



SUPPORT FOR THE ADULTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTS

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Along with the hot summer, early childhood education has been a hot topic in many community conversations. Throughout the nation there is a teacher shortage in early childhood education. In some parts of the United States, especially where I am in North Carolina, we have regions that have no licensed childcare programs, we call them childcare deserts. Parents of young children are struggling to find quality and affordable care so they can get back to work. The lucky parents have found someone to care for their child, others have family, friends, or neighbors. Some parents have decided to stay home and care for their children. What is most concerning is the fact that the additional funds childcare programs received from the federal government initiative to support them during the pandemic are set to end this Fall. Meaning that the extra income these teachers have received from these funds will come to an abrupt stop and experts warn that our society may experience a mass departure of childcare professionals leaving the field at this time.

This issue of *HS Dialog* will look at supports for young children and adults that many times are offered through a quality childcare program. When adults (parents and caregivers) have strong mental, physical, and emotional supports in their own lives, they can often help to provide the same supports to young children in their lives. The first article is by a collection of researchers from Georgetown University (Tidus, Davis, Perry, Rabinovitz, & Horen, 2022) and examines the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) support service. These services provide mental health consultants to work with families and adults/early childhood professionals to build and promote the social-emotional development of infants and young children. The IECMHC is an evidence-based prevention program and has been around for a long time. However, these researchers look at the program through a new theory of change lens. The theory of change investigates not just that IECMHC has positive outcomes, but asks, what are the “mechanisms that cause” this positive change. Whether you are familiar or not with IECMHC, this article will prove to provide more information and insight into what causes these outcomes.

The second research article, *Screening for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) before age 3: Evidence for the Family Map Inventory*, studies the validity of an electronic Family Map Inventory (FMI) instead of the paper pencil version. They are from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (Whiteside-Mansell, McKelvey, Lewis, & Peters, 2022). Additionally, they answered the questions (1) if the electronic FMI was effectively used as an intervention tool, (2) did educators use the tool to focus on supporting families related to the constructs in the original ACES. As society continues to integrate technology into almost everything we do, using this to gather data and identify the correct supports for a parent/family is a much more efficient, effective, and familiar pathway to support families. To find the answers to their research questions you will need to read the manuscript, I promise it is a good read – lots to learn here.



The final research article, *Falling through the Cracks of Early Intervention and Prevention*, comes from researchers at the University of Illinois Chicago and examines the missed opportunities for referring a pregnant woman to a prenatal cessation smoking program (Shenberger & Zinsser, 2022). Many young women and families receive services through their local health department and childcare organizations such as Early Head Start (EHS). Early Head Start is a comprehensive program that was developed to support low-income families with children under 3 years of age. This manuscript examines a pregnant woman's challenges to receiving a referral to a smoking cessation program but even if a woman receives a referral in some communities there is limited or no access to these programs. As I read this article, it makes me wonder what other supports are falling through these cracks.

Each of the research articles listed above is followed by an accompanying Research to Practice. These manuscripts bring detailed ways for early childhood practitioners to apply the research in everyday, early education environments. To our readers, thank you for your dedication to our journal, to the field, and to the future of young children.