

## **1304.24 Child Mental Health**

To be effective, a Head Start Program must support the mental health of staff, parents and children. The concept of mental health must be understood and the activities must be planned collaboratively among all service areas to meet the needs of the specific community. It is important to discuss mental health in a comprehensive way that considers its relationship to the physical, social, cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and occupational needs of the whole person. By its comprehensive nature, Head Start is an ideal setting for promoting a positive mental health program, and in turn, will strengthen all other goals, objectives and activities in Head Start.

UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start believes that through the implementation of a successful intervention program for low income and economically disadvantaged children and families, it is possible to strengthen the ability of the child and family to succeed in their future years. This shall be done by soliciting parent information, observations, and concerns about their child's mental health. Staff will share child's class observations with parents including behavior, development separation, and attachment issues. For this success to be achieved, the Head Start Program will ensure that each child and family will be provided with a comprehensive program to meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs while always recognizing and reinforcing the parent's role and pride in themselves and their children. The Head Start Program is based on the premise that all children show certain needs and can benefit from a comprehensive developmental program which includes a comprehensive mental health service component.

Head Start Performance Standards require three levels of intervention:

1. Prevention
2. Identification

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### **3. Referral and treatment**

We can provide these services by:

1. Assisting children in emotional, cognitive and social development toward the overall goal of social competence in coordination with the education program and other related component activities.
2. Assisting disabled children and their families in obtaining the necessary mental health services which will ensure maximum benefits from participating in the Head Start Program.
3. Provide training for staff and parents to help them understand child development and growth, appreciation for individual differences, and the need for supportive environments.
4. Assist with provisions for prevention and early identification and intervention of problems that interfere with the social-emotional development of children, parents and staff.
5. Help promote positive attitudes in parents and staff towards mental health services and recognition of the contribution of psychology, medicine, social services, education and other disciplines of mental health practices.
6. Assist in the mobilization of community resources to serve children, staff, and families who have problems preventing them from coping with their environment.

## **The Mental Health Professional**

Mental Health Professionals are available to our Program on a consultant basis. They can provide the following services:

1. Assist in planning behavior modification strategies, training staff and parents.
2. Observe children, consult with teachers and other staff, and help with behavioral screening, and assist with follow-up and referrals.
3. Keep staff and parents aware of community mental health resources.

Their mission is to observe, confer, intervene, and follow-up in writing and verbally with staff and parents regarding their findings, strengths, and weaknesses. Ultimately, when necessary, therapeutic intervention would ensue.