

Early Childhood Provider Perspectives of Mental Health Needs for Young Children in a Rural Region

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Purpose

Last year it was discovered young children entered Wraparound with more needs than older children. A study was initiated to better understand area provider attitudes about the need for early childhood mental health.

Executive Summary

- A survey was developed using a collaborative process including the One Community One Family (OCOF) Evaluation Advisory Board, infant mental health specialists and the core evaluation team.
 - The survey included three main components: demographics, mental health problem list, and questions about referral practices.
- Participants represented three categories: mental health providers (N=28, 25.5%), daycare/preschool providers (N=54, 49%), other early childhood providers (N=28, 24.5%).
- Over 50% of providers reported parental concerns, developmental issues, behavioral problems, and trauma history observed among the children they serve.
- Findings suggest that early childhood providers are only likely to refer young children for mental health services if there is a known traumatic event, alternatively early childhood providers are almost 2 times less likely to initiate a mental health referral for developmental concerns which commonly co-occur and frequently indicate mental health needs in young children.

Tables/Graphs

- The table below shows the distribution of responses for participations for two questions:
 - What problems do you observe in the young children at your place of work? (all providers in analysis)
 - What problems would cause you to refer to a mental health provider? (mental health providers removed from the analysis).

Table 1. Comparison of need in population and referral patterns

	Need in population served, N=110	Reason to referral to mental health, N=80
Potty Training Issues	30.9%	10.8%
Developmental Concerns	74.5%	53%
Attachment Issues	42.8%	66.3%
Parenting Concerns	69.1%	72.3%
Behavioral Problems	79.2%	79.5%
Trauma History	61.9%	79.5%

One can see that parental concerns, behavioral problems, and trauma history are consistently reported for both lists, while the biggest variations are for potty training issues, developmental concerns and attachment issues.

Table 2. Mental Health Problem List

Parenting needs	Attachment	Behaviors	Trauma	Developmental concerns
Poor parenting	Leaves adults	Relationship with peers	Exposure to Trauma	Delay verbal
Unsafe home	Leaves home	Head banging	Lack empathy	Delayed motor
Caregiver Mental Illness	Difficultly bonding with caregiver	Temper	Lack of eye contact	Learning delay
Caregiver Substance Abuse	Relationship with adults	Moodiness		
Problems at foster care		Biting		
Malnourishment		Kicked out of preschool		

In an analysis of daycare/preschool providers (N=54) and other early childhood providers (N=28) it was found that they are 2.5 times more likely to identify trauma as a reason to refer, compared to almost 2 times less likely to refer for developmental concerns.