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California Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) Network Newsletter Summer 2022

IECMHC Network Services

Summer! When you hear the word what comes to mind? The end of the school year? Sunny hot days? Camping? Time in the garden? For some, summer is a time to slow down and take a break from a busy year of school and work. For others, summer may be just as busy and full as any other time of year. Here at the IECMHC Network we have a little of both! Some areas slow down and in others we are as busy as birds building a nest. This summer we are busy planning Webinars, Community of Support Groups, the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant training program, website updates and so much more. All in addition to our Consultation Services that are available year-round!

All early learning and care programs in the state of California are eligible for our Consultation Services. We serve private and state funded center-based programs and home-based providers. **All services are offered at no cost.**

We are here for you! Requests for consultation can be made through our website:

[The California Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Network](#)

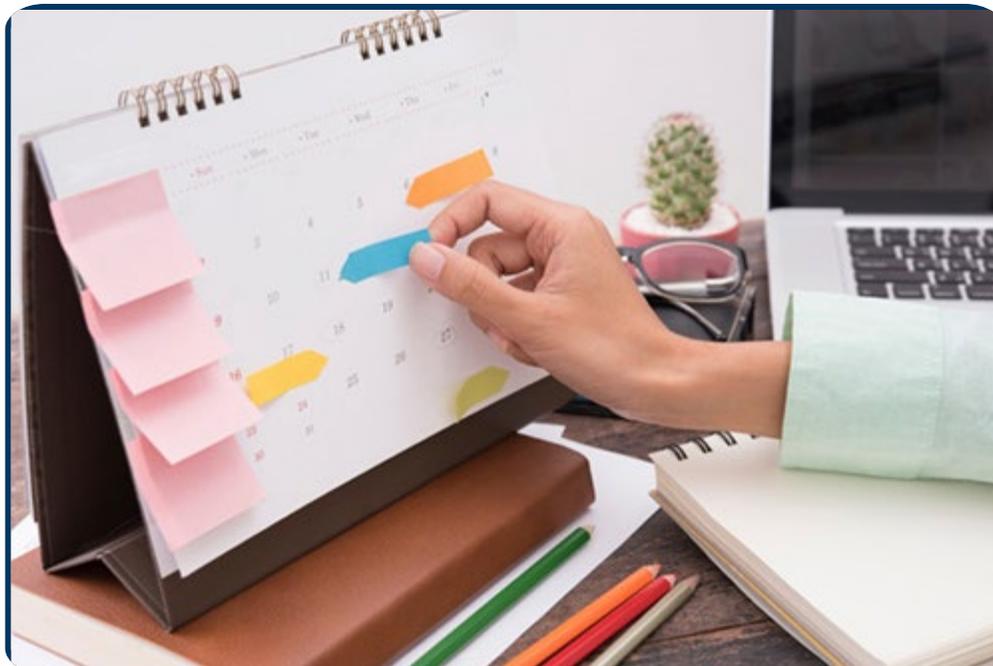
Newsletter Available in Spanish ([Español](#)) and Chinese ([中文](#))



Helpline

Not sure what services you're eligible for? Or have a specific question or concern? Call our Helpline at **1-877-524-2422**. Live Helpline staff will offer one-on-one support for timely, non-emergency guidance regarding specific questions or concerns. Staff will also have information about other ICEMHC Network services and supports available to you.

Upcoming Events



A calendar of upcoming ICEMHC Network events with registration information can be

found on our website. Just click on the **Events** tab in the menu bar on the home page: [The California Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Network](#)

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant Training Program

The emerging field of infant and early childhood mental health consultation offers early learning and care programs a much-needed resource to support the social and emotional well-being of children, families, teachers, and care providers. The IECMHC Network is focusing efforts to build statewide workforce capacity – that is, increase the number and availability of mental health consultants throughout the state. The first phase of this work includes sponsorship of 100 California participants in Georgetown University’s certificate program in infant and early childhood mental health consultation. Participants will go through the certificate program in two cohorts of 50 each. Cohort 1 runs from June – November 2022 and Cohort 2 runs from December 2022 – May 2023.

The second phase includes the development of a California-based training program for infant and early childhood mental health consultants. To this end, we are collaborating with colleagues in our state who train and/or supervise consultants in this specialized area of practice. We are drawing upon the experiences and perspectives of colleagues in early learning and care programs via statewide surveys and focus groups. Surveys launched in June 2022 and Focus Groups will run from July – September 2022.

For more information about the IECMHC Network’s efforts around a statewide IECMH Consultant Training Program, please contact us at 1-877-524-2422 extension 5. Or visit our website at <https://www.cibc-ca.org/wp>

Consultant Reflections



Lessons Learned from the Pandemic: On Resilience and Parallel Process

By Mayra Malinowski

As an IECMHC consultant in the IECMHC Network, I have learned change is the one constant over time. Nothing has demonstrated this as much as my experience in supporting early educators over the past two years. As we all struggled to understand how to remain effective in supporting children and families, I experienced the utmost respect, empathy and awe at the resilience of early learning and care providers. And I learned through our mutual reflective interactions.

While experiencing stress and trauma in their own families, health, work, and daily lives, I listened to dedicated early educators express their concerns at addressing the parallel needs of the children and families they work with. A frequent struggle they shared: “I can’t teach my curriculum anymore” – routines, lesson plans and expectations were broken and disrupted. How to move forward? Advice from our Director, Jennifer Miller, constantly replayed in my mind: “whatever we can do to help...” The past years have taught us that our real impact with children and families is embedded in our ability to be responsive to developmental needs and learning opportunities in the present moment over imposing a pre-set curriculum.

One act of resilience is to find the strengths in a challenging situation. The pandemic drove home the lesson that it is the process, not the product, that inspires growth and resilience in all of us, including the early learning and care workforce. The best planned lessons are empty without the shared understanding of resilience and challenges experienced by the children and families we serve, as well as our colleagues and ourselves. The professionals I consult with need to speak their experience and truth, be heard, process, reflect and reframe. Giving myself permission to focus on and celebrate this process

has brought resilience to my own practice.

I look forward to ongoing opportunities to reflect and wonder with early educators, with the aspiration to support their confidence in continuing their own unique process. What is working? What feels challenging? What can I do to help?

Resilience Resources

Check out the Self-Compassion Practices on the [Self-Compassion](https://self-compassion.org/) website (<https://self-compassion.org/>). Kristin Neff, Ph.D. is a pioneer in the field of self-compassion research, creating a scale to measure the construct almost 20 years ago. She is a published author and in conjunction with her colleague Dr. Chris Germer, she has developed an empirically supported training program called [Mindful Self-Compassion](#), which is taught by thousands of teachers worldwide.

Making a Coping Skills Toolbox

Have you heard the term calm-down kit or coping skills toolbox used in relationship to helping children manage emotions and stressful situations? Maybe you have participated in a workshop to create a kit or toolbox for children in your care. Have you ever thought about creating one for yourself? Neglecting self-care has many of us to feel burned out and exhausted. Research shows that children manage stress best when they have at least one supportive responsive relationship with a caring adult ([Harvard Center on the Developing Child](#) [<https://bit.ly/3GoaqDI>]) If we take care of ourselves as adults, managing our own stress and emotions, we will be better able to support the children in our care. We can be the supportive, responsive adults' children need in their lives if we are healthy ourselves. Here are a few tips to create a Coping Toolbox.

A Coping Toolbox is a place for you to keep things that calm you down in periods of stress. Because there are infinite ways to cope each toolbox will be unique. What matters most is that you find the coping methods that will help you build resilience and thrive. The items in the toolbox fall into six categories.

1. **Self-Soothing:** Comforting yourself through your six senses
 - a. Examples:
 - Touch – Stuffed animal, stress balls, playdough
 - Hear – Music, guided meditation, silence
 - See – Snow globe, fish tank, happy pictures
 - Taste – Mints, tea, sour candy
 - Smell – Candles, lotion, perfume, aromatherapy
 - Motion – Dancing, jumping
2. **Distraction:** Taking your mind off the problem for a while
 - a. Examples: Puzzles, books, art, crafts, sewing, music, movies, Sudoku, what
3. **Opposite Action:** Doing something opposite of your impulse that's consistent with a more positive emotion.
 - a. Examples: Affirmations and inspirational images, funny or cheering

movies, TV, books.

4. **Emotional Awareness:** Tools for Identifying and Expressing Your Feelings
 - a. Example: A list or chart of emotions, a journal, writing supplies, drawing supplies.
5. **Mindfulness:** Tools for centering and grounding yourself in the present moment
 - a. Examples: Meditation or relaxation recordings, grounding objects (like a rock or weighted blanket) yoga mat, breathing exercises.
6. **Crisis Plan:** Contact information of supports and resources for when coping skills aren't enough.
 - a. Examples: Family and Friends, Therapist, Psychiatrist, Hotline Numbers, Crisis Team/ER, 911.

Put it all together! Once you've gathered all your items, put them together in a box, basket, or container, decorate it any way you like and then put it in a place where you will remember it and use it! What will be in yours?

Adapted from [Baldwin County Public Schools Coping Skills Toollit](https://bit.ly/3NBEU7n)
(<https://bit.ly/3NBEU7n>)

Additional Resources

- [Mental Health America](https://mhanational.org/building-your-coping-toolbox) (<https://mhanational.org/building-your-coping-toolbox>)
- [USA Today](https://bit.ly/3z54FsR) (<https://bit.ly/3z54FsR>)



Family, Friend and Neighbor Resources

[FFNcaregivers.org](https://ffncaregivers.org/) (<https://ffncaregivers.org/>) sponsored by Bananas.

Bananas is a Child Care Resource and Referral Agency located in Oakland,

California. Bananas has been supporting children, families, and caregivers since 1974. The FFN caregiver website launched April 2022. If you are a family, friend, or neighbor caregiver this site has resources designed especially for you. Content is available in English and Spanish.

Developing Milestones Resources

- [Harvard Center on the Developing Child Caregiver Handouts: Games and Activities](https://bit.ly/3MNMAUb) (https://bit.ly/3MNMAUb)
Here you'll find handouts with suggestions for games and activities to do with children of different ages. These activities can promote child-caregiver bonding and build children's brains through play.
- [Pathways](https://pathways.org/) (https://pathways.org/)
Free Resources to help you understand, track, and encourage your child's milestones for the best outcomes.
 - [Pathways Developmental Checklists and Brochures Available in Six Languages](https://pathways.org/print/) (https://pathways.org/print/)
- [Sharing Our Journey, UC Davis MIND Institute \(Videos\)](https://bit.ly/3PKMqif) (https://bit.ly/3PKMqif)
This set of 11 videos, produced by the UC Davis Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities and funded by the Department of Developmental Services Disparity Funds Program, is aimed toward increasing equity and access to services for all families of children with developmental disabilities. Videos are available in English and Spanish. (September 2019)

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Resources

- [Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation](https://www.iecmhc.org/) (https://www.iecmhc.org/)
The Center of Excellence for Infant & Early Childhood Mental Consultation (CoE for IECMHC) housed at Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development is a national center providing technical assistance to programs, communities, states, territories, and tribal communities, and professional development to individual mental health consultants to increase access to high quality mental health consultation throughout the country.
- [The Earliest, A Zero to Three Podcast](https://bit.ly/3wMTt2p) (https://bit.ly/3wMTt2p)
A four-part series launched in May of 2022 to take a deep and personal look at mental health in the earliest years of life. From the Zero to Three Website, "Join host Ernestine Benedict and early childhood expert, doula, and Mother Elizabeth Pihlaja as they explore pregnancy, birth, trauma,

and mental health and well-being in the earliest years of life - the years that matter most. Because who we become starts even before birth.”

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