

LOWER SHORE EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTATION PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

FALL
2024

Our Interns

This fall the Lower Shore ECMHC Program welcomed MSW student interns, Sydney Koteff and Katie Sweeney! The internship pathway is essential to the work of the Lower Shore ECMH Program, and the field of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health at large as it seeks to develop qualified professionals for the workforce.

A central part of their role as interns is to support an early learning center through the embedded consultation model. The embedded IECMHC model can support childcare providers in intentionally creating an environment that promotes positive infant social and emotional mental health, to develop strategies on how to engage with children throughout their day, and to promote providers use of effective teaching practices (Parent Infant Early Childhood Team University of MD SSW, 2023). The students have designated days at the center where they aim to foster relationships with staff and families and offer resources to help staff and families best meet the needs of the children they support.

Sydney and Katie's field placement will continue through the end of the Spring '25 semester.



Sydney Koteff and Katie Sweeney

ECMHC in the Community

On September 10, 2024, Janelle Parker (program director), LCSW-C was invited to join the Lower Shore Autism Community's family support meeting at Dove Pointe. The participants learned about IECMH, the consultative stance, and how the work supports early childcare programs across the Lower Shore region. Thank you again, Barry Johansson and the team at LSAC for the opportunity to speak with your group!

A big part of early childhood mental health consultation is training and education. Please contact the program at 410-677-6590 or by email at jjparker@salisbury.edu if you are interested in hosting the Lower Shore ECMH program at your preschool, center, agency, or organization. Training is FREE and can be available in a virtual format as well as in-person.

Individual Experiences

Sydney

My experiences through the Lower Shore Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program thus far have been enriching. I've been presented with so many learning opportunities, all within different sectors of social work. From individual referral case work, to working within an organization amongst different classrooms, to attending professional development meetings, I've had many opportunities to apply what I've been learning in my MSW program.

Wicomico Day School - in my placement within the school, I disperse my time amongst three different 3-year-old classrooms. Each classroom has about 10-13 children, and 2 teachers. Within these classrooms, using the consultative approach, I am observing and looking for ways in which I can support the social emotional learning of the children. To do so, using aspects of the pyramid model, I consider all factors contributing to the environment of the classroom. I work to support the teachers and support the interactions among the students.

Katie

I have also thoroughly enjoyed being a part of the Lower Shore Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program so far this semester. I've had many opportunities to get out into the community and meet people, as well as attend events and workshops to further broaden my social work knowledge. These opportunities have taught me a lot and gave me a good idea about all of the different resources available to people in our community.

My field placement is also at Wicomico Day School, where I spend my time with the 4-year-old classrooms. While I have been in all 3 classrooms to observe, I spend most of my time in one particular classroom. There are 15 students in this classroom and I use my time here to observe the behaviors of these students as well as their social skills amongst each other. I utilize what I learned in training prior to beginning this internship in this classroom to support the children's development. I have productive conversations with the teacher as well to discuss my observations and for her to provide me with additional information regarding specific children.



Pictured: Janelle Parker, LCSW-C; Leslie Sinclair (Eastern Shore CCRC); Katie Mercer (Wicomico County Birth to Five) and Trina Tilghman-Dix (Wicomico County Judy Center)



The Lower Shore ECMH program sponsored a continuing education workshop "Charting Growth: Key Conversations on Child Developmental Milestones & Screenings" on September 5, 2024. This workshop was in collaboration with the Eastern Shore Childcare Resource Center and Wicomico County Birth to Five Program.

Special thanks to the presenters: Trina Tilghman-Dix, Coordinator of the Wicomico County Judy Center and Katie Mercer, Coordinator of Wicomico County's Birth to Five Program.

There were 15 attendees who represented family home care programs, center-based programs, and other agencies who work with families and children in Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester Counties. Participants received certificates and training hours.

***If your program is in need of free professional development or training support, please contact us at 410-677-6590.**





September 26, 2024 – Janelle Parker, LCSW–C attended the NASW–MD Chapter's 2024 Clinical and Macro Social Work Conference. Tisha Edwards, MSW, JD; Maryland's Secretary of Appointments for Gov. Wes Moore was the keynote speaker for the event.

Here are a few takeaways from Janelle's experience at the conference:

"The keynote address was a call to activism and a reminder of the necessity of MACRO practice. While the SW profession allows us to work with clients at the micro level to influence individual change, it also enables us opportunities within large systems to evoke change that impacts all citizens. It is important to engage in advocacy at some level, even in politics (which may make some uncomfortable). The skillset an MSW possesses and the framework we use as approaches to work with individuals/families/groups we are an invaluable asset that needs more representation in decision making arenas".

ADVOCACY



Childcare Staff (all capacities – teachers, assistants, Directors) – we **WANT** and **NEED** to hear from you!

Advocacy is essential in helping to create change that benefits our communities. Personal experiences and testimonials are **extremely valuable** to help policy makers and legislators better understand the needs of different communities.

We are seeking professionals to share about their experience of receiving classroom support from the Lower Shore ECMH Program (how helpful was it to have a free resource provide objective observations, discussions with families, recommendations and/or materials) and also offer free staff training and consultation on early childhood development, social emotional learning and early childhood mental health.

We would love to have your participation (your personal information would remain anonymous) to share with policy makers at the state level to ensure that our program continues to be available to you and the children and families you care for in 2025 and beyond.

Send a short email with your experience with a consultant to: jiparker@salisbury.edu.

We look forward to hearing from you!



TOWN HALL MEETING

Please join us and other members of the early child care community from across the state of MD on **January 9, 2025 at 1:30p or 6:30p** for a virtual town hall meeting to share your experiences with infant and early childhood mental health.

To register send your name and email address to: lsecmhc@salisbury.edu



Embedded Approach

Within our internship, we utilize the embedded approach at Wicomico Day School. As interns within the Social Work program, our role is to help promote the social and emotional mental health of the children within these classrooms. During the first few weeks we were at WDS, we made observations on the children in the classroom, making note of particular behaviors and the socialization of the children with their classmates. As time went on, we still made mental notes throughout the day, however our focus shifted to working to promote this social and emotional mental health to overall benefit the students and the teacher as well.

Our work is used to support the childcare providers who in this case, are the teachers at WDS. Through determining ways to promote the social and emotional mental health of the students, the successful outcomes would bring about benefits for the classroom as well. Through this embedded approach, the strategies we implement or the suggestions for strategies are to promote the development of the children which in turn assists the teachers too. We engage with the students in these classrooms as well, which also gives us a closer look into their social interactions with other students and how they handle certain situations or emotions.

Utilizing the embedded approach within the ECMHC Program has been a new learning experience and we hope to further promote the social and emotional mental health of these students at Wicomico Day School through this approach.

Pyramid Model

The Pyramid Model is the theoretical approach we use in all of our work. We apply concepts and theories each day we are in Wicomico Day School, and when we work with individual cases. The Pyramid Model is an approach that takes into consideration the various components of contributing factors to a child's education and growth.

This model can be used as a resource for early childhood educators, for parents, and other early intervention personnel (National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations, 2024). It provides an additional, more broad perspective of what we have always looked at in effective early childhood education.

To build an effective work force, we look at three levels: Environment/Relationships, Social Emotional Support, and Intervention. These different levels mirror, in a way, the different levels of social work: Macro, looking at the whole picture. Mezzo, looking at organizational factors and resources. And Micro, the one-on-one intervention.

Each level is equally as important when considering the learning environment of the young children. Through our placement at Wicomico Day School, we are able to inspect and address each level of the pyramid within the environment. The use of the pyramid model is a new skill we as interns have been equipped with through our participation with the Lower Shore ECMHC Program.



More Involvement in the Community

Professional Development Events

9/16 Virtual Training: Becoming a Mental Health Sleuth

On September 16, we had an online training opportunity entitled Becoming a Mental Health Sleuth which was presented on Zoom. This training had several speakers with one main presenter, as well as a very interactive activity to engage the viewers given this was online. The engagement activity gave a list of symptoms associated with a specific mental disorder, and our task was to determine the disorder given our background knowledge on the disorders. This activity took up a good portion of the training, but we found it to be very engaging and beneficial to accompany the remaining portion of the presentation. This training provided us with a lot of important information about different mental health disorders through a very interactive and interesting presentation. Overall, the training was successful in that we left the Zoom meeting feeling as though we learned something that contributes to our field placement.

10/9 UMES: Power of Parenting and Fatherhood

On October 9, we attended an interprofessional seminar at UMES about the Power of Parenting and Fatherhood Programs. This training highlighted the importance of father engagement in parenting and with children's development. There was also an emphasis on the unique challenges and needs of fathers in relation to their children's emotional well-being and development. A goal of this seminar was to provide males with a safe space to share and learn about how both parents can engage in therapeutic interventions. There were several speakers in this seminar who shared their input on the importance of fatherhood and provided their own experiences as well. The training was very inspiring, engaging, and eye opening to the importance of fatherhood and how there needs to be more attention given to this matter.

11/14 Virtual Event – Diversity Forum at University of Wisconsin–Madison

On November 14, we had the opportunity to virtually attend the Diversity Forum put on by the University of Wisconsin–Madison. The conference was titled, Thread of Belonging: Navigating Differences and Building Community. There were multiple speakers, as well as smaller breakout sessions throughout the day. Speakers included staff, faculty, and students from UW–Madison spreading awareness and knowledge of how they navigate efforts of diversity, equity, and inclusion on campus. Additionally, many speakers shared their personal experiences and values that have come up through the work they do and their culture. A big takeaway for me from this conference was the seven generations principle. I learned about this concept while listening to Carla Vigue speak, the Director of Tribal Relations at the university.



Sydney at Fall Fest

Thanksgiving



Feast



Katie in the Classroom



Petting Zoo



Pumpkin Patch



Alignment with Social Work Competencies

There are 9 competencies we work towards each day as we develop as social work professionals. Within this practicum placement, we have many opportunities to apply what we are learning in our MSW program to real world experiences. These are some specific competencies demonstrated and often worked on within Wicomico Day School and the ECMHC program as a whole:

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Adhering to policies and expectations in all professional environments

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

Referring to the pyramid model, theories of childhood development, person-centered approach, through a strengths perspective in our interactions with clients

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Work on cases (individuals), families within cases and within WDS, involvement in WDS and other early childhood education programs, and within the community

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Through the consultative process, we use tools such as the DECA and the ASQ to gather more information about the child, their environment, and their behaviors.

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Interventions in all the environments, suggestions for resources, support to teachers and students, and contributing to overall community with involvement

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Pre and post tests with individual cases, and quarterly evaluations with supervisor and WDS director



Happy Holidays!

FROM EVERYONE AT THE LOWER SHORE ECMHC PROGRAM

Don't forget to take care of your mental health during the holiday season!

Even if you have lots to be grateful for, it's normal to feel negative emotions during the holiday season.

Here are some statistics:

About **9 in 10 adults** report feeling anxious, grieving loved ones, or anticipate family conflict in the holiday season

&

43% of adults say that the stress of holidays can make it difficult for them to enjoy them (APA, 2023).

You're not alone! Lots of people are feeling similar negative emotions.

Some things you can do:

Be present in the moment!

Don't feel pressured to participate in anything you don't want to!

Take time to yourself, engage in self care (whatever that is to you).

Remember that the holiday season is temporary.

Be kind to yourself and others.