

Child Care Health Consultation

King County’s child care providers are dedicated to providing safe, healthy, and nurturing environments for children. Best Starts for Kids supports this goal by investing in child care health consultation (CCHC), which builds collaborative partnerships between a trusted consultant (nurses, nutritionists, and other specialists) and children, families, and providers. This healing-centered, trauma-informed approach promotes the health, safety, and development of children in child care.

With community partners, Best Starts for Kids is working to make CCHC accessible to all providers and families and inclusive of the county’s many cultures, languages, and abilities. This snapshot presents key data from year 1 of a 3-year evaluation of new and existing CCHC models.

The challenge

Expand access to CCHC while identifying the approaches with the greatest impact.

In 2018, Best Starts for Kids invested in two new approaches to CCHC, one community-informed and one based on a public health model. We partnered with Cardea to evaluate the impact of these approaches. In the first year of evaluation, child care providers at 448 participating sites shared their experiences with us.

The community-informed approach:

- Focuses on underserved child care providers, primarily licensed family homes and Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers.
- Shares models valued by community, embedded in culture and social conditions.
- Delivers culturally and linguistically responsive services and builds on community strengths.

The public health approach:

- Serves providers at licensed child care centers and some licensed family homes.
- Draws on multidisciplinary teams that include a nurse and a mental health consultant, augmented with other specialists as needed.
- Follows best practices for public health programs and adheres to the Washington Administrative Code and Caring for Our Children.

What we learned

- Both approaches offer services in person (previous to COVID-19 stay-at-home orders), focusing on coaching and modeling to build providers' skills.
- CCHC gives providers more tools to manage children's challenging behaviors with training on mental/behavioral health, sensory and self-regulation, brain development, and more. As a result, providers were able to be more inclusive of all children in their care and to keep children and families in care.
- Through CCHC, providers learned more about and become more likely to use developmental screening tools and resources.
- Providers learned and implemented more ways to make the child care space safer and support children's health, including skills to increase immunization and safe sleep practices.
- Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers and licensed family home providers can find community through CCHC and value the chance to learn from other providers.
- Consultants exhibited strong interpersonal skills which supported building a trusting relationship.
- For some providers, lack of administrative support and limited time made it difficult to put what they learned into practice.



We said that we were going to serve all students, but we didn't know how. We didn't have the capacity in our staffing or budget to have the staff support that we really needed... [The consultant] immediately came in, and it was challenging for them, too, but we devised strategies to be inclusive for this child."

— *Partial day provider*

What's next?

The descriptive first-year evaluation is building foundational evidence for the use of CCHC to support child care providers. The second and third years of evaluation will investigate core components of CCHC across all seven Best Starts–funded models. The evaluation plan will need to be responsive to the impact of COVID-19 on CCHC services and provider outcomes.

Acknowledgments

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