

 <b>Policy #: CMH-2</b>	<b>Effective Date:</b> 6/22/10	<b>Page #:</b> 1 of 2
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**COMPONENT: MENTAL HEALTH**

**SUBJECT: SECURE SERVICE IN A TIMELY MANNER**

**PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:** The agency must secure the services of mental health professionals to ensure timely and effective identification of and intervention with family and staff concerns about a child’s mental health. Mental health program services must include a regular schedule of on-site mental health consultation involving the mental health professional, program staff, and parents on how to design and implement program practices responsive to the identified behavioral and mental health concerns of an individual child or group of children; promote children’s mental wellness by providing group and individual staff and parent education on mental health issues; assist in providing special help for children with atypical behavior or development; and utilize other community mental health resources.

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE:**

Highland Rim Head Start requires a mental health consultant to be a licensed or certified mental health professional with experience and expertise in serving young children and their families.

Mental Health Consultant agreements are reviewed annually in June by the Health Services Manager. Updated/revised contract is sent to the consultant for review and signature.

The Mental Health Consultant will develop a schedule of regular on-site visits and submit to the Health Services Manager. The Health Services Manager will notify the classroom teachers, Family Advocate, Area Coordinator and Education Manager.

The Mental Health Consultant’s contact information is available to the parent/guardian and staff through the Resource Manual and on the Mental Health Resource Poster on the parent board.

The Mental Health Consultant is to conduct child and classroom observations, parent consultations as needed, parent meetings, education opportunities per schedule as requested along with other services as requested by the Health Services Manager.

The Mental Health responsibilities are outlined in the contract.

The Health Services Manager is responsible for:

- Reviewing the consultant contract annually in June to determine if changes are needed;

- Providing parents/guardians information specific to the mental health needs of individual children as needed;
- Ensure parents are actively involved in planning and implementing any mental health interventions for their child(ren).

The Health Services Manager must ensure a variety of opportunities are provided for parents and program staff to identify and discuss issues related to children and parent/guardian mental health:

- Mental health parent education opportunities may be provided through Parent meetings, resource racks, parent boards, newsletters, referral to community providers, individually through the mental health consultant and staff.

The Mental Health Consultant must:

- Provide assistance to the program;
- Provide consultation concerning specific requests/assignments by the Health Services Manager;
- Be available and accessible as needed;
- Development of Mental Health Consultant schedule;
- Work closely with all parties involved to ensure the most benefit to the children and families being served. (i.e. teachers, Health Services Manager, Area Coordinators)

The Mental Health Consultant will only complete individual child observation if permission has been provided by the parent/guardian on the referral form.

The Mental Health Consultant will provide frequent visits and schedules to center/classrooms in an effort become familiar with the classroom staff and children, to provide information and consultation if needed, and to locate any needed treatment or service in a timely fashion.

Refer to Completing Social/Emotional Referral SOP.