

# Orange County Family, Infant, and Early Childhood Mental Health (FIECMH)

*Initiative Update*

Issue 1: January 2025



## Welcome to the FIECMH Partner Community!

Do you know others who may want to stay updated? Please share this newsletter!

FIECMH stands for *Family, Infant, and Early Childhood Mental Health*. The initiative is focused on infants and children (and their caregivers) because the roots of lifelong mental health—and health and well-being more broadly—start at birth (or before). For everyone to be as healthy and well as possible, emphasizing early, proactive, and protective support versus reactive treatment is key.

The initiative's work is to envision what a “continuum of care” (the full range of supports for mental health and well-being) looks like for Orange County families. Our goal is to collaboratively create a roadmap for how we do this, and ensure that the continuum of care envisioned by families, community partners, and systems leaders is realized and sustained.

In this first issue of the FIECMH Initiative Update, you'll find highlights from our community update meeting on November 20 as well as a preview of what's to come in 2025.

**This newsletter is your source for what's coming, what's happening, and what progress the initiative has made so far. It's also a way to be connected and tell us what's on your mind—we want to hear from you!**

We are deeply saddened by the devastation caused by the ongoing fires in Los Angeles. Our thoughts are with the children, families, and communities affected during this challenging time. We recognize that our Orange County partners may also be impacted directly and called to support our neighbors. The First 5 Association has compiled a list of resources that you can access [here](#).

## Please join us! Upcoming Events

**Working Session: Services for Prenatal to Age 8**

**(February 19, 11:00-12:30 p.m. PST OR February 21, 1:00-2:30 p.m. PST)**

Help our community create a more complete picture of what services already exist to support mental health and well-being for expecting families and children 8 years old and younger—and what we still need. Whether your expertise is geographic, from experience accessing services, focused on one particular age group or an aspect of mental health promotion, prevention, or intervention, your insights and experiences are important!

There are two dates, but the agenda for each 90-minute session will be the same, so **please choose to attend one session** on the date most convenient for you.

Please note that once you register you will receive a calendar invite from Zoom. This registration is only for the one session you sign up for. This is not an ongoing workgroup.

[Register for February 19 Working Session](#)

[Register for February 21 Working Session](#)

## Recent Progress

### Making Connections and Deciding Next Steps at the Nov. 20 Community Update

On October 29, 2024, 65 community partners—parents, health care providers, members of community-based organizations, and systems leaders—came together at the Delhi Center to align on a collective vision for how to meet the mental health needs of all families in Orange County. This reflected nearly a year of listening to and learning from the community.

The focus of the November 20 community update was a share-out of the work that took place at the October 29 convening and an introduction to the next phase of work.



*In case you missed it: Participants at the October 29 Convening helping to build a vision for FIECMH in OC*

The next step in developing the OC FIECMH continuum of care includes digging deeper into specific areas of focus:

- Services and supports
- Sustainability, including funding, systems alignment, and workforce
- Data and measurement

- Oversight

Efforts to look more closely at these topics will occur in different ways, starting with working sessions focused on services and support. [See the Upcoming Events section above to sign up for the first session.](#)

For more details from the meetings on October 29 and November 20, 2024, see:

- [November 20 Community Update Meeting Slides](#)
- [October 29 Convening Initiative Overview](#)
- [October 29 Convening Literature Review](#)
- [October 29 Convening Landscape Scan](#)

## How can we improve?

In response to feedback that community partners want more time to meet each other, the November 20 meeting began with partners breaking out into small groups to introduce themselves and their organizations and share how the work of the FIECMH Initiative might impact their own efforts.

If you have ideas about additional ways we can help community partners get to know one another at future meetings or would like to share other feedback on the community update, please let us know by sending an email to [fiemh@healthplusstudio.com](mailto:fiemh@healthplusstudio.com).

## What's Coming Up Next

- **Next community update:** Community updates are open to all community members who want to contribute to the development of the FIECMH continuum of care in Orange County. The next update will be on **Friday, March 14**. A registration link will be shared in our next newsletter.
- **From aligned initiatives:** There are multiple related efforts underway in the county that are helping to increase our learning:
  - **Partners working with the FFPSC Community Pathway survey** are seeking input from adult community members to support the development of a community prevention pathway for child welfare in Orange County. [See the survey here.](#)
  - **OC Network of Care** is hosting a **convening on February 25** that is open to Orange County community partners interested in learning about and discussing current behavioral health system transformation efforts at the state level and their impacts on Orange County. [Register and find more information about the event here.](#)

## Every Voice Matters

We want to hear from you! Curious to know what other community partners know and think? We will be sure to share the results. Please take 2 minutes to answer our poll question:

**How confident are you that you know what services and supports are available in Orange County to support the mental health of families with young children up to age 8?**

## Some Working Definitions

### What is a continuum of care?

A continuum of care provides a range of options for people with different mental health needs. These options include supports that promote well-being, reduce health risks, and help identify and diagnose mental health conditions, as well as interventions and treatment options. The continuum of care ensures that people's needs are met over time and in response to varying needs of support.



### What does a continuum of care look like for Orange County?

FIECMH Initiative community partners have made a good start in defining what a continuum of care looks like in Orange County. While this definition may continue to evolve over the course of the coming year, the current working definition is...

The Family, Infant, and Early Childhood Mental Health Continuum of Care in Orange County is a spectrum of effective, community-based services and supports...

- For families with infants and young children from prenatal to age 8, with or without established risk of mental and behavioral health challenges
- That is family-centered
- That includes promotion, prevention, and intervention organized into a coordinated network
- That recognizes the relationship between mental health challenges and other behavioral health considerations, such as substance use and neurodevelopmental conditions
- That addresses cultural and linguistic needs
- With the goal of helping children and families to function at home, in school, in the community, and throughout life

Questions or comments? Please email us: [fiecmh@healthplusstudio.com](mailto:fiecmh@healthplusstudio.com)

**Please share this newsletter!** Forward it to staff you know at Orange County public agencies, community-based organizations, and local advocates serving children and families, as well as health care providers and families interested in knowing about and participating in the initiative.

*The FIEMCH Initiative is supported by funding from First 5 Orange County and Orange County Healthcare Agency.*



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