *promotion*, such as the use of mental health screening in physician’s offices, library corners with social emotional health information; b) *preventive services* such as prenatal screening for

high-risk mothers, home-visiting, mental health consultation; and c) *intervention services* such as play therapy, dyadic treatment, mental health consultation?

### **Cultural Competence**

- ◆ Do you have a plan or initiative to address cultural competence in your state/community?
- ◆ Is cultural competence being addressed at multiple levels including; policy, system planning, and service delivery?
- ◆ What are the major ethnic/racial groups in your state/community?
- ◆ Are different ethnic/racial groups involved in your planning efforts?
- ◆ Is training available to providers and families on cultural and linguistic competence?

### **Prepared Workforce**

- ◆ How is your state/community addressing the need for well-trained providers (e.g., early childhood mental health in-service and pre-service training and preparation for early childhood and mental health professionals, certification requirements, etc.)?
- ◆ Do service providers include nontraditional as well as credentialed professionals?

### **Maximized/Flexible Funding and Sustainability**

- ◆ Is there an inventory of the major federal, state, and local funding being used for early childhood mental health services and supports, noting eligibility criteria?
- ◆ How are you organizing funding (e.g., blended, braided or pooled funding) and are any of the funds flexible?
- ◆ Have you been able to redeploy or reinvest funds from restrictive settings (hospitals, residential treatment)?
- ◆ Does your state have a managed care initiative and if so, are mental health services carved out? Are developmental services bundled?
- ◆ Do you have a sustainability plan? If so, please specify.
- ◆ Is EPSDT being used in your state/community? How?
- ◆ Have you reached out to include multiple agencies, foundations, community organizations, etc. to gain broad ownership in your system?

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- ◆ How do you evaluate the progress and effectiveness of your system development and implementation?
- ◆ How do you assure quality services and supports and measure outcomes for children and families?
- ◆ How are you using data to advocate for system change?
- ◆ Does your state/community have a cross-system data collection mechanism?