



Mental Health Overview

PROCEDURE / APPROACH

Southern Oregon Head Start (SOHS) uses a preventative model to encourage healthy children and families. SOHS builds on each child's strengths, their self-esteem, and promotes positive experiences and positive and trusting relationships. Health and developmental history information is gathered at registration and at the initial home visit. At the initial home visit, SOHS staff complete a Behavioral Screening for each child with the parent. Throughout the year a Mental Health Consultant (MHC) conducts child observations, debriefs and consultations to address any mental health concerns present within the classroom or at home. SOHS staff, the MHC, and parents work closely together to determine if a child and family are in need of professional Mental Health services. Throughout the year an Early Childhood Behavior Specialist (ECBS) is available to support staff with children who are experiencing challenging behaviors. The ECBS will help develop individualized plans that focus on the child's safe and full participation in our program as well as building the child's social emotional development. All support and guidance for children and families are provided with a trauma informed care approach.

HEAD START PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS:

- 1302.33-Child Screenings and Assessments*
- 1302.41-Collaboration and Communication with Parents*
- 1302.42-Child Health Status and Care*
- 1302.45-Child Mental Health and Social and Emotional Well-Being*
- 1302.46-Family Support Services for Health, Nutrition, and Mental Health*
- 1302.60-1302.63-Additional Services for Children with Disabilities*

Overview

A. Initial Home Visit

The Behavior Screening Ages and Stages Questionnaire-SE (ASQ-SE) is completed with the parent during the initial home visit. The home visit and questionnaire provides an opportunity to 1) get the parent's perspective of their child's social emotional development, 2) inform SOHS staff about the child's social emotional well-being 3) increase the parents awareness of the impact they can have on their child's social

emotional development through discussing preventative approaches and 4) inform parents of Mental Health information and services.

B. Teacher, Specialist and Home Visitor Observations

Once the child begins school or home visits, SOHS staff will observe the child in the classroom or home. For classroom children, SOHS staff debrief on a regular basis to review the current day and plan for the next day. More comprehensive debriefs by staff occur during staffings. Staffings are a place to discuss strengths, concerns, the child's behavior in the classroom, as well as what is happening at home and action plans are put in place to address any concerns identified. For home based children, the home visitor provides strategies and resources for the parent when mental health or behavior concerns have been identified.

C. MHC Observation(s)

The MHC comes into the classroom for Classroom Observations a minimum of two times per program year. First observations begin in October and second observations begin in late January. The MHC notes overall classroom concerns as well as individual staff, and child concerns. These observations are followed by a debrief session, which addresses the concerns noted with follow-up suggestions. MHC may also conduct individual observations in the classroom with parent permission. MHC provide consultation with home visitors at least twice a year to discuss any concerns or family needs. All parents are given opportunity to consult with a MHC at any time during the program year. If a MHC has concerns, they may recommend a referral to a local Mental Health agency or physician for further assessment.

D. Health

Health Observation forms are available from the Health Services Department (see Health Services Department procedures) when the concern about a child's behavior is health related (e.g., medications).

E. Curriculum and Child Guidance Planning

SOHS teaching staff provide a curriculum that is enriched with tools for developing social emotional skills and building positive relationships. Teaching Strategies Gold is an assessment system used by staff, which includes a social/emotional domain. These tools help assess the individual social emotional needs of children, as well as offer guidance to create and implement individual goals. The ECBS may develop with teaching staff an Individual Child Guidance Plan for children who exhibit patterns of challenging behavior. These plans are reviewed every month in order to monitor progress and make any changes to the plan that may be necessary in order to better meet the needs of the child.

F. Parent Information

In keeping with a preventative approach to mental health, families are introduced to the SOHS Mental Health program early in the program year, receiving information about

curriculum and their center's MHC and ECBS. SOHS staff will discuss with parents community mental health resources and trainings when concerns arise.

G. Treatment Services and Options

A variety of treatment services may be used for children and their families. The type of treatment service is determined by the agency and the consultant. The MHC makes recommendations, but it is the mental health agency and professional that makes the determination of what will be provided. The most common is individual or family therapy.

SOHS staff assist parents in completing mental health referrals. When a child is in referral or receiving services, SOHS staff are required to follow up once a month with parents on where the family is in the referral process or how the therapy is going, and document these notes in our data system.