

T-MHCS Brief: Strengthening Louisiana’s Early Childhood Workforce Through IECMHC

Overview

Louisiana’s early childhood system is experiencing intense workforce instability, with educators citing challenging child behaviors, high stress, and limited professional support as leading reasons they leave the field. As Congress considers updates to the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), federal priorities are shifting strongly toward workforce recruitment, retention, and professional development.

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC)—as implemented through Louisiana’s TIKES model—is one of the state’s most effective strategies for stabilizing the early learning workforce while improving outcomes for young children.

Louisiana’s Challenge: Workforce Stability Threatened by Stress & Child Behavior Needs

Louisiana educators consistently identify:

- **Challenging child behaviors**
- **High relational labor**
- **Stress and burnout**
- **Lack of reflective professional support**

as major contributors to turnover. Louisiana’s TIKES program data and national research show that **child behavior challenges are one of the strongest predictors of teacher burnout and classroom instability.**

Turnover disrupts relationships, lowers CLASS scores, increases costs for centers, and undermines Louisiana’s ability to maintain a high-quality early childhood system.

How IECMHC Strengthens Louisiana’s Workforce

Louisiana’s statewide IECMHC system offered through TIKES already delivers measurable workforce benefits:

1. Reduces Teacher Stress & Burnout

Reflective support help educators process the mental health demands of their work, which is critical as many programs serve children experiencing trauma or adversity.

2. Improves Classroom Climate & Child Behavior

Consultants help teachers implement strategies that reduce challenging behaviors, a key driver of turnover and expulsion risk.

3. Increases Teacher Skill, Confidence & Retention

IECMHC provides job-embedded professional development aligned with Louisiana's emphasis on improving CLASS domains.

4. Prevents Expulsion

TIKES data show reductions in risk of behavior-related removals, which keeps children in class and preparing for kindergarten, and improved support for teachers working to educate children with challenging behaviors.

5. Offers High Return on Investment

Replacing early educators is costly; IECMHC prevents turnover while simultaneously supporting children and families.

Summary

Beyond its support for young children and families, Louisiana's IECMHC program is:

- **A workforce retention strategy**
- **A core component of quality improvement**
- **A system that strengthens PD and supports educators statewide.**

Conclusion

IECMHC is one of Louisiana's most effective tools for strengthening the early childhood workforce. By recognizing IECMHC as the **workforce stabilization and professional development strategy** that it is, Louisiana can continue to improve outcomes for educators, young children, and families statewide through continued funding.