



## Overview of Project LAUNCH

- The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has been given an opportunity to create an integrated and comprehensive plan to promote the wellness of young children, from birth to age 8.
- **Project LAUNCH** (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children’s Health) is a federal grant program administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).
- The project’s primary objective is to promote the social emotional, behavioral, and physical health and cognitive development of young children from birth to age 8.
- This project will enhance the partnerships between the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) Children’s Bureau, the Department of Health (DOH), the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), and our local partner, Allegheny County Department of Human Services.
- Grantees are funded to work with a pilot community for 5 years, pursuing dual goals of improving systems and services at the local and state level.
- Project LAUNCH is guided by local and state Young Child Wellness Councils (YCWCs) that engage key leaders in developing a common strategy and plan for improving outcomes for young children and their families.
  - PA Project Launch is supporting the implementation of evidence-based programs and activities to improve child wellness in the following demonstration sites: Pittsburgh City School District, Baldwin-Whitehall School District, and Woodland Hills School District.
  - Implementation will focus on the three demonstration sites in Allegheny County with the goal of countywide implementation in the last two years of the grant.
  - The experience in Allegheny County will be shared with other counties in the state to encourage statewide expansion.
  - Project LAUNCH is about system change:
    - ensuring availability and access to quality prevention services,
    - provision of quality, effective services,
    - addressing service gaps and reduction of health disparities, and
    - eliminating fragmentation in systems and funding streams

### *Project LAUNCH Primary Focus*

- Increase access to screening, assessment, and referral to appropriate services for young children and their families;
- Expand use of culturally-relevant, evidence-based prevention and wellness promotion practices (EBPs) in a range of settings;
- Increase integration of behavioral health into primary care settings;
- Improve coordination and collaboration across local, state, and federal agencies serving young children and their families, and
- Increase workforce knowledge of children’s social and emotional development and preparation to deliver high quality care.

### *Project LAUNCH Promotion, Prevention, and Intervention Strategies*

- **Screening and Assessment in a range of child serving settings**
  - Screening for social and emotional wellbeing helps to identify indicators of developmental delays or behavioral concerns and signal that a more extensive assessment may be needed.
- **Integration of behavioral health into primary care settings**
  - Integration models seek to bring mental health expertise into the primary care practice both through mental health consultants and through training primary care staff to be able to recognize, assess, and provide appropriate referrals to help their patients who have mental health needs.
- **Mental health consultation in early care and education**
  - Early childhood mental health consultant’s (ECMHC) work collaboratively with early care and education (ECE) programs, staff, and families to improve their ability to prevent, identify, treat, and reduce the effect of mental health problems among children and to implement classroom and center-based practices that promote health social and emotional development.
- **Enhanced Home Visitation**
  - Home visitors work directly with families and caregivers to provide support and guidance on health care, education, and child development. Training is provided for home visitors on social emotional development to improve the effectiveness of home visitation programs at supporting families.
- **Family Strengthening and Parent Skill Building**
  - Evidence-based tools and approaches are used to help families create healthy environments that support children’s development.

### *Pennsylvania Project LAUNCH Strategic Plan At-A-Glance- Goals and Objectives:*

1. **Ensure young children at risk for poor developmental outcomes are screened and provided appropriate resources, including referrals.**
  - a. Increase usage of the most appropriate instruments for screenings and assessments in all early childhood settings for children 0-8, their families, and pregnant women.
  - b. Increase providers’ skills around implementing high-quality screening and assessment processes, including referral and follow-up.
  - c. Increase parent and community awareness of the importance of screening and assessment.

- 2. Enhance integration of physical health and behavioral health practices to improve access of care for children birth to 8 years, their families, and pregnant women.**
  - a. Increase number of behavioral health screens with validated instruments as a part of healthy development check-ups in primary care offices caring for children.
  - b. Increase the number of physical health and behavioral health providers trained in topics related to integration (including infant and child behavioral health, behavioral health tools and resources, and practice integration models).
  - c. Increase the number of pediatric practices that integrate behavioral health resources to meet the needs of young children and their families.
- 3. Strengthen existing ECMH consultation and extend services to children birth to 8 years, their families, and pregnant women, integrating into multiple early childhood settings.**
  - a. Increase use of uniform best practices in the process of ECMH Consultation in early childhood settings.
  - b. Increase the use of ECMH consultation in new settings and for additional age groups.
  - c. Increase stakeholder knowledge of the importance of social emotional wellness and the availability of ECMH consultation and support.
  - d. Increase parent and community awareness of the importance of social emotional wellness and the availability of ECMH consultation and support.
- 4. Promote integrated, evidence-based, high-quality home visiting services that ensure access to those who need it.**
  - a. Increase the number of home visiting programs that provide behavioral and physical health resources to meet the needs of families and that support home visiting staff.
  - b. Increase home visiting staff knowledge around best practices in the foundation of home visiting and evidence-based/evidence-informed programs.
  - c. Increase parent and community awareness of the importance of social emotional wellness and the availability of home visiting supports.
- 5. Ensure families with young children are connected to needed services and information.**
  - a. Increase parents' access to information and resources to support healthy child development and social emotional wellness.
  - b. Increase community members trained in mental health issues.
  - c. Increase parent involvement in social networks that promote their leadership skills.
  - d. Raise community awareness of social emotional wellness in children birth to 8 years and its role in school success.

\*\*Evaluation Outcome Measurements to be added upon finalization\*\*

For more information/resources on PA Project LAUNCH, please contact Brandy Fox, LCSW at [brafox@berksiu.org](mailto:brafox@berksiu.org)