



FACTS FOR SCHOOLS

What is Primary Project?

Primary Project is a school-based early intervention, prevention program designed to enhance school related competencies and reduce social, emotional, and school adjustment difficulties for children in pre-kindergarten through third grade. Six core components establish a solid foundation for success in Primary Project: 1) A focus on young children, 2) Early screening and appropriate selection of children, 3) Use of paraprofessionals in a direct service role, 4) Use of mental health professionals as supervisors, consultants and leaders, 5) Use of ongoing outcome and process evaluation, and 6) Integration of Primary Project within the school and community settings.

Who is involved?

The Primary Project team (mental health professional and child associates), teachers, administrators, and parents are involved. Children's Institute, as the developer of this program, provides training, evaluation, clinical, and program consultation.

How are children selected to participate in Primary Project?

Children are systematically screened to identify those with emerging difficulties. Teachers meet with the Primary Project team and discuss children that will benefit from Primary Project. Children may also be recommended for participation as a result of direct observation in the classroom, referral by their parent(s), or referral by other school personnel. Children who may be shy, anxious, withdrawn, moody, have difficulty engaging peers in positive relationships, or exhibit mild physical aggression often are most appropriate for participation in Primary Project. Children who demonstrate emotional disturbances, severe physical aggression, cognitive problems, or are receiving other behavioral or psychological services are not appropriate for Primary Project.

What happens in the intervention?

Children that are selected and whose parents have given consent are paired with specially trained child associates. Child associates form a trusting relationship with the child using a child-led play philosophy. Children are typically seen once a week for 30–40 minutes usually for one semester or 12–15 sessions.

What is the role of the school-based mental health professional?

The mental health professional provides supervision of the child associates and oversight of programmatic activities such as coordinating training, screening, and selection.

How are teachers involved?

Teachers work cooperatively with the Primary Project team and with the parents of children in the program. Teachers help identify children who are just beginning to display mild school adjustment difficulties. Teachers play a critical role in supporting the development of realistic goals for participating children. Teachers provide feedback to the project team and help evaluate the program. Teachers are kept informed about students' progress through informal meetings, selection, and mid- and end-of-year conferences.