

INDIANA UNIVERSITY-BLOOMINGTON  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING AND EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY  
PROPOSAL FOR OPTIONAL CONCENTRATION

## **Undergraduate Concentration In Child Mental Health**

### **What are the primary objectives of the proposed concentration and brief description of chief features?**

With the number of mental health issues in children and adolescents increasing every year, there is a need for a comprehensive, practical course of study that guides educators through the complexities of child mental health. The Concentration in Child Mental Health intends to introduce students to content related to the mental health needs and development of children. Offering an elementary education concentration at Indiana University will address the burgeoning problem of unresolved mental health issues among children. At Indiana University, the School Psychology faculty (in the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology) have expertise in the domains of study related to this concentration including behavioral disorders and childhood psychopathology, school-based mental health, trauma, and evidence-based therapeutic treatments. The content of the courses proposed related to the concentration will be reflective of research-based, developmentally appropriate practices for addressing children's mental health issues. The goals of this concentration are as follows:

- 1) To develop students' knowledge about child mental health and its importance in the educational context
- 2) To provide students with the skills needed to successfully integrate the knowledge of child mental health into the educational context
- 3) To develop students' intellectual curiosity related to the field of child mental health
- 4) To develop students' ability to think critically about the field of mental health as it relates to children by increasing knowledge related to the social and cultural context of mental health, mental illness, diagnosis, and treatment.

### **Why is the concentration needed?**

Teachers are in a unique position to recognize and support students with mental health concerns given the amount of time and interaction they have with students on a daily basis. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC; 2019) estimates 1 in 5 American children between the ages of 3 and 17 years old have a diagnosable mental, emotional, or behavioral disorder. Given the high prevalence rates of student mental health concerns, particularly within the state of Indiana (Indiana Youth Institute, 2019; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2019), teachers are an important component to addressing and support student mental health.

Recent studies of have indicated teachers recognize and support the important role they play in addressing and supporting student mental health (Reinke et al., 2011). However, teachers report feeling they do not have the knowledge or preparation to address student mental health, thus

leading to lack of efficacy in being able to address their students' mental health needs (Reinke et al., 2011; Walter et al., 2006). When Ohrt and colleagues (2020) conducted a systematic review of the literature from over one hundred years, only 15 articles focusing on improving teachers' abilities to identify and support student mental health in the classroom were found. The dearth of coursework and training related to student mental health is well-documented and an under-focused area at pre-service teacher training level.

### **What courses will constitute the concentration?**

The Concentration in Child Mental Health will consist of 12 credit hours (four classes), which will include two required courses (6 credit hours) and two additional required classes from which the student may choose. All of the courses are already existing courses within the School of Education—five are housed within the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology (P and G courses) and one is within Curriculum and Instruction/Special Education (K course). Further, each of these courses consistently meets enrollment to run when offered. The course offerings for the concentration will include:

**1. REQUIRED COURSES (9 credit hours):**

F203/PXXX: Introduction to Mental Health for Children and Youth (200-level)

P248: Elementary School Child: Physical, Emotional and Social Development (required for Elementary Education major; can also count toward concentration)

P403: Psychological Trauma in Children and Adolescents

**2. REQUIRED COURSES (3 credit hours) Choose ONE course:**

G208: Prevention of Adolescent Risk Behavior

G375: Multicultural Skills

K343: Education of the Socially and Emotionally Disturbed I

P404: Behavior Management in Youth

### **Describe each course briefly.**

**F203/PXXX: Introduction to Mental Health for Children and Youth (3 cr.) [Gen Ed: S & H]**

**\*Note: course will be listed as P225 pending course remonstrance.**

In response to the serious crisis in mental health care for children, there is a growing movement in the United States and in other countries to address childhood and adolescent mental health. This course serves as an entrée to the concentration and will briefly expose students to issues related to childhood and adolescent mental health including prevalence, diagnosis, school-based services, and culture and mental health. Course objectives include: (1) describing the status of child mental health and mental health services in the United States; (2) demonstrating key concepts and principles associated with developmental psychopathology; (3) describing the ways in which trauma and resilience influence a child's mental health outcomes; (4) describing the ways in which mental health services may be delivered within a school setting; (5) describing the variety of careers related to mental health service delivery for children and adolescents; and (6) demonstrate knowledge of the key concepts related to how culture influences mental health

diagnosis and treatment. The courses within the concentration then complement and expand upon the content introduced within this course.

### **P248: Elementary School Child: Physical, Emotional and Social Development**

Child development in the school context. This course will provide an understanding of physical, emotional, and social development in a school marked by a diversity of cultural, social, and personal traits. Also, the role of the teacher in supporting positive development in students.

### **G208: Prevention of Adolescent Risk Behavior**

This course will provide an overview of the principles of prevention interventions with a focus on the role of counselors and other helping professionals in the development and dissemination of prevention. Prevention of the following adolescent risk/problems that will be covered in the course: alcohol and drug use, risky sexual behaviors, suicide and self-harm, delinquency, obesity, and bullying. Further, the course will address the settings in which prevention of adolescent risk behaviors occurs including, but not limited to, schools and community agencies.

### **K343: Education of the Socially and Emotionally Disturbed I**

A basic survey of the field of emotional disturbance and social maladjustment. Definitions, classifications, characteristics, and diagnostic and treatment procedures are discussed from a psycho-educational point of view.

### **P403: Psychological Trauma in Children and Adolescents**

Research on trauma has dramatically changed our understanding of childhood trauma and its impact on the growing child. This course will introduce students to core concepts related to trauma, resiliency, and evidence-based interventions for traumatized children and adolescents. This course focuses on four areas: (1) review the nature and definition of childhood trauma; (2) explore the consequences of traumatic experiences in the context of psychosocial, biological, and developmental processes; (3) highlight effective interventions for children affected by trauma; and (4) information related to secondary trauma, burnout, and self-care for practitioners working with trauma victims.

### **P404: Behavior Management in Youth**

This course is designed to help future teachers, therapists, and other youth service professionals develop the knowledge, awareness, and skills necessary to effectively manage problem behaviors in youth. Students will gain a better understanding of common childhood disorders and mental health issues that are associated with problem behaviors in youth.

**Why were these courses selected? How do these courses form a coherent and unique plan of study representing depth as well as breadth of learning?**

These courses are selected on the basis of academic content and the ability to provide students with background knowledge and content to be able to think critically about the material as it relates to the field. The scope and sequence of these courses are such that it allows students to gain more intimate knowledge and a more in depth examination of the content as they progress. For instance, the portal course provides a brief introduction (e.g., psychopathology, trauma) to other courses offered in the concentration. Then, a course such as Psychological Trauma in Children and Adolescents affords students the opportunities to examine this content more in depth. The courses within this concentration were strategically designed and selected to represent offerings that provide both a depth and breadth of knowledge related to child mental health.

Our search of existing undergraduate coursework in the School did not lead to any courses currently offered that specifically relate to child mental health. Our campus-wide search, including coursework offered by the School of Public Health, School of Social Work, and Psychological and Brain Sciences, did not yield concentrations specifically related to mental health, and a lack of coursework where children's mental health is the main focus of the course.

### **How does the concentration complement the campus, school, or departmental mission?**

The courses in this concentration represent an array of options for interdisciplinary study and engagement with content that aligns with the strategic goals of Indiana University and the School of Education. All of our courses are designed to provide students with opportunities to critically analyze course content to engage in a well-rounded liberal arts education. Furthermore, our concentration will allow students to explore our commitment to promoting diversity, consistent with the Strategic Goals of the School of Education. For example, our portal course has a unit specifically focused on cultural considerations related to mental health.

### **What cooperative relationships, if any, will the new concentration establish with other departments or program? Please describe any such contact which has already been established.**

We have engaged in discussions with faculty members both within our department as well as outside of our program concerning this concentration and have received a great deal of support for the creation of this concentration. Additionally, we have been able to confirm the proposed concentration does not overlap with any other undergraduate concentration offering in the School of Education or anywhere across the IUB campus. Rather, we have received enthusiastic support from colleagues indicated this proposed concentration will fill a need within the School of Education. Although this proposed concentration was developed by the School Psychology faculty, the coursework reflects several inter-program and inter-departmental partnerships. For instance, G208, one of the introductory courses, is part of the Counseling Concentration and the undergraduate major in Counseling and Student Services. While most coursework will be offered by the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology, one of the introductory courses, K343, will be offered by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

**Are there any staffing or logistical problems typically associated with the courses that constitute the proposed degree objective? If so, how might they be addressed?**

All members of our core faculty (Dr. David Shriberg, Program Chair, Dr. Scott Bellini, and Dr. Heather Ormiston) have committed to teaching these courses. We would also plan on providing teaching opportunities to advanced Associate Instructors, who would benefit by receiving a stipend, fee remittance, and the valuable experience of teaching for the program while completing their doctoral studies. Finally, the concentration could also make use of adjunct faculty, a plausible option because we are well-positioned to offer adjunct teaching opportunities to several professionals with expertise in the content areas of the courses in the concentration.

**Describe any innovative features of the concentration.**

This concentration will be one of only a few focused on child mental health *in the nation*. IU can be on the cutting edge of developing a concentration focused on this area. With the changing nature of the way we are serving children and youth, especially in schools, we see this concentration as filling a need for individuals seeking to pursue careers in elementary education. We intend to offer a mix of in-person and online offerings for each of these courses, including potential offerings over the summer and intensive eight-week courses. One course for instance, P403: Behavior Management in Youth, has traditionally been offered as an online second-eight-week course that has seen significant enrollment in each of its offerings. Another unique feature of the concentration is the amount of cross-program collaboration offered by the concentration. In its current proposal, the concentration will provide enrollment for four School of Education programs: Counseling Psychology, Human Development, School Psychology, and Special Education/Curriculum and Instruction.

**What is the proposed implementation timeline for this concentration?**

We intend to follow the process of faculty and administrative approval for this concentration, so we will be submitting this proposal to the appropriate committees and will be awaiting their feedback and eventual decision on this concentration. We hope the concentration can be formally approved and become ready for students to begin coordinating their enrollment in both introductory level and advanced level courses by Fall 2021.

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