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MCH Innovations Database Practice Summary & Implementation Guidance

Hand In Hand

We provide 5 tools and a trauma-responsive approach to support the emotional wellbeing of parents, early care and education professionals, and children.



Location

Global



Topic Area

Family/Youth Engagement



Setting

Home-based, Day care/Preschool, Clinical



Population Focus

Child Health



NPM

N/A



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Section 1: Practice Summary

PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

Hand in Hand's founder, Patty Wipfler, spent her early career as an educator, leading a co-operative preschool and working as a community organizer leading antiracism work around the country. She witnessed first-hand the damage parental stress can do, and saw clearly that societal protection from overwhelming parenting circumstances is rare. Thirty years ago, Patty established the Hand in Hand Parenting organization in response to that need; Hand in Hand's caregiving approach is rooted in the idea that global problems of violence and racial and social injustice arise from disconnection, unmet needs, and the unhealed emotional residue of adverse experiences. Hand in Hand creates a world where people's innate instinct to love, to connect, and to heal from hard things is protected and nurtured.

Hand in Hand has now expanded across five continents and 225 countries and territories, with materials translated into 14 languages, and has a global network of 185 Certified Instructors serving their local communities. Hand in Hand reaches over one million parents and professionals each month, and provided more than 66,000 hours of direct support to families and professionals in 2021.

Hand in Hand supports the emotional well-being of children and their caregivers through five transformative caregiving and peer-support tools. Hand in Hand serves parents and professionals through local and online classes, talks and workshops led by Certified Instructors, an online community group moderated with real-time support, self-guided classes, support calls, a one-year Instructor Certification program, and professional development training for a wide range of professionals. Hand in Hand's diverse group of Instructors work across a variety of settings (parent education and support, home visiting, early care and education, mental health, primary care, early intervention, child welfare, child care) in a wide range of communities and countries worldwide.

Hand in Hand is aligned with a robust evidence-informed theoretical framework for disrupting trajectories between early life stress and adverse outcomes, and the five tools operationalize the principles of attachment theory, authoritative parenting, and trauma-responsive care. Hand in Hand is continually focused on promoting the protective factors that address the root causes of disparities in child outcomes, and on supporting diverse communities to promote equity and justice.

CORE COMPONENTS & PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

Hand in Hand provides indirect support for children by training and supporting the adults who care for them. The core components of Hand in Hand's Instructor-led programs include 1) weekly group classes for peer support and mentoring from a Certified Instructor 2) an accessible online course format 3) instruction in a peer-support tool 4) instruction in 4 adult-child tools. Additionally, there are two core components of the approach that serve as catalysts for positive outcomes for children and the adults who care for them: 1) The consultative alliance - the warm connected quality of the relationship between the Instructor and participants, 2) A fresh lens through which to view children's behavior and emotional functioning.

Hand in Hand's Theory of Change outlines these core components and is included below:



Core Components & Practice Activities

Core Component	Activities	Operational Details
Personalized Mentoring & Support/Reflective Practice	Experiential weekly class led by a Certified Instructor	Provide online courses of 3-8 weeks in length for real-time support and training in the tools. 4-6 participants per group meet for weekly mentoring groups that last for 60-90 minutes. Participants receive new content and perspectives, personalized guidance, feedback, peer support, and practice the adult-adult stress reducing reflective practice tool.
Instructor-Participant Alliance	Instructor facilitates relationship-building during the mentoring calls	Instructor facilitates the creation of a warm, trusting relationship between Instructor and participants to encourage depth-oriented reflective practice, increased connection, and the necessary emotional tone to utilize the peer support tool (Listening Partnership). Instructor models tone and body language to communicate support, caring and safety. The consultative alliance established between Instructor and participants is a parallel process to the alliance established between participants and the children they care for.
Adult-Adult, Peer-Support Tool	Listening Partnerships: A timed exchange of emotional connection and support for parents/teachers/caregivers	Utilized and practiced during weekly mentoring calls; participants set up 1-1 “listening exchanges” with other participants in order to build in additional individualized support and community support when the course ends. This tool builds responsive relationships and resilience for caregivers in the context of their own histories of adversity. This peer support tool helps to buffer against caregiver stress while caring for children with histories of adversity. This tool supports the natural emotional recovery process from stress and overwhelm. It decreases isolation and helps to provide alternatives to harsh and punitive discipline practices.
Adult-Child, Caregiving Tools	Four tools to respond to big feelings and challenging	Simple and concrete tools that help caregivers be the ‘super protective factor’



	behaviors: Play-based tool (Playlistening), setting warm and firm limits (Setting Limits), child-led 1-1 time (Special Time), supporting emotional expression (Staylistening).	against negative outcomes for the children in their care. Tools work to build, maintain, and repair adult-child connection. Tools increase child-led play, adult-child connection and positive interactions, warm and firm limits, and help children recover from hard moments.
Learning Materials	Short videos and written booklets & articles	All videos are delivered in short segments to encourage a manageable pace and support the adult learning process. Content is shared through 1) short didactic teaching segments 2) anecdotes 3) short booklets
Course Format	Accessible internet-based courses with a combination of asynchronous learning and weekly group calls with peers led by a Certified Instructor	The online training format of the courses eliminates travel expenses, the need for childcare, and can be accessed by people with limited physical mobility. After decades of development, the distance format utilizes best-practices in adult education to optimize learning opportunities for educators and parents. These no-cost tools can be incorporated into the often resource-limited lives of families, and into early childhood educational settings that support communities facing adversity.
Trauma-Responsive Lens	Learning new theory of emotional functioning	The Hand in Hand model proposes that learning, optimal emotional functioning and recovery from hard times depend upon the experience and sharing of emotion while anchored by a warm, responsive adult. This supportive structure of co-regulation builds the foundational skills for self-regulation, executive functioning, and emotional resilience.
Connection Plan	Template for scheduling in times of connection	Participants use this template to integrate the tools into their existing routines in order to help plan for ongoing implementation and support.



HEALTH EQUITY

The Hand in Hand approach at its core is focused on fostering optimal human emotional functioning so children and the adults who care for them can heal from the effects of systemic mistreatment and work towards justice and equity.

The year-long Instructor Certification Program and all other professional development trainings include reflective practice and increased awareness of 1) culture and identity as sources of strength and resilience and 2) the impact of racism, colonialism, and various identity and role-based experiences on Instructors own emotional functioning and caregiving capacity. Hand in Hand leads monthly professional development training for our worldwide Instructor cohort in which we share how we use these tools in the context of our lived experiences in regard to neurodiversity, physical functioning, gender, relationship status, family composition, socioeconomic status, cultural heritage, ethnicity, lifeways and various role-based identities. Hand in Hand conducts virtual and in-person retreats to support one another around leadership in our own families, our own communities, and in sharing the Hand in Hand tools with others.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

Hand in Hand is engaged in a continuous process of program development, evaluation, and improvement. In 2018, Hand in Hand was selected as a Frontiers of Innovation (FOI) Portfolio Project by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. Through FOI, the research team trained in a rapid-cycle iterative research methodology (the IDEAS Impact Framework) in which findings inform practice and are quickly incorporated into program modifications. Co-creation is a guiding principle of this work and this methodology is now central to the way that Hand in Hand develops and refines programs.

Under FOI's mentorship, Hand in Hand's Research Team conducted a feasibility study of the 6-week online Foundations Course for Early Childhood Educators. Both Certified Instructors and educators were enrolled in the course as participants and both quantitative and qualitative data regarding the feasibility and acceptability of the training program was collected. Furthermore, interview data was collected, which revealed compelling preliminary qualitative data regarding changes in educator beliefs and practices related to emotional functioning and the use of the Hand in Hand tools in their educational settings.

The Research Team has incorporated feedback from the feasibility study into the improved design of the Foundations Course for Early Childhood Educators and are now recruiting participants for an early pilot study which will include training 50 early childhood educators in a revised 8-week version of the course (to be conducted in Fall of 2022). Based on the feedback from the early pilot study, the Research Team will document the findings, begin modifying the course, and plan for a study of the next iteration of the intervention. The aim is to look closely at mediators and moderators and to further refine the theory of change.

The design of the larger research agenda has been influenced by research that has previously been done on the theoretical foundations of the approach as well as on specific components of the Hand in Hand model. These research foundations are described in more detail in the following section.

Community-Defined Evidence: Hand in Hand has a well-trained and highly experienced cohort of Certified Instructors who teach the approach in a wide variety of communities all over the world. The programs, services, and training curricula are continuously being co-created by Instructors and the communities of which they are a part, the parents with whom they work, and in the wide variety of professional settings in which they work. Hand in Hand's longevity and reach speak to the feasibility, acceptability and cultural alignment and flexibility of the approach and the tools.



Individuals' Experiential Evidence: Hand in Hand has compiled over 5,000 written anecdotes from people who document their use of these tools in their families and their work settings. These anecdotes are used to teach parents and professionals about the tools and the approach. Hand in hand has not yet formally evaluated this extensive library of practice-based evidence.

Professionals' Experiential Evidence: Hand in Hand's multidisciplinary Research Team brings together professionals from a range of sectors including Parent Education, Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Special Education, Pediatric Medicine, Clinical Child Psychology, and Developmental Psychology. As professionals in their respective fields, they bring a high degree of expertise to bear on the clinical impact of the Hand in Hand approach, particularly in relation to the effectiveness of Hand in Hand in comparison with other caregiving, social-emotional learning, and mental health practices.



Section 2: Implementation Guidance

COLLABORATORS AND PARTNERS

Practice Collaborators and Partners		
Partner/Collaborator	How are they involved in decision-making throughout practice processes?	Does this stakeholder have lived experience/come from a community impacted by the practice?
Certified Instructors	<p>1) The research program includes Instructor interviews and surveys on their experience of the programs that guides the Research Team in program design and improvement 2) Communities of Practice (14-week professional development series) for Instructors requires completing feedback surveys about their experiences with the program which are used to inform program improvements 3) Instructors are encouraged to attend regular calls with the Program Director to receive reflective supervision and feedback that informs program development.</p>	<p>Yes, Certified Instructors are required to use and practice the tools with their families, in their own communities, and/ or in their professional settings in order to teach the tools to others.</p> <p>The vast majority of Certified Instructors are parents.</p>
Parents and caregivers who participate in all 3 to 8-week courses	A pre and post evaluation survey is given to all participants. Data is used to improve program delivery.	Yes, parents are the key population we serve and are directly impacted by Hand in Hand.
Professionals who participate in all 3 to 8 week courses (mental health providers, medical professionals, educators)	A pre and post evaluation survey is given to all participants. Data is used to improve program delivery.	Yes, professionals who work with children and families are part of the key population impacted by Hand in Hand.



<p>School Leaders</p>	<p>Hand in Hand regularly consults with school leaders on the benefits and barriers to accessing and using the tools in school settings.</p>	<p>Yes, we are expanding the training and support to early childhood educational communities. School leaders are providing support for teachers to implement the tools in their classrooms.</p>
<p>Early Care & Education Professionals</p>	<p>Research studies conducted for early childhood educational communities include pre and post surveys, weekly surveys, and individual or group interviews (60-90 mins.) in order to increase accessibility and cultural congruence of the program, improve training materials and format, and refine evaluation plan.</p>	<p>Yes, early care and education professionals are a part of the key population impacted by Hand in Hand.</p>

REPLICATION

Over the years, Hand in Hand Parenting has worked with hundreds of groups to meet individual community needs through in-depth programs, parent support groups, and individualized talks. For a list of implementation sites and funders, see <https://www.handinhandparenting.org/become-a-partner/partner-list/past-partners/>.

INTERNAL CAPACITY

The Hand in Hand approach is implemented in a variety of settings and communities around the world. There are no universal standards for internal capacity, as each setting a community requires a different level of internal capacity.

For more information, please contact Maya Coleman, Director of Programs and Research at maya@handinhandparenting.org.

PRACTICE TIMELINE

Hand in Hand Parenting has several Instructor-led programs with flexible timelines to meet the needs of the communities served. There are no standard timelines for implementing the practice, however, many of the foundational Hand in Hand courses and groups run for 6-8 weeks.

For more information about programs, timeline, and specific practice activities, please explore our website



www.handinhandparenting.org/research, or contact Maya Coleman, Director of Programs and Research at maya@handinhandparenting.org.

PRACTICE COST

Hand in Hand programs are typically led by one or more Certified Hand in Hand Instructors. We currently have a cohort of 185 Certified Instructors who are available to conduct workshops, speak to groups and organizations, teach courses, and provide consultations. The cost to administer a specific Hand in Hand program depends on many factors, including the setting, the participants, and the time needed from the Instructor(s).

We can share examples of categories for budget items that an organization may use in funding this work with Hand in Hand:

- The Hand in Hand Instructor's hourly or project-based contractor fee
- Rent for the space within which to hold programs
- Telephone/internet connectivity
- Supplies and office equipment
- Travel to and from centers/homes, etc.
- Training and professional development costs
- General and central administrative support
- Supervision for the Instructor
- Fees for the Instructor to maintain Active Certified Instructor status with Hand in Hand

For more information about practice costs, please explore our website www.handinhandparenting.org/research, or contact Maya Coleman, Director of Programs and Research at maya@handinhandparenting.org

LESSONS LEARNED

Clear benefits from the Foundations Course for Early Childhood Educators documented in the Feasibility study for Early Childhood Educators:

- Educators reported growth using the tools with children in their programs in just six weeks
- Educators reported feelings of relief after learning a new theory of emotional functioning
- Highly trained and experienced educators made use of the tools (no ceiling effect)
- The online class and mentoring call helped educators feel supported, reduced isolation, increased compassion and facilitated learning about the tools
- Length of class and call were useful; other formats might increase access (e.g. one- or two-day workshop models).



We have addressed many challenges successfully over the decades as we support a growing Instructor Community across the world. One of the largest barriers to making these tools even more widely available is the fact that practice-based evidence has not always been understood and given appropriate weight. We are in the beginning phases of formally documenting Hand in Hand's decades of practice-based evidence. We are excited about partnering with research institutions and others engaged in community involved research to explore possible collaborations; please reach out if you are interested in discussing possibilities..

For more specific lessons learned and feedback please see the Impact Report in supplemental materials below or contact Maya Coleman at maya@handinhandparenting.org

NEXT STEPS

The Research Team secured funding to continue investigating the outcomes of the Hand in Hand program in underserved early childhood educational communities in the US. The research plan below outlines 4-phases of the research program. The primary goals are to continue to improve the training program, and increase accessibility and cultural congruence in order to effectively scale the program across diverse early childhood education programs.

Improvements for the Foundations Course for Early Childhood Educators:

- Reduce the overall volume of material and develop additional materials focused on early childhood educational settings
- Increase culturally diverse voices in the materials
- Increase mentorship time and materials related to Connection Plans
- Provide simple ways for teachers to share the theory and practice with families
- More clearly address how listening tools can be used in diverse developmental and cultural contexts
- Expand the Community of Practice model for Instructors for additional professional development and support
- Utilize the Community of Practice model for educators who have completed the Foundations Course
- Expand and evaluate DEI training for Instructors

RESOURCES PROVIDED

- [5 Listening Tools with Descriptions](#)
- [Feasibility Study Impact Report](#)
- [Hand in Hand Parenting as a Trauma-Informed Caregiving Practice](#)

APPENDIX

- www.handinhandparenting.org/research

