



## Profiles of Innovation: COVID-19 Recovery – Three Approaches to Social-Emotional Support and Mental Health

This Profile of Innovation is part of a series highlighting innovative initiatives implemented or planned by Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies. These profiles feature activities aligned with recovery priorities. Many were funded with federal coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) funds, including the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act; the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act; and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP Act) funds. The information was gathered during the [COVID-19 Recovery: Sharing Uses of Federal Relief Funds webinar](#) and from publicly available sources, and has been reviewed by the Lead Agency.

The Office of Child Care (OCC) has issued [guidance](#) for all the COVID-19 federal response and recovery funds. These guidance documents include an overview of the funds, details about the obligation and liquidation periods, allowable use of funds, administrative cost caps, and so on. OCC has strongly encouraged Lead Agencies to use these funds as part of a cohesive vision to implement policies that will better support children’s developmental and learning needs, meet parent’s needs and preferences with equal access to high-quality child care, and support a professionalized workforce that is fairly and appropriately compensated.

### Innovation

Many states have responded to the social-emotional and mental health needs of children and families as well as providers and staff during the pandemic. This profile provides a brief overview of three approaches:

- **Colorado:** Mental health consultants and a menu of options for health and mental health supports
- **Kentucky:** Provider and director “cafés” and trauma-informed care and resiliency training
- **South Carolina:** Program-based staff well-being

### The Approach: Colorado

Colorado (CO) recruited Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) consultants in 2020 in response to Governor Jared Polis’ executive order to support the health and well-being of those impacted by COVID-19. Using a combination of ARP Act and CRRSA funds, CO has **expanded its number of consultants** to 52 statewide, an increase of 18 consultants. New [Early Childhood Mental Health](#) resources are available to help raise awareness of the ECMH services, including [ECMH outreach materials and a social media toolkit](#).

ARP Act and CRRSA funds are also being used on [related activities](#) such as **grants that offer a menu of options** including trainings, mental health counseling for their workforce and families, social-emotional and health screenings for children, family health education, and access to child care health consultants. Providers may also opt in to **participate in evidence-based health and mental health programs**, such as [Incredible](#)



#### WHAT OCC GUIDANCE IS AVAILABLE ON SOCIAL- EMOTIONAL SUPPORT?

Beginning with the [2015 information memorandum](#), OCC has encouraged states to adopt policies promoting social-emotional and behavioral health.

This was followed by the [policy statement](#) on the prevention of suspension and expulsion and resources to support discussions across early care and education systems in the nation.

In response to COVID-19, OCC published the [Mental Health and Wellness Resources](#) webpage.

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[Years](#), [Pyramid Model](#), and [Conscious Discipline](#). These activities are designed to improve the well-being of child care providers and families to support and facilitate a positive, engaging, and reciprocal caregiving environment for children.

CO has published a series of briefs capturing the impact of initial federal stimulus funds on the ECMH program, including briefs on [COVID-19 Responsiveness](#) (Brief #1); [Workforce, Recipients, and Reach](#) (Brief #2); [Workforce Competency Alignment](#) (Brief #3); and [Voices from the Field](#) (Brief #4).

### The Approach: Kentucky

In response to the increased stress brought on by COVID-19, Kentucky began sponsoring **Provider** (staff/workforce) **Cafés** and **Director Cafés** in 2020 to support the mental health of child care providers and staff. These position-specific regional cafés (hosted via Zoom calls) provide a chance for people to talk about their stress, debrief on their own trauma, and discuss how they are managing their mental health. The Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services Division of Child Care uses CRRSA funds for the cafés, which are conducted by regional ECMH Specialists. Child care professionals can attend one café a month and receive a \$30 stipend for each session attended and training hours credit toward annual training requirements. KY offered stipends to providers to encourage them to come and to reward them for their time.

The regional ECMH Specialist also provides **trauma-informed care and resiliency trainings** each month. Child care professionals can attend one time and receive training hours credit. They are also eligible to receive a \$50 stipend and an age-appropriate trauma-informed care and resiliency educational resource kit.

Directors who can show 75 percent staff attendance for both Provider Cafés and trauma-informed care and resiliency trainings (including themselves) will receive a **one-time center bonus** of \$500 and materials to create an adult coping corner for all staff to decompress and center so they can provide the best quality care possible.

### The Approach: South Carolina

The [Be Well Care Well](#) program is housed with the South Carolina (SC) Program for Infant/Toddler Care and funded by the South Carolina Department of Social Services Division of Early Care and Education. The goal of the program is to **encourage the caregivers to care for themselves** so they can support the children in their care. A Well-Being Coach partners with a child care center for 1 year to help establish a Well-Being Committee that will create a well-being plan from a list of suggested activities. For this SC program, well-being includes these concepts: intellectual, emotional, physical, social, financial, environmental, occupational, and spiritual. The program offers incentives and awards to participants. The Well-Being Coach ensures that staff have links to local community health and wellness partners and learning opportunities that promote overall well-being. CCDF and Preschool Development Grant: Birth to Five funding are being used for this initiative.

#### WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

Please contact the Office of Child Care Regional Office, the Child Care State Capacity Building Center's State Systems Specialist, or the Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Response and Recovery Team member for your Region to arrange a peer to peer opportunity with Child Care and Development Fund staff or request additional information.



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