



integrated health & mental health consultation

Kid Connects provides integrated health and mental health consultation to licensed child care centers, family child care homes and in Head Start/Early Head Start settings. Kid Connect has been providing these services in Boulder County, Colorado since 1997. In 2008, the first replication of Kid Connects was conducted in Weld County and the model is currently being delivered in six counties in Colorado.

Kid Connects uses a relationship-based integrated mental health consultation model in which early childhood consultants are based on-site at child care settings and in family child care homes. The Kid Connects model is informed by the latest research on attachment and early relationships, has a strong foundation in child development, and delivers effective, clinically sound, developmentally appropriate practices in the classroom setting and to families. Reflective practice guides our interactions with administrators, teacher/providers, parents and children.

Consultants offer a wide variety of services to all children on a prevention basis and together with teachers/providers and parents identify children who need additional support. The flexibility of the model allows for classroom consultations, home visiting, parent support, and teacher training.

The goals of Kid Connects are to improve health, developmental and mental health outcomes for children in child care settings, to reduce expulsions from child care settings and to improve the capacity of caregivers to respond to the social and emotional needs of very young children.

We evaluate the impact consultation has on the quality of teacher interactions, classroom environments, parental stress, expulsions and on child protective factors and behavior concerns. The evaluation component of the project utilizes standardized instruments whenever possible to measure multiple variables.

The Kid Connects model has recently been manualized and the published three-book set includes the Kid Connects Implementation Manual, the Consultant Guidebook, and the Forms Binder.

Some examples of Kid Connects activities:

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- ❖ Availability at pick-up/drop-off times to discuss any concerns with parents about their child.
- ❖ Arranging specific one-to-one meetings per parent request at a time and location convenient to the parent including in the home, at the parent's job site or together in other community meetings.
- ❖ Observation and intentional interactions with children in the classroom individually or in small groups.
- ❖ Provide short-term clinical interventions for children and parents when indicated and requested by the parent.
- ❖ Facilitate social skills, violence prevention and kindergarten readiness groups for children.
- ❖ Provide health and developmental screenings, appropriate referral and follow-up for all children, while assisting teachers integrate health findings into planning for children.
- ❖ Provide mental health screenings to all children and to work with teachers on effective social and emotional activities in classrooms based on results.

- ❖ Support for parents to ensure successful referral and connection with other services or agencies as needed.
- ❖ Attend parent-teacher conferences on behalf of child/family and develop reflectively based, problem-solving approaches for child-related concerns
- ❖ Offer parent workshops on various topics.

CHILD CARE CENTER, PRESCHOOL or HOME STAFF

- ❖ Using reflective practice, consult with teachers to enhance the quality of care in the classroom or home.
- ❖ Offer training for providers either formally through workshops or through informal discussions on topics that support professional development & understanding of children's needs.
- ❖ Participate in parent-teacher conferences to address specific concerns and offer support to parents and teacher/provider.
- ❖ Together with teachers, develop teacher/child classroom interventions, communicate foundational underpinnings of strategies, and monitor implementation.
- ❖ Support teacher/provider emotional well-being, stress reduction, and intervene as appropriate with staff concerns
- ❖ Attend teacher team and/or staff meetings regularly

ADMINISTRATORS

- ❖ Regular consultation regarding leadership, staff effectiveness and communication, and meeting the needs of young children and their families.
- ❖ Explore expulsion practices and support development of meaningful policies that support children, families, and staff through challenging behaviors
- ❖ Conduct staff trainings to meet identified program development goals.
- ❖ Collaborate on health screening implementation and follow up.

For further information, please contact Jordana Ash, LCSW, IMH-E (IV)@ Kid Connects Boulder, @ 720.406.3637.