



## Creating a “Mentally Healthy” Atmosphere: De-Stigmatizing the Stigma

### Broadening Our Thinking

HS/EHS program staff need to begin thinking about the Mental Health Professional or community partner much like the Nutritionist, Health Manager or Education Manager. Each of these specialists is there to make certain that children thrive in their respective areas, and handle problems as they arise. The Mental Health Professional or Consultant is there to support mentally healthy home and program environments for the children the program serves.



Still other families need more ongoing, long-term support. However, keep in mind that mental health can change over time and rarely stays exactly the same for anyone. Consider your program, the mental health needs, and how young children, families and staff are best supported in your setting.

### Building Relationships Over Time

After all is said and done, relationships create the foundation for mental health. When there is trust and mutual respect, partnerships develop between parents and staff. Community partnerships link families to needed services, and at the same time support HS/EHS programs. Though it will not happen overnight, HS/EHS programs can build on current relationships and strengthen new ones over time.

### Understanding Mental Health vs. Mental Health Disorders

Think of a continuum. On one end sits mental health (healthy mental health), on the other end mental health disorders, and there is a range between the two. Many HS/EHS families fall in or near the range of mental health. Some families need help that can be addressed with a slight change in programming.