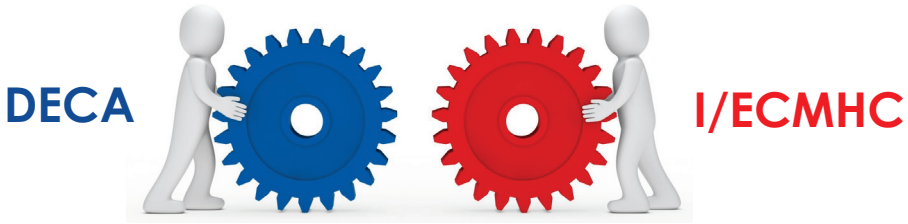
Devereux
CENTER FOR
RESILIENT CHILDREN

Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC) and the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) Program Alignment Paper



By Rachel Wagner, Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist and National Trainer

The Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) Program is an assessment and planning system to promote children's social and emotional development and was designed with the specific intent to bridge the worlds of early childhood development and mental health, providing a common language that is strength-based, family friendly, and developmentally appropriate. The DECA Program is a valuable complement to any Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC) service because it helps all the adults in a child's life focus on social and emotional health and resilience.

Table of Contents:

Alignment Overview ---- 1
DECA Overview ---- 2
The DECA 5-Step Approach Can Support the I/ECMHC Process ---- 3
The DECA Program Levels of Intervention Can Support the I/ECMHC Process ---- 4
The I/ECMHC Key Features & Core Values Can Be Supported by the DECA Program ---- 5
Other DCRC Resources That Can Support I/ECMHC Work ---- 6

1. Alignment Overview

The Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) Program is an assessment and planning system to promote children's social and emotional development and was designed with the specific intent to bridge the worlds of early childhood development and mental health, providing a common language that is strength-based, family- friendly, and developmentally appropriate. The DECA Program is a valuable complement to any Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC) service because it helps all the adults in a child's life focus on social and emotional health and resilience. I/ECMHC services benefit from utilizing the entire DECA Program suite of resources and strategies, but can also benefit from utilizing the assessments (birth through 5 years old) independently, and will find that they are/contribute to:

- **Easy to use.** Complete an assessment and use companion strategies to build the critical social and emotional skills children need.
- **Research-based**. Nationally standardized, reliable, and valid, the assessments meet or exceed standards for high quality.
- **Comprehensive**. The assessments are completed by caregivers, teachers, and families, ensuring a team approach to building social and emotional skills for all children.
- **Strength-based**. The tools help to build on a child's existing competencies and offer a strength-based approach to address areas identified for growth.
- **Positive outcomes**. The information can contribute to significant, positive change in the life of a child. The Devereux Center for Resilient Children provides a variety of professional development experiences that are useful for I/ECMHC consultants. Many of these trainings can support efforts toward mental health credentials and endorsements. MI-AIMH Competency Guidelines accept training hours on topics related to many of the topics DCRC offers, including topics related to attachment, infant and toddler development, family relationships and dynamics, separation, trauma, relationship-focused therapeutic practices, and many more.

I/ECMHC Overview:

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC) is a prevention-based approach that partners a mental health consultant with adults – such as teachers, caregivers, and families – who support infants and young children in their everyday environments. The goal is not to provide therapy or "fix" children, but to build the capacity of adults to foster healthy social and emotional development in the children they care for. I/ECMHC focuses on strengthening relationships, enhancing environments, and promoting equity and cultural responsiveness across all settings where young children grow and learn. The core goals of I/ECMHC work include;

Prevention: Promoting Mental Health
I/ECMHC works to reduce risk factors and promote healthy development for all children, not just those with identified concerns.

Capacity Building: Supporting Adults
Consultants focus on increasing the knowledge, skills, and confidence of caregivers, teachers, and families.

Systemic Impact: Strengthening Environments
I/ECMHC aims to improve the broader systems and settings where children grow, making positive change sustainable.
https://www.iecmhc.org/

DECA Program Overview:

The Devereux Center for Resilient Children (DCRC) provides strength-based, resilience-focused assessments and planning systems to promote healthy social and emotional development in infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. The centerpieces of the DECA Program are the DECA for Infants (I), Toddlers (T), and Preschoolers (P2), which are standardized, valid, and reliable tools that measure within-child protective factors and screen for behavioral concerns. Included with the assessments, the DECA Program provides strength-based planning approaches and strategy resources for caregivers/teachers and parents.
The DECA Clinical tool (DECA-C) can be used by mental health professionals to provide a next-level assessment and support for children with extensive social and emotional needs.

DCRC's model emphasizes promotion, prevention, and intervention. We refer to the supports offered at these three levels as Universal, Targeted, and Expanded. DCRC's strength-based approach to assessment and planning consists of a five-step system to promote healthy social and emotional protective factors in children. The program includes assessment, a comprehensive planning framework, and strategies to help the child in both the home and school settings.

2. DECA Overview

The DECA tools listed below can be used as part of the comprehensive DECA Program or as stand-alone tools. The DECA I, T, and P2 allow an I/ECMHC program to systematically gather information about children's social and emotional strengths and needs and support the use of that information to guide planning that will support all children (universal intervention) or some children who have needs (targeted intervention). The DECA-C can be used by an I/ECMHC seeking to assess a child with extensive needs (expanded intervention). The DECA tools meet or exceed the professional standards for validity and reliability and were developed using a robust standardization sample. The assessments can support outcome measurement, research, and eligibility if needed. The DECA tools also create a common language and foster collaboration among early childhood professionals, mental health consultants, and parents/family members.

Devereux Center for Resilient Children (DCRC) Assessment Tools: Summary Table

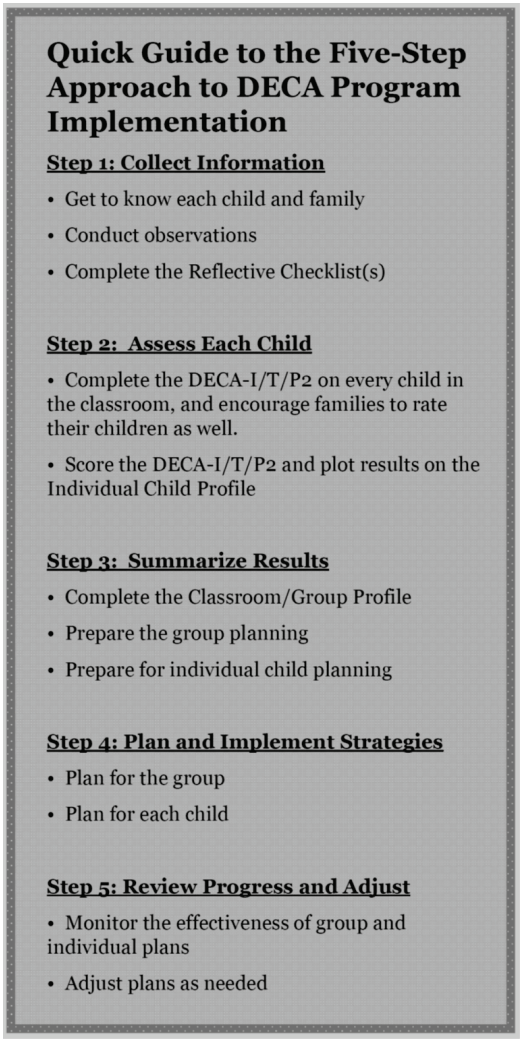
Strength-based assessment tools based on resilience research that measure social and emotional skills and competencies

	DECA for Infants (DECA-I)	DECA for Toddlers (DECA-T)	DECA for Preschoolers, Second Edition (DECA-P2)	DECA Clinical Form (DECA-C)
Age-range	1-18 mo.	18-36 mo.	3-5 yrs.	2-5 yrs.
Assess, Screen, or Both	Both	Both	Both	Assess
Parent/Guardian Rater	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher/Caregiver/Provider Rater	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Time to Administer (in minutes)	5-10	5-10	5-10	10-15
Total Number of items	33	36	38	62
Reading level	Sixth	Sixth	Sixth	Sixth
English, Spanish, or Both	Both	Both	Both	English
Culturally Appropriate Items	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Reliability meets/exceeds prof standards	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Validity meets/exceeds prof standards	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
National Standardization sample	2,183	2,183	3553	1108-2,000
Standard Scores	%, T-score	%, T-score	%, T-score	%, T-score
Advanced Interpretation Available	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Web-based (Electronic) Version	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Scoring Assistant CD	Yes	Yes	No	No
Cost per Assessment (paper)	$1	$1	$1	$2
Accompanying Strategies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Professional Development	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Meets Professional Standards	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

These assessments come in a paper version but are also available electronically on the DECA online which also includes access to strategies.

3. The DECA Program 5-Step Approach Can Support the I/ECMHC Process

The comprehensive DECA Infant/Toddler Program and DECA Preschool Program are implemented using a 5-step approach. The steps include Step One: Collect Information, Step Two: Assess Each Child, Step Three: Summarize Results, Step Four: Develop and Implement Plans, Step Five: Evaluate Progress and Adjust. Through each step of the process, a wide variety of tools and strategies are provided to support observation, reflection, family partnerships, social-emotional quality improvements, individualization, targeted/prevention focused supports, and outcome measurement. An I/ECMHC doing classroom or child-focused consultation can utilize some or all aspects of the comprehensive DECA Program to support their work. Through these five steps, the program works to: (1) assess and build resilience in all children; (2) promote the resilience of the important adults in young children's lives; and (3) create environments that support resilience-building behaviors in children and adults.



Quick Guide to the Five-Step Approach to DECA Program Implementation

Step 1: Collect Information

- Get to know each child and family
- Conduct observations
- Complete the Reflective Checklist(s)

Step 2: Assess Each Child

- Complete the DECA-I/T/P2 on every child in the classroom, and encourage families to rate their children as well.
- Score the DECA-I/T/P2 and plot results on the Individual Child Profile

Step 3: Summarize Results

- Complete the Classroom/Group Profile
- Prepare the group planning
- Prepare for individual child planning

Step 4: Plan and Implement Strategies

- Plan for the group
- Plan for each child

Step 5: Review Progress and Adjust

- Monitor the effectiveness of group and individual plans
- Adjust plans as needed

During **Step 1,** an I/ECMHC can use the following DECA Program resources to gain valuable information about a child, the child's family, and the quality of the settings where children spend time. The I/ECMHC can determine how to collaborate with teachers and parents in the use of the following tools:
1. Family Questionnaires, 2. Observation Tools
3. Behavior Incident Reports, 4. Devereux Reflective Checklists for Caregiving and Teaching Practices

During **Step 2,** an I/ECMHC can support a teacher in administering and scoring the age-appropriate DECAs. Assessments can be completed on every child in a classroom to learn about all children's social and emotional strengths and needs or on individuals for child-focused consultation. DECA results in the form of Individual Child Profiles indicate each child's strengths and needs related to important within-child protective factors that support resilience. For children with extensive needs, an I/ECMHC doing child-focused consultation may also choose to use the DECA-C during this step.

During **Step 3,** an I/ECMHC doing classroom consultation to support all children can utilize the Classroom/Group Profile to create a visual summary of the protective factors and behavior concerns for the class. Also during this step, an I/ECMHC can utilize DECA tools to prepare to plan for individual children by using the Individualized Planning Summary to organize planning efforts. Preparing to plan is a key feature of I/ECMHC work.

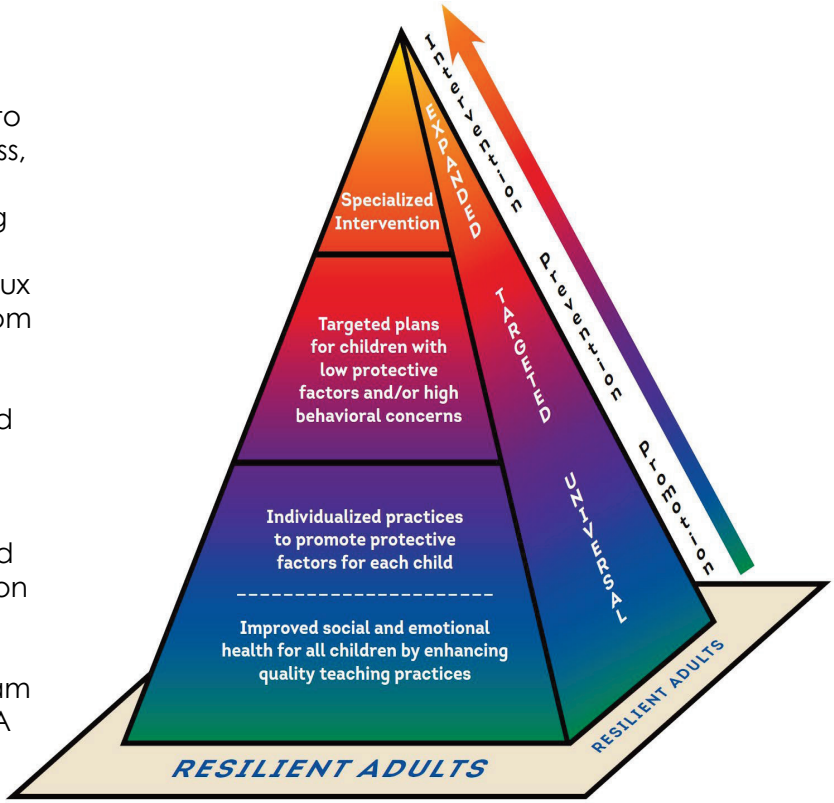
During **Step 4,** an I/ECMHC can work with teachers (and parents) to develop plans and utilize strategies for a group of children or individual children by using the Group Action Plan, the Child Strength Goals Strategies Plan, and/or the Positive Guidance Plan. Consultants can also benefit from using the Team Planning Meeting Reflection Questions to support strength-based and family friendly planning meetings with all the adults in a child's life. The DECA Program Infant/Toddler and Preschool Strategies Guides are full of universal and targeted strategies. The DECA online platform also offers a wide variety of easy-to-access strategies based on the child's DECA results.

During **Step 5,** an I/ECMHC can use the DECA Program to collect ongoing information and conduct additional DECAs to monitor effectiveness and adjust plans as needed. The DECA provides an opportunity to do advanced analysis of pre-post data as well as rater comparisons.

4. The DECA Program Levels of Intervention Can Support the I/ECMHC Process

The DECA Program offers support to children and adults who care for them at three levels of intervention. An I/ECMHC program often provides services at all three levels as well.

Resilient Adults are at the base of supporting healthy protective factors in all children. Adults who are healthy themselves are best prepared to promote children's social and emotional wellness, prevent further risks, and link to expanded intervention when needed. An I/ECMHC seeking to build a supportive relationship with teachers, caregivers, and parents could utilize the Devereux Adult Resilience Survey (DARS) and strategies from *Building Your Bounce: Simple Strategies for a Resilient You* to help the important adults in children's lives focus on their own well-being and create plans to build their resilience.



Universal / Promotion refers to services and strategies that all children need for a strong, solid social and emotional foundation. Individualization is used at the universal level to promote the unique strengths and needs of each child. An I/ECMHC seeking to provide support to a program at the promotion/universal level can utilize DECA Program resources (see 5-step approach).

Targeted / Prevention refers to additional supports and strategies that are needed for children who require more focused attention because of areas of need in within-child protective factors or emerging behavioral concerns. These children may be considered at-risk for developing social and emotional difficulties. Targeted prevention strategies are designed to prevent the development of these difficulties in at-risk children. Teachers using targeted prevention strategies may increase the frequency and duration of a strategy or modify a strategy to specifically address a child with an Area of Need in protective factor(s). An I/ECMHC seeking to provide support to a program and/or family at the prevention/intervention level (focusing on supporting an identified child exhibiting needs) could utilize the DECA Program assessments, planning tools, and strategies.

Expanded / Intervention refers to services and strategies that require the additional support of professionals beyond the classroom teaching staff. These additional professionals are involved at the expanded level because the needs of the children exceed what an individual teacher can address. The additional professionals work with the teacher and family to help them better understand the child's behavior, to develop and implement more effective strategies to help the child, and to coordinate the efforts of all the professionals and parents so that the child receives a consistent planning approach. Children who need expanded intervention may already have a clinical diagnosis or may benefit from further evaluation. It is important to note that children receiving expanded services still benefit from targeted prevention plans and universal promotion to enhance the quality of their care. An I/ECMHC seeking to provide services at an intervention/expanded level can utilize the DECA-C. The use of the DECA-C can seamlessly complement a classroom implementing the comprehensive DECA Program but can also be used independently.

5. The I/ECMHC Key Features & Core Values Can Be Supported by the DECA Program

Four Key Features of I/ECMHC

1. Prevention-based – support healthy development early to prevent mental health challenges
2. Indirect service model – Consultants work through adults, not directly with children
3. Capacity-building for adults – Equips caregivers and educators with knowledge, skills, and confidence
4. Focus on relationships and environments – Strengthen adult-child relationships and the settings children grow in

Core Values Guiding Practice

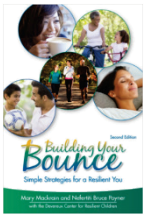
- Strength-based – building on what children, families, and caregivers already do well
- Relational framework – assessment and intervention happens through the lens of relationships
- Cultural context and humility – learn from families rather than assume
- Brain science and development: early experiences shape brain architecture
- Secure attachment: responsive relationships are the foundation of social-emotional learning

https://www.iecmhc.org/

The DECA Program is:

1. focused on the importance of promotion, prevention, and intervention and offers resources for children at each of these levels
2. guided by collaboration between early childhood and mental health providers to optimize child outcomes as one principle and strong partnerships with families as another.
3. specifically designed to support the adults working in early childhood settings caring for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers and is based on developmentally appropriate practices, and has a focus on building the social and emotional health and resilience of children
4. offering I/ECMHCs a wealth of strength-based and research-informed resources that they can use to build strong relationships with families and early care and education providers
5. empowering teachers and parents/caregivers by providing them with the tools needed to promote children's social and emotional health within the context of their daily routines at school and home
6. a tool that meets or exceeds the professional standards set forth for assessments and all the DECA Program strategies are research-based

6. Other DCRC Resources that Support I/ECMHC Work



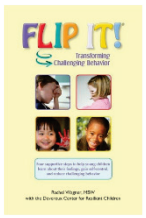
Building Your Bounce: Simple Strategies for a Resilient You

This book is designed to meet adults where they are and take them to a place of greater strength and determination. Through reflective readings, activities, journaling and written responses, this book will uncover strategies for strengthening the four areas related to adult resilience: Relationships, Internal Beliefs, Initiative, and Self-Control.



Your Journey Together (YJT): Building Resilience in Children and Families

YJT is a strength-based curriculum designed to help family service professionals promote the social and emotional well-being and resilience of vulnerable children and their families. The YJT curriculum focuses on empowering parents to promote safe, trusting and healing environments – all key elements of a trauma-sensitive program. While YJT is designed for families with young children (infants, toddlers, preschoolers), many of the concepts apply to families with children of all ages.



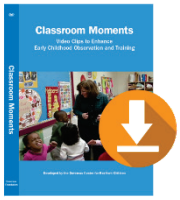
FLIP IT!® Transforming Challenging Behavior in Young Children (book)

This informative book is designed to support all adults who interact with young children. This book explains the FLIP IT strategy's four simple steps to transform challenging behavior in young children. Teachers and parents can help children learn about their feelings and gain self-control by using the mnemonic: F – Feelings, L – Limits, I – Inquiries, and P – Prompts. Learn to FLIP IT with the practice pictures, reflections activities, and real-life stories inside.



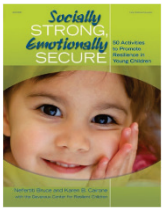
FLIP IT!® Transforming Challenging Behavior in Young Children (self-paced course)

You can learn the FLIP IT strategy, on your own time and at your own pace, with the FLIP IT Self-Paced Online Course! The course is approximately 2.5 hours, including interaction, reflection, application of skills learned, and a final assessment. You are welcome to complete the course all in one sitting, or you can complete it over time. Empower yourself and your team members by purchasing this course today!



Classroom Moments

Designed to enhance training, this download includes 28 video clips from early childhood classrooms, including clips that illustrate Prevention in Action, Positive Guidance, Learning Opportunities, Developing Observation Skills, and Case Studies. In addition to the video clips, this download also comes with a trainer guide for use in developing training and workshops for staff.



Socially Strong, Emotionally Secure: 50 Activities to Promote Resilience in Young Children

Now more than ever, adults must help children develop the skills necessary to navigate successfully through life. By focusing on building social and emotional strengths, adults increase children's resilience and prepare them to handle the challenges in life. The strategies and activities found in this resource provide teachers with the tools they need to help children become socially and emotionally healthy for life. Organized into five chapters, the activities support and build resilience in children ages 3-8.

SCAN TO SHOP NOW!

We also invite you to explore our Free Resource Library!



Devereux
CENTER FOR RESILIENT CHILDREN

We strive to promote social and emotional development, foster resilience, and build skills for school and life success in children birth through preschool, as well as to promote the resilience of the adults who care for them. Our nationally standardized strength-based assessments, strategy resources, and professional development are grounded in resilience research, and for over 25 years have been used by thousands of programs across the U.S. and internationally.



Resilient Children
Children's overall happiness and success in life depends on the social and emotional foundation that is built during the earliest years. The Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) Program promotes resilience and reduces challenging behaviors using nationally standardized, reliable, and valid assessment tools to measure children's social and emotional strengths and needs. Assessment results are tied to research-based strategies that teachers and parents can use to promote protective factors.



Resilient Adults
The critical connection between children's resilience and the health and wellness of the adults in children's lives cannot be underestimated. Adults need to stay focused on their own health to optimize the overall healthy development of young children. The Devereux Adult Resilience Survey (DARS) and accompanying book of strategies, *Building Your Bounce: Simple Strategies for a Resilient You*, support the well-being of ALL adults working with young children.



Resilient Families
Your Journey Together (YJT) is DCRC's resource to promote resilient families. The goal of YJT is to provide parents and guardians with the knowledge and skills that help family members better cope with life's challenges to reach their full potential. YJT shows parents how to use ordinary, everyday routines, activities and interactions as resilience-building opportunities.



Resilient Programs
Resilient children need resilient caregivers, and resilient caregivers need resilient supervisors. DCRC's resource to support resilient leaders is the Devereux Resilient Leadership Survey (DERLS). Organized around four key protective factors - Relationships, Internal Beliefs, Initiative, and Self-Control - this tool can provide wonderful insight for leaders around areas of strength and growth opportunities in their current role.

Stay connected with us so that we can support your important work!