



Commonwealth of Virginia
Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health
Strategic Plan 2022-2026

Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services
State Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Coordinator
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I. Strategic Plan Executive Summary

The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, in collaboration with Virginia Commonwealth University, and Stakeholders from multiple agencies across the Commonwealth, works to advance the Mental Health of young Children birth to six through promotion, prevention, and intervention. Service delivery in Virginia is inclusive of children birth to six with disabilities, and children and families from historically underserved communities. ECMHVA is a statewide initiative focused on the development, implementation and sustainability of a comprehensive early childhood system of care for infant and early childhood mental health. The Early Childhood Mental initiative collaborates with early childhood agencies and representation across the Commonwealth to identify opportunities to increase access to resources and services by researching and securing funding for a continuum of quality in promotion, prevention, and intervention through evidenced-based services that support the child in the context of the family and community. Virginia is committed to supporting the following values as part of the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health initiative:

- Engages parents as partners
- Provides high quality supports and services to children and families
- Includes child and family centered practices rooted in policy & cultural competence
- Service delivery is relationship based
- Services are delivered in the child's natural environment
- Services rendered are trauma informed and evidence based
- Services are linked to community court systems including(family, substance abuse and domestic violence)
- Includes workforce development supporting providers in Education, Early Intervention, Childcare, Health, Mental Health, and Home visiting systems
- Promotes comprehensive mental health services for infants and children in Virginia's foster care system and families facing homelessness across the Commonwealth
- The Virginia's IECMH Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the IECMHVA initiative including the development of and the implementation of the IECMHVA strategic plan, facilitating regularly scheduled meetings for IECMH stakeholders and Advisory Board, and working collaboratively with the Endorsement Coordinator and the Workforce Development Director

*The Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Advisory Board and the Virginia Infant Mental Health Board is comprised of representatives from infant and early childhood systems both on the state and local level whose programming focuses on children from birth to five, their families, and practitioners.

* Funding for the IECMH Virginia initiative is currently made available through our largest funder Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia and The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. Sustaining partners include; Virginia Department of Education, Early Childhood Special Education and

the Head Start State Collaboration office, Virginia Department of Health, and the Virginia Department of Social Services.

II. Vision Statement

The Virginia Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative is committed to improving Social-Emotional wellness and outcomes for children birth to six years by engaging with families, practitioners, and communities across the Commonwealth.

III. Mission Statement

The Virginia Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative will use the principles from the evidence based Pyramid Model framework, to support Social Emotional interventions for children, and to ensure competence and education for Virginia's infant and early childhood practitioners. Virginia's mission is to maximize collaboration at both the state and local level to increase and align professional development in Social Emotional development and education infused with the tenets of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health to maximize wellness for children ages birth to six years of age. Virginia's efforts to increase education for practitioners and services to children will include collaboration and integration of all early childhood systems that serve our youngest citizens to including; Public Pre-k, Early Childhood Special Education classrooms, Early Intervention, Home visiting, and Childcare environments. All efforts will include ongoing guidance and input from our Stakeholders and collaborating partners across the state and will reflect cultural sensitivity for all children and families.



IV. Guiding Principles

- IECMH will engage in educational information and training opportunities that will be accessible for parents, practitioners, and policy makers serving children birth to five, an inclusive system of services that touch the lives of young children including the following systems: judicial, social services, pediatrics, labor and delivery, childcare and public pre-k.

- IECMH practices are Inclusive and promote the concept that the parent-child relationship is the cornerstone of the Infant and Early Childhood mental health work, and is recognized as well as valued by practitioners.
- IECMH practices emphasize the critical importance of the child's social emotional development and wellness in the context of the family and community.
- IECMH practices recognize that social-emotional development and wellness is the foundation for all other learning.
- IECMH practices and trainings recognize and support the principles of infant and early childhood mental health, and the importance of ongoing Reflective Supervision for practitioners in all disciplines.
- IECMH promotes education, trainings, and collaborations that are evidence-based and support best social, emotional and behavioral health for children birth through six years.
- IECMH professional development is consistent and clear across the workforce.
- IECMH services will develop and disseminate materials and resources that can be embedded in system wide programming for children birth to six years. These materials will support the social emotional development and wellness of all children birth to six, and is inclusive of children with disabilities and their families.
- IECMH sustainability relies on State and local agencies collaborating with the IECMH Coordinator to research and respond to young children, birth to six, needs for ongoing support of training and development of consultative practices provided by/for IECMH professionals.
- IECMH Workforce Development team will collect data from the field in order to analyze the following elements of the IECMH work: measure impact of the IECMH work across the state, state deliverables satisfied across the state in IECMH, as well as to inform decision-making for future planning and programming.

V. Desired Outcomes

- Promote Awareness of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health across the Virginia for parents and practitioners.
- Sustain/increase the use of evidence-based practices and tools including the Pyramid model framework across Virginia
- Enhance/increase educational opportunities for CDA, Community Colleges, and Universities across Virginia to implement Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health principles into the curricula.

- Provide training for families and caregivers both in person and virtual for social emotional development and wellness, developmental red flags, and pathways for intervention.
- Promote trainings and educational opportunities in social emotional development and wellness, including the tenets of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health in Childcare settings and public pre-k programming.
- Promote reimbursable hours through Medicaid for Infant Mental Health practitioners.

