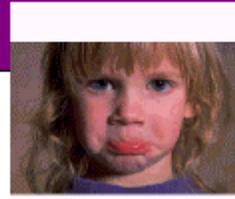


KID CONNECTS:



INTEGRATING MENTAL HEALTH AND PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Kid Connects integrates mental health, primary health care and early education through mental health consultation, health care screenings and coordination of referrals and follow-through for young children in child care centers and family child care homes. Kid Connects provides services in child care centers and family child care homes through the *Pearl Project at the Mental Health Center of Denver* and the *Child Development Program at the Mental Health Center Serving Boulder & Broomfield Counties*.

Without intervention many of these children might experience:

- expulsion from child care settings,
- lack of readiness to enter school,
- child abuse and resulting out-of-home placement, and
- later involvement in mental health, criminal justice and welfare systems

The **goal** of Kid Connects is to integrate mental health and primary health care to improve the outcomes of children in low income families. The **outcomes** are:

- Reduce behavioral problems & improve mental health functioning of children in child care
- Better integration of health and mental health services in child care services
- Consistent implementation of health screenings and referrals
- Decrease in expulsion rate
- Increase school readiness
- Increase skills in child care providers
- Integrate screening tools in assessments
- Contributing to enactment of statewide system and policies that better respond to the behavioral/mental health needs of youth children
- Extend services to other communities

For more information, contact

Claudia Zundel, Co Dept of Human Services, Division of Mental Health 303-866-7528
Tracy Kraft-Tharp, Project Specialist, Kid Connects, at 303-421-2787

Kid Connects offers two types of services to child care center and family child care home settings: center-based and child-specific consultation:

Center-based services involve consultation to center directors and staff regarding child development, strategies to handle behavioral problems, overall classroom environment and quality improvements. Center-based activities could also include educational programs to which all parents are invited or classroom instruction in which all children participate. All children enrolled in the center benefit from these services. It is through these more general center-based services that children needing specific intervention are often identified.

Child-specific services include direct involvement with specific children and consultation with the parents and teachers of those children focused on reducing problem behaviors and encouraging social and emotional competence in that particular child. Child-specific services can also include direct involvement with the child individually or in a small group. Referral for evaluation and treatment of related problems often occurs.

Kid Connects is effective in identifying young children with severe mental health and/or behavioral problems.

- ❑ Kid Connects children had an average of 3 risk factors; between 57% and 66% of Kid Connects children live in families experiencing three or more risk factors.
- ❑ Kid Connects children were significantly more severe at admission than children in the traditional mental health system on the problem severity scales.
- ❑ Kid Connects children demonstrated a greater improvement in almost all problem severity domains in a comparison of the changes in problem severity scores from admission to discharge than children served in the traditional mental health system.
- ❑ 93% of the eligible children received health care screenings.

Child-specific services reduce the severity of children's mental health and/or behavioral problems.

- ❑ Children served showed improvements in mental health functioning, and a change in behavioral concerns.
- ❑ Children served showed an increase school readiness in cognitive and linguistic development skills.

Center-based services have a definite impact on the general quality of care provided by participating child care facilities.

- ❑ Parents and teachers report that Kid Connects services are helpful to children and classroom quality.
- ❑ Parents reported that Kid Connects helped to prevent expulsion of their child from care and that the services helped prevent them from missing work.

Data 2004/2005

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