

A Tennessee Systems of Care Approach for Risk Reduction Among Children with Emotional and Behavioral Needs

Kelechi Ohayagha MD

UTHSC Department of Psychiatry, Division Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

Dr. Ohayagha has no conflicts of interest to disclose

Introduction:

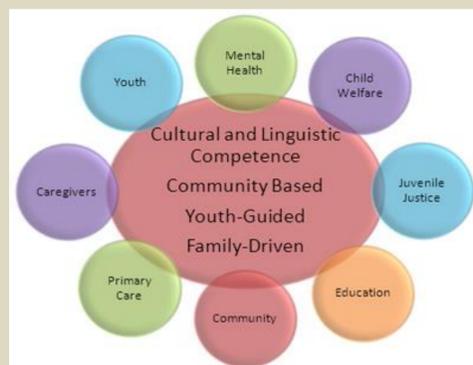
Between 13% and 20% of children in the United States experience a serious emotional disturbance in a given year¹. However, only about half of all children in need of behavioral and emotional services receive them².

Early Connections Network is a systems of care in Tennessee for very young children with social, emotional, and behavioral needs, and for their families. Early Connections Network offers an effective approach to delivering mental health services via collaboration with providers, families, caregivers, teachers, governmental agencies, and natural supports to improve access to quality care for those with mental health challenges. It prepares children for school and for life. Early Connection Network serves children ages 0-5.

Systems of Care Philosophy:

The system of care model is an organizational philosophy and framework that involves collaboration across agencies, families, and youth for the purpose of improving services and access to care. The system of care philosophy is built upon these core values and guiding principles:

- ❖ *To be family-driven and youth-guided*
- ❖ *To be community-based*
- ❖ *To be culturally and linguistically competent*



National Outcomes for Systems of Care:

- ❖ School suspensions and expulsions decreased by 44%.
- ❖ Achievement of passing grades increased by 31%.
- ❖ Youth reported significantly lower levels of depression (22%).
- ❖ Youth suicide attempts were reduced by 43%.
- ❖ Youth self-reports of arrest dropped from 27% to 11%³

Children and Youth Show Improvement in Behavioral and Emotional Symptoms



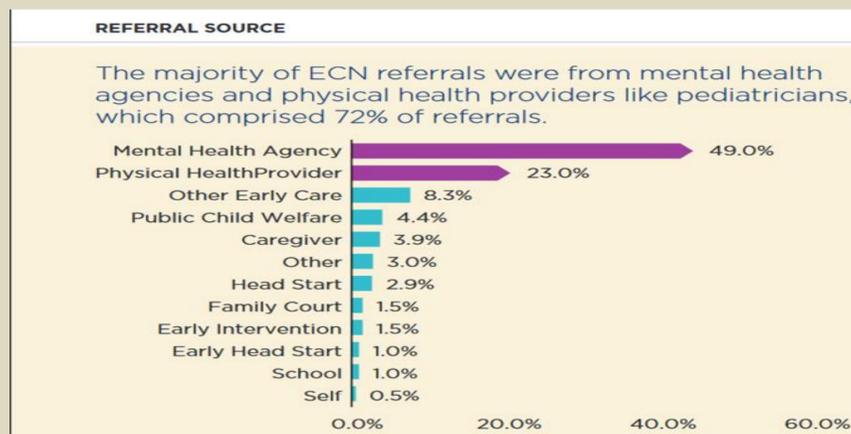
Early Connections Network

Early Connections Network (ECN) is a mental health initiative in Middle Tennessee that includes Cheatham, Robertson, Sumner, Montgomery and Dickson counties.

The ECN transforms traditional approaches to mental health care through the delivery of services that are community-based, family-driven and culturally and linguistically competent.

Using trained local parent caregivers as care coordinators in collaboration with early childhood specialists, the ECN serves a minimum of 228 young children and their families.

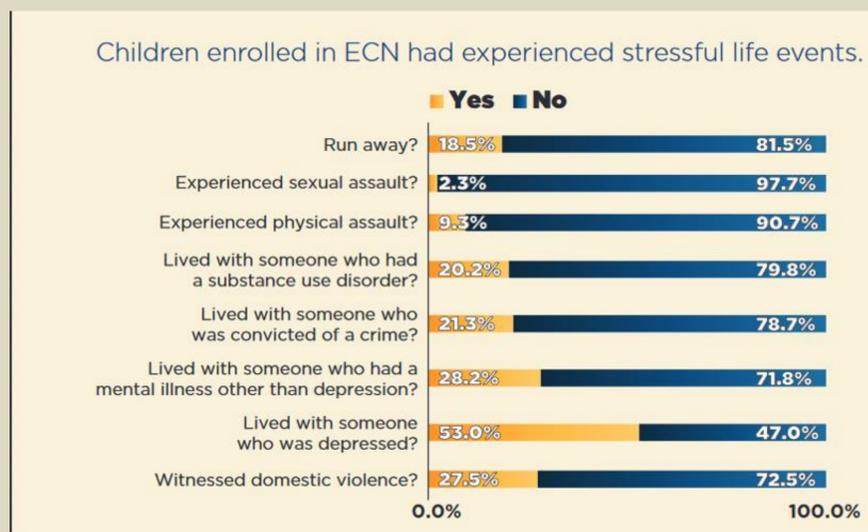
Special attention is given to the children and families of military service members including active military, reserve and National Guard units⁴.



Presenting problems

While a variety of problems were reported, the most common presenting problems were disruptive behaviors, inattention and hyperactivity⁵.

- ❖ 73% disruptive behaviors
- ❖ 45% inattention and hyperactivity
- ❖ 57% reported at least 4 problems



Early Connections Network is supported by a grant from SAMHSA

ECN Outcomes:

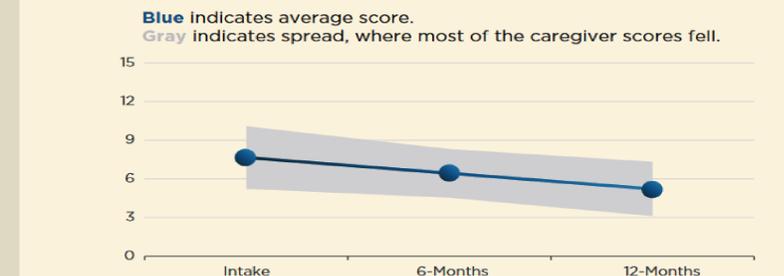
Aggression Scores fell steadily from intake to 12-months.



There was a reduction in impairment from intake to 6-months and from 6-months to 12-months.



Global Stress scores dropped steadily at each time period.



Caregivers reported a reduction in child impairment from intake to 6- and 12-months, as well as, a reduction in aggressive behavior. Caregivers reported a reduction in caregiver strain from intake to 6- and 12-months. Families reported an overwhelmingly positive System of Care experience. Caregivers found care to be individualized, child-centered, and family-driven. Skill building and community-based care was also mentioned as being helpful⁵.

Conclusion

Early Connections Network offers an effective method to improve outcomes among at risk children through the delivery of services that are community-based, family-driven and culturally and linguistically competent.

Resources:

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4. Retrieved from <http://www.tnvoices.org/>
5. Retrieved from Tennessee Association of Mental Health Organizations www.tamho.org