

## IV. Using the Integrated Plan

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The Integrated Plan is a blueprint for service providers, policymakers, funders, and others who are interested in leveraging the positive aspects of places and spaces for the purposes of promoting mental health in children. Stakeholders who are interested in implementing the work or supporting it through policy changes or financial and other investments will find guidance about how to approach, implement, and evaluate their work. The Integrated Plan is also written for broad consumption by the public for those interested in learning about how the physical and social elements of space can promote mental health in children and the status of spaces for children in Wake County as it relates to those elements.

Many sections of the Integrated Plan function both as standalone documents and as pieces of the complete plan. Below is a description of the sections of the Integrated Plan, their intended use, and likely audiences. The descriptions also note whether the section being described would be most meaningful when reviewed in conjunction with other sections of the Integrated Plan.

### Executive Summary, Background, and Project Description

These sections are for readers who want to understand the motivation and context for the project and what it set out to accomplish. The sections are likely to be most useful when read together. They provide a history and overview of the project, a snapshot of project components, and a discussion of the project purposes and goals.

### Implementation Priorities: Sample Approaches to Implementation, Best Practice Indicator Framework, Quality Improvement Tools

These sections are for readers interested in leading or participating in making changes to places and spaces to promote children's mental health and include service providers, policymakers, and funders.

The Best Practice Indicator framework should be used in combination with the Quality Improvement Tools after reviewing the Sample Approaches to Implementation. Doing so will orient the reader not only to the key recommended approaches for developing spaces but also to the related strategies and activities associated with that approach.

The Best Practice Indicator framework and the Quality Improvement Tools feature the nuts and bolts for service providers who are seeking to enhance their spaces and as an orientation for policymakers and funders to understand where they might influence the work through policy changes and investments. The Best Practice Indicator framework reviews five Best Practice Indicators focused on implementation and a sixth indicator that addresses sustainability. A Best Practice Indicator is an area of practice that has been determined to be central to maximizing the impact of environment on children's positive mental health. The Indicators are examined and described from the perspective of policy, practice, physical characteristics and people needed to adopt the Best Practice Indicator. For example, if an organization chose to diversify its space (for the purposes of accommodating families with children of different ages), the organization would review the types of policies the organization should have in place, the various practices that should be utilized, the physical characteristics to consider for the space, and what qualities or credentials the people working in that organization need to be successful. The Best Practice Indicator framework also provides a summary statement about what an organization fully adopting the Indicator would need to do and supplies information about the key early childhood mental health developmental tasks associated with that particular Best

Practice Indicator. The Sustainability Best Practice Indicator should be reviewed in combination with any of the other Indicators as it addresses how organizations can have a lasting impact and maintain their efforts.

The project recommendations advise service providers to review the Best Practice Indicator framework and identify their own starting point or points for making changes to their organizations, programs, and partnerships.

The Quality Improvement Tools support the implementation of the Best Practice Indicators. The Quality Improvement Tool document contains four tools with directions for how to use each of them. These tools provide a process for undertaking the work and a way of organizing implementation in order to track readiness, progress and impact.

## **Supporting Deliverables**

The supporting deliverables included in the Integrated Plan contain the background materials developed by the project team. These deliverables include extensive information collected from Wake County stakeholders regarding their current levels of engagement in this work, their capacity for expanding their scope and adopting the strategies suggested in the Best Practice Indicator framework, and their organizational and personal goals and concerns. Importantly, reviewing these documents can provide service providers, policymakers, funders, and others with ideas for partnership and can educate them about valuable resources that already exist in Wake County and elsewhere.

### **Supporting Deliverables: Literature Review**

The literature review is an extensive review of the academic research about the impact of various types of spaces, as well as specific elements and components of spaces, and, the intersection of the impact of spaces upon children's mental health. Readers interested in this area of study or the research basis for the physical and social design of spaces, will find this section of particular interest. The literature review also contains expert interviews with professionals from across the country.

### **Supporting Deliverables: Case Studies**

The case studies provide an in-depth analysis stemming from research and interviews with leaders of five spaces that have endeavored to promote children's mental health through spaces and places. The case studies are examples from North Carolina and across the country of the implementation strategies for these space-related elements. They highlight successes and challenges as well as the critical components to consider when building or changing spaces to promote positive mental health for children. The case studies focus on a number of different types of settings: a school playground, an early education center, a public park, a low-income housing development, and a family/community center. Service providers, policymakers, funders, and others may find it a helpful orientation to read about factors to consider when undertaking an enhancement to an existing space or the creation of a new space that is similar to their own setting(s) or settings of interest to them. For example, planners of public recreation space may want to pay particular attention to the public park and school playground case studies.

### **Supporting Deliverables: Service Provider and Parent/Guardian Focus Groups, Service Provider and Parent/Guardian Surveys**

These documents are reports on project activities that collected information from Wake County-based service providers and parents/guardians. The reports provide a basis for understanding the types of spaces within Wake County, how they are used, and what service providers and parents/guardians identify as important conditions and elements related to a space that they and their children use.

## **Supporting Deliverables: Expert Panel Meeting Summary, Overview of Project Process**

The Best Practice Indicator framework and Quality Improvement Tools were outcomes of the project's Expert Panel process. A description of this process and a summary of the Expert Panel are in the Expert Panel Meeting Summary document. The Expert Panel relied on all of the other supporting deliverables to develop the Best Practice Indicators, which are documented and described in the Overview of Project Process document. These documents reference other documents in the Integrated Plan and provide additional context for the project.