



INFANT & EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTATION & PYRAMID MODEL IN MARYLAND

SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT
January–June 2024



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About Us

The Parent, Infant & Early Childhood (PIEC) Team at the University of Maryland's School of Social Work's Institute for Innovation and Implementation has partnered with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) for over 15 years to deliver comprehensive statewide resources and best practices related to two evidence-informed models: *Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation* and *The Pyramid Model*. These models build the capacity of early childhood professionals to support infants' and young children's behavioral health. Our team provides statewide coordination, training and coaching, technical assistance, implementation support, research, and evaluation for these models.

The PIEC team is composed of specialists in early childhood education and development, maternal and child health, program development, research, and evaluation. We work in partnership with child care providers and state and local agencies to enhance systems of care,

This report is the PIEC team's first that combines the activities and impact of our two models. For previous year's reports, please visit [this link](#).

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Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) in Maryland

History

The Division of Early Childhood within the Maryland State Department of Education has funded IECMHC services statewide since 2006. There are 10 funded programs that provide services to all 24 jurisdictions. These services are offered at no cost to the child care programs or families.

Since 2009, the PIEC team has supported the IECMHC model by providing training and workforce development, technical assistance, implementation support, policy support, subject matter expertise, and data and evaluation to state-funded IECMHC programs.

Programs



Caroline, Dorchester, Kent,
Queen Anne's, Talbot



Lower Shore Early Childhood
Mental Health
Consultation Program
at Salisbury University

Wicomico, Worcester,
Somerset



The Family Tree
Baltimore City
Child Care Resource Center
A LifeBridge Health Group

Baltimore City



Howard County
Office of Children and Families

Howard



Frederick
Carroll



EARLY CHILDHOOD
SERVICES
Montgomery County
Department of Health & Human Services

Montgomery



Child Resource
Connect

Prince George's,
Anne Arundel



Charles, Calvert,
St. Mary's



Allegany, Washington,
Garrett



Baltimore Co,
Harford, Cecil



IECMHC Reach

1/1/2024 - 6/30/2024

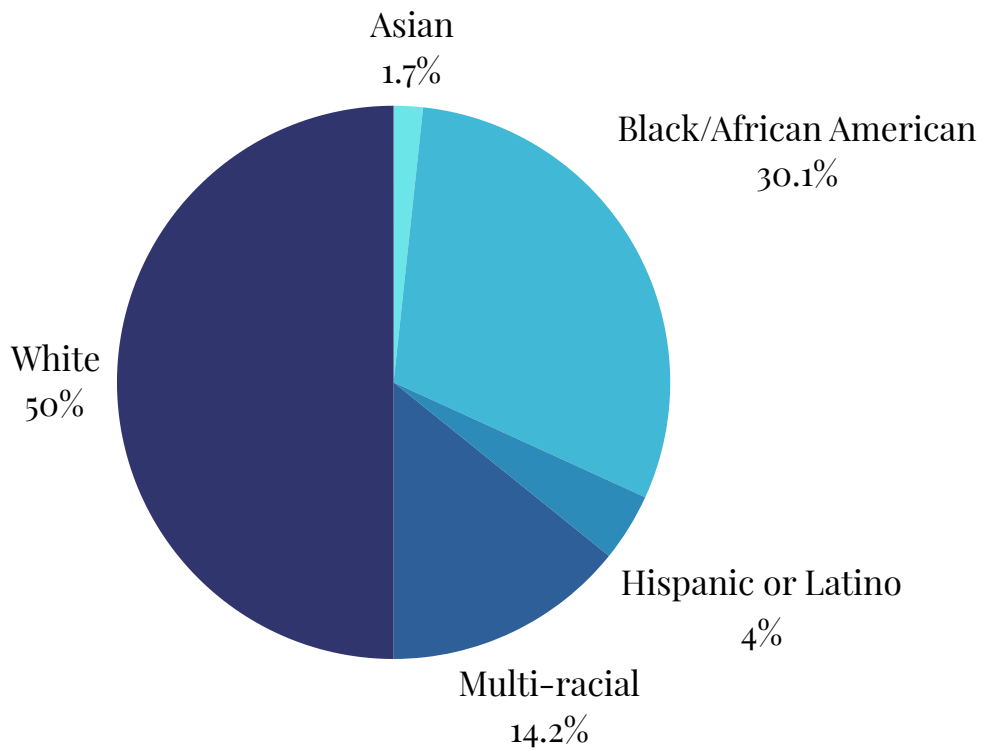
In this period, 235 referrals were made, and **211** were accepted.

Child specific and
classroom consultation:
85%

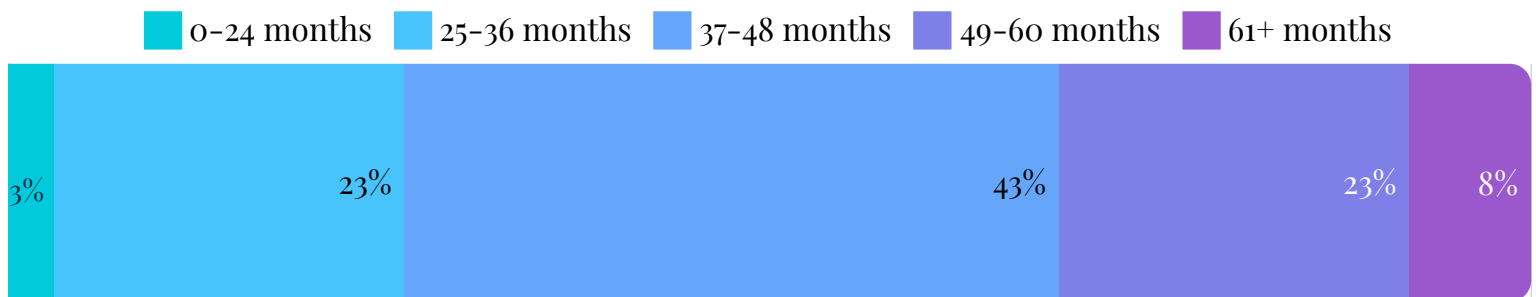
Program
consultation
15%



75%
male



Child age at referral



IECMHC Technical Assistance



The PIEC team continued to offer statewide convenings for the IECMHC workforce to promote professional development and build community. From January through June 2024, the PIEC team convened **12** statewide IECMHC meetings.

3

Peer conversations

—
1-hour sessions for IECMHC workforce and state leaders to come together and discuss successes and challenges

5

Black Affinity Group meetings

—
A space for Black and African-American-identifying IECMH professionals to build community.

4

IECMHC Leadership meetings

—
Programmatic guidance, promotion of best practices, workforce development for directors and program managers

In addition, the PIEC team continued to provide trainings and related communities of practice to enhance ongoing skill development for consultants. We also continued our efforts to build the IECMHC workforce through our Internship Pathways program and the onboarding training series for both new and existing consultants.

3

Trainings

—
Facilitating Attuned Interactions (FAN), Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT), Climate of Healthy Interactions for Learning and Development (CHILD)

11

Community of Practice sessions

—
A space to enhance staff development and promote collaboration for practitioners trained in Practice-Based Coaching and/or TPOT/TPITOS

IECMHC Capacity building

—
Our internship program has been well-received by partnering IECMHC programs and students alike. We also coordinated with local universities to prepare for a 2024-2025 intern cohort. As part of our onboarding training series, we offered a Consultative stance training and transitioned to a new Learning Management System, CE21, to provide on-demand access to trainings.

Pyramid Model in Maryland



Image from the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI)

The Pyramid Model for Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children is an evidence-based framework for promoting and supporting healthy social emotional development for all children. The PM takes a tiered approach to providing universal supports to all children to promote wellness, targeted supports to those at risk, and intensive interventions for those who need them, all supported by an effective workforce. The PM supports adults within a range of settings and disciplines, including early intervention providers, early educators, families and other professionals.

Research shows that when providers receive training and coaching in Pyramid Model practices,

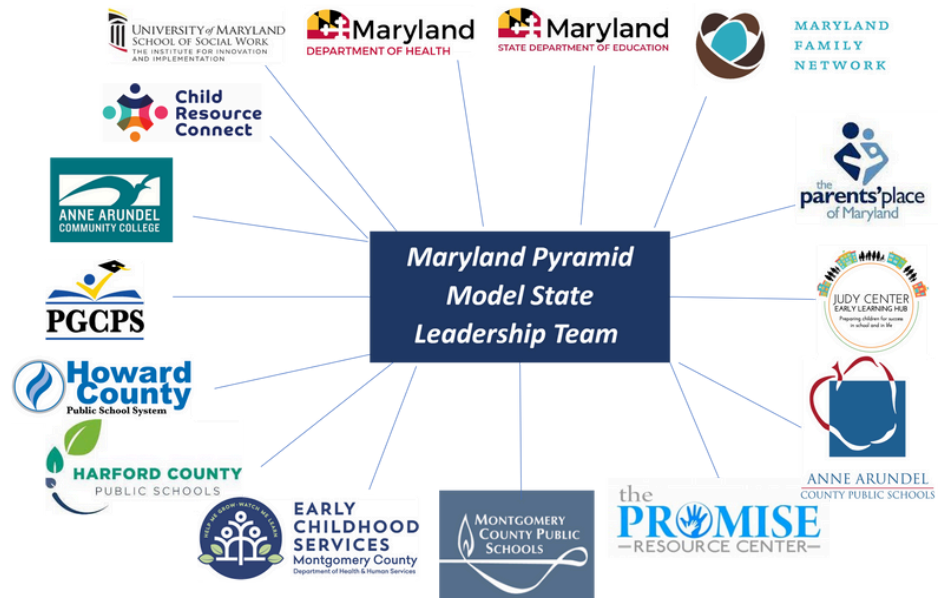
- Children's social skills improve and problem behaviors reduce (Hemmeter et al., 2016)
- Use of suspension and expulsion is reduced (Fox et al., 2021; Clayback et al., 2021)
- Use of emotionally supportive classroom practices is enhanced (Hemmeter et al., 2016)

Maryland was among the first states to implement the Pyramid Model in 2006, starting with just a few county-wide demonstration sites, and today, there is some level of Pyramid Model engagement statewide, with trainers and coaches serving all jurisdictions.

The Pyramid Model framework and Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) intervention can enhance outcomes when used together. Combined, the models together can enhance program quality, support children's well-being, and empower educators and caregivers.

Pyramid Model State Leadership Team

In Maryland, the work of the Pyramid Model is guided by an interagency, decision-making body, known as the Maryland Pyramid Model State Leadership Team (SLT). This team is comprised of representatives from the Maryland State Department of Education, local school systems, part C early intervention programs, parent advocacy groups, child care resource and referral centers, Judy Centers, and behavioral health agencies.



The SLT meets quarterly to make decisions regarding Pyramid Model implementation across the state. The team utilizes the Statewide Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ) to guide its work and develop annual goals. The SLT is also comprised of 4 subcommittees that meet monthly to advance goals: ***Data and Evaluation; Family Engagement; Implementation & Demonstration Sites; and Professional Development.*** Our overarching ***Elevating Equity committee*** also continued to meet regularly (see Pg 11 for updates). Below are our highlighted accomplishments:

- In January, we co-hosted, facilitated, and provided administrative support for the SLT's third annual Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ) retreat. The theme of this retreat was *Telling Our Story*. During this day-long, hybrid retreat, the SLT finalized our BOQ results and discussed priorities for work in the coming year.
- Our Family Engagement subcommittee finalized our Pyramid Model family engagement guide for programs serving children birth to five.
- Progress continued on our Implementation and Demonstration Site guide, as well as our training guide for new Pyramid Model content to support Maryland trainers.

Pyramid Model Training & Technical Assistance

58

trainings provided, including Positive Solutions for Families, Preschool classrooms, and Infants and Toddlers classrooms



965

online training modules completed. 317 were Infants and Toddlers classroom modules. 648 were Preschool modules

2

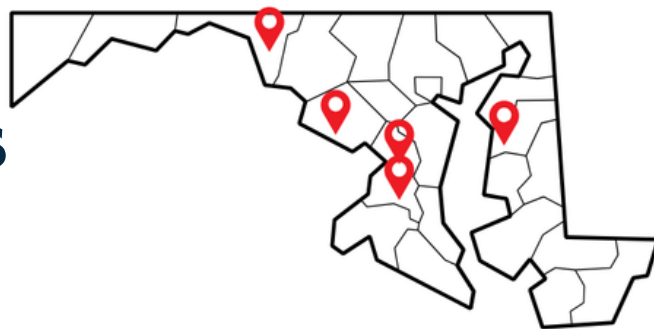
coaching cohorts led by the PIEC team to support Positive Solutions for Families facilitators



100

participants in the training-of-trainers for the updated Pyramid Model Preschool curriculum or Infant and Toddler curriculum (*includes both re-certifications and new trainers)

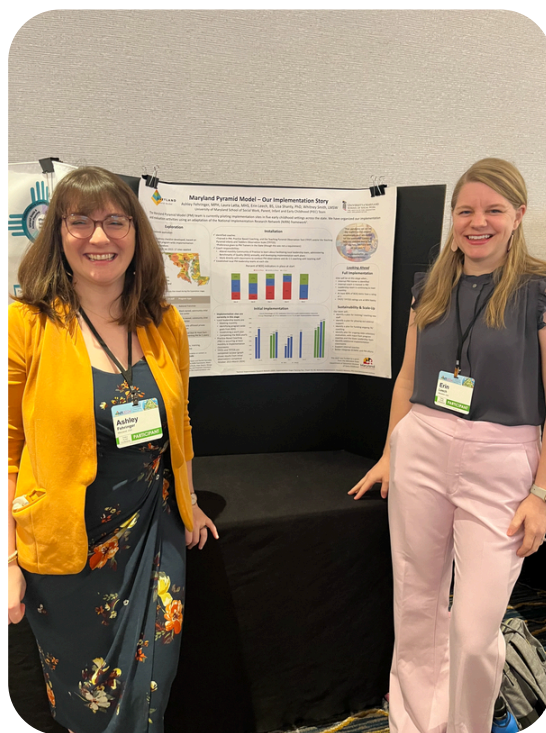
Pyramid Model Implementation sites



At the start of 2023, five pilot child care programs and one Head Start site were chosen to participate in Maryland's first Pyramid Model Implementation Site Pilot Program. All sites are supported by 1-2 Pyramid Model Program Coaches. January through June, implementation sites continued to have monthly leadership team meetings and initiated classroom observations and direct coaching, after completing their initial Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ) and initial TPOT/TPITOS observations last quarter. This year, the PIEC team held another quarterly directors' meeting, during which directors could connect with each other and learn about their success and challenges with Pyramid Model implementation, as well as get updates from the PIEC team. Additionally, this year, the PIEC team visited each site to see progress made in one year of work.

In April 2024, Pyramid Model training manager Ashley Fehringer and training specialist Erin Leech presented on our Implementation site project at the annual National Training Institute on Effective Practices: Addressing Challenging Behavior conference in Tampa, FL. Our poster provided an overview of our site activities grouped by implementation stage.

Our poster can be viewed by [clicking this link](#).



Our Commitment to Equity

Equity is fundamental to our work. The Pyramid Model framework and IECMHC aim to support the enhancement of caregiving for all children, regardless of race, gender, language, learning differences, class, or other factors, while identifying and addressing areas where discrepancies in care persist. Recognizing and addressing the systemic and racial inequities within the early childhood field is a crucial aspect of our work.



In 2021, the Maryland Pyramid Model State Leadership Team developed the following equity statement to guide Pyramid Model work and we at Kids Thrive Maryland seek to uphold these same principles.

In recognition of the historical, systemic and current racial inequities that exist throughout all levels and layers of our society, we acknowledge that our youngest citizens are too often exposed and harmed. We know this delivers a lasting impact on their social and academic trajectories, the most detrimental of which are higher rates of suspension and expulsion among young black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) before they enter kindergarten, which begins the preschool to prison pipeline. We believe that practices that promote social and emotional awareness and skills in both children and adults, like the Pyramid Model, can serve to significantly correct and address these realities. Recognizing this, the Maryland Pyramid Model SLT commits to implementing the Pyramid Model through a culturally responsive and anti-racist lens.

This year, we engaged in the following activities:

- Under the leadership of Angelique Kane, our equity coordinator, the Elevating Equity Committee continued to meet monthly to explore characteristics of White Supremacy Culture. Discussion focused on developing strategies to uphold the fidelity of evidence-based practices while honoring individualization based on the cultural needs of stakeholders, the workforce, and families. Themes included: *One Right Way* and *Right to Comfort, Power Hoarding, and Fear of Conflict*.
- The PIEC team continued to meet with Dr. Eva Marie Shivers of the Indigo Cultural Center to discuss our ongoing equity initiatives in both IECMHC and Pyramid Model, including guidance and coaching on how to effectively integrate anti-bias and anti-racist competencies for our IECMHC providers.
- The Black Affinity Group for the IECMH community continued to meet monthly. In this group, participants create an effective coalition for addressing ineffective policies and practices in larger, multiracial groups. Informal discussions include group review of relevant articles and the development of professional skills amongst peers.

Thank you!

Thank you for engaging with our IECMHC and Pyramid Model efforts to support the social and emotional needs of our state's youngest learners, as well as their families, educators, and caregivers.

This statewide work has benefited from dedicated funding and support from the Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Early Childhood.



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