



# EARLY CHILDHOOD PROMISING PRACTICE PROFILES

Tobacco Settlement  
Revenue –  
Investments in Youth

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## ***Kentucky Early Childhood Mental Health Program***

### **SUMMARY**

Established in 2003, the **Early Childhood Mental Health Program (ECMH)** provides mental health consultation for early childhood programs and assessment and therapeutic services for young children and their families. Specialists at each of fourteen regional Community Mental Health Centers engage the broader mental health community and early care and education professionals to promote mental health. An important goal of the program is to reduce the number of young children inappropriately expelled from early childhood programs who have social, emotional, and behavioral challenges. Program activities include extensive training, program and child-level consultation, and direct therapeutic services. Over 2,300 children have enrolled in the ECMH Program since 2003 and many more have benefited indirectly from the improved skills and knowledge of early care and education professionals. Focusing on a population that has been previously underserved, ECMH staff are available at no cost to consult with providers and work directly with children and families in a location most suitable for the family. ECMH specialists balance direct services with training and developing professional networks to maximize the impact and reach of their work. Funding for the ECMH is provided, in part, by payments the state receives from the tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA).

For youth programs to be successful, policymakers, program leaders and intermediary organizations need access to flexible and sustainable sources of funding. State payments from the tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) currently fund a range of health, education, prevention, and other initiatives serving young people. This series of promising practices profiles focuses on the use of MSA funds to support early childhood programs and services.

### **BACKGROUND**

Twenty-five percent of Kentucky's tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) dollars fund the early childhood initiative, KIDS NOW, overseen by the Early Childhood Development Authority, a state agency attached to the Governor's Office under the Office of Early Childhood Development. Programmatic investments must contribute to the State's goal that "all young children in Kentucky are healthy and safe, possess the foundation that will enable school and personal success, and live in strong families that are supported and strengthened within their communities." Between 2000 and 2008, KIDS NOW has received over \$265,000,000 in MSA revenue to support activities

related to maternal and child health, supporting families, enhancing early care and education, and establishing support structures.

A component of the KIDS NOW initiative, the **Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Program**, provides mental health consultation for early childhood programs, assessment and therapeutic services for young children and their families as appropriate. Since 2003, \$775,000 in MSA funds are allocated annually to provide core funding to the 14 regions and to support training, coaching, and mentoring supports. These funds enable ECMH specialists to engage in services such as assessment and training, which cannot be billed through the existing fee-for-service structure.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The **Early Childhood Mental Health Program** is administered jointly by the Department of Public Health and the Department of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Addiction Services. Funded with MSA dollars, Kentucky augmented existing mental health services by hiring and training 14 full-time ECMH specialists, one per Regional MHMR Board.

The primary goals of the ECMH Program are to provide:

- Program and child-level consultation to early care and education (child care) programs regarding social, emotional, and behavioral issues;
- Training on working with young children with social, emotional, and behavioral needs and their families to child-serving agencies and individuals; and
- Evaluation, assessment, and therapeutic services for children age birth to five and their families.

Extensive training efforts are a major component of the program, addressing in-depth content and collaborating with many other mental health and early care and education professionals to deliver services to children and their families. Some of the duties of the ECMH Specialist include:

- Provide free consultation and education services to early care and education staff that serve children age birth to five;
- Provide assessments and appropriate treatment to children age birth to five with mental health needs at the location most suitable for the child and family;
- Collaborate with local Healthy Start in Child Care consultants and the Health Access and Nurturing Development Services (HANDS) home visitors, and other agencies or programs that serve children birth to five and their families;
- Provide information and serve as a resource to families, private physicians, and other caregivers through raising awareness of available services and resources for children age birth to five and their families;
- Deliver early childhood mental health training to Regional MH/MR Board staff, as well as other community partners who serve young children;
- Foster community planning for early childhood mental health through local groups and the Community Early Childhood Councils in the area;

Over 2,300 children have received direct clinical services through the ECMH Program since 2003 and many more have benefited indirectly from the improved skills and knowledge of early care and education professionals.

## EVALUATION

An annual evaluation of the ECMH program was conducted by Resources for Education, Adaptation, Change and Health, Incorporated (REACH) of Louisville for three years (FY2003 –

FY2005). Telephone interviews with the ECMH specialist in each region, as well as a structured review of case data was used to collect information on the characteristics of children and families served by the program and key program activities.

Some of the key findings from the REACH evaluation for FY 2005 were:

- Eighty-seven percent of families enrolled in the ECMH Program reported that their children were better at handling daily life.
- Seventy-nine percent of the families who are enrolled in the ECMH Program reported that their children are better able to get along with others.
- Ninety percent of mental health professionals who received training through the ECMH Program reported improvement in ability to serve young children with behavioral health needs.
- Satisfaction surveys indicated increased satisfaction with the ECMH Program if there are six or more contacts with the ECMH Specialist.

After the initial three years of operation, the administering agencies shifted the focus of evaluation efforts to track the impact on children enrolled in ECMH and their family. The University of Kentucky Center for Drug and Alcohol Research designed a statewide data collection system and began collecting data in November, 2006. An array of stakeholders was engaged in a Theory of Change process which identified the baseline and follow-up measures to be tracked. Data are collected from caregivers as well as from youth who are 12-21 years of age.

Key outcomes from recent reporting show that:

- ECMH Program has an 88% success rate for keeping children who are risk of expulsion from child care enrolled in the child care program.
- No children were expelled from early care and education programs during the first quarter of FY2008. Nine children were expelled in FY2006 and thirty six children were expelled in FY2007.
- Early results from the outcomes evaluation suggest that the basic needs of children, ages one to three, who are receiving services from ECMH are being met.

## **KEYS TO SUCCESS**

- ✓ The ECMH program expands existing mental health services to reach **a previously underserved population.**
- ✓ The ECMH program **uses flexible MSA funding to support assessment and training services not covered under the existing fee-for-service structure.**
- ✓ **Specialists develop valuable networks** between other professionals and relevant community members, **allowing for improved and coordinated delivery of programs and services.**
- ✓ The ECMH program developed a **statewide data collection system** that is used to **inform and adjust program strategies and interventions.**

## RESOURCES

### Websites

- Kentucky's Early Childhood Mental Health Program, <http://mhmr.ky.gov/mhsas/Early%20Childhood%20MH.asp?sub1>
- KIDS NOW Initiative, <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Early+Childhood+Development/KIDS+NOW+Initiative.htm>
- REACH of Louisville, Inc., <http://www.reachoflouisville.com>
- The Finance Project's Tobacco Settlement Revenue - Investments in Youth Initiative, <http://www.financeproject.org/tobacco>
- The University of Kentucky Center for Drug and Alcohol Research, <http://cdar.uky.edu>

### Publications

- KIDS NOW, Kentucky's Early Childhood Initiative Summary, <http://education.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/E5C9FA92-40FC-4A83-A638-A6D54883E5FC/0/InitiativeSummarywbulletsDecember07.doc>
- REACH of Louisville, Inc., ECMH Executive Summaries from the Year 1 and Year 2 Evaluations, <http://mhmr.ky.gov/mhsas/ECMH%20Evaluation.asp>
- Sanford, Sheppard & Illback, Robert. Descriptive Follow-up Evaluation of the Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Initiative (Fiscal Year 2004), Louisville, KY: R.E.A.C.H. of Louisville, Inc., <http://mhmr.ky.gov/mhsas/html/PDFs/ECMH%20Year%20Two%20Evaluation.pdf>
- The Finance Project, "Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement State Profile: Kentucky," <http://www.financeproject.org/tobacco/factsheet.cfm?abbr=KY>
- Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement, [http://www.naag.org/backpages/naag/tobacco/msa/msa-pdf/1109185724\\_1032468605\\_cigmsa.pdf](http://www.naag.org/backpages/naag/tobacco/msa/msa-pdf/1109185724_1032468605_cigmsa.pdf)

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This Profile is part of a series of resources developed by The Finance Project intended to provide key state decision makers and opinion leaders with the information and tools necessary to consider how tobacco Master Settlement Agreement revenues can support initiatives that promote the positive development of youth, including the prevention of smoking and the adoption of healthy behaviors. The Finance Project has not conducted program evaluations of the initiatives profiled and does not endorse particular policies, practices, or programs. This Profile was developed under a grant from Underage Tobacco Prevention: Philip Morris USA, an Altria Company. For more information, visit [www.financeproject.org/tobacco](http://www.financeproject.org/tobacco) or email [tobacco@financeproject.org](mailto:tobacco@financeproject.org).