

Cultivating Connection: Developing an Interview Guide to Evaluate Caregiver Attitudes Towards Mental Health Risk Calculation in Preschool Educational Settings

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Introduction

The Problem

- Indicators of mental health issues are prevalent in early childhood (ages 3-5).
- Early mental health intervention is critical to improving long-term outcomes, enhancing social-emotional development and promoting family well-being.
- However, the lack of prognostic tools for early childhood mental health makes it difficult to identify and address children who may need care.

1 in 5

children under the age of 5 experience mental health issues



The DECIDE Tool

- Our team has developed an early childhood mental health risk calculator (DECIDE Tool) to systematically identify young children at risk for mental health difficulties.
- While existing efforts have been geared toward implementation in pediatric primary care, we are working toward implementation in preschools.

Study Goal

As part of a mixed methods study, I will develop a semi-structured interview guide to gauge caregiver attitudes on early childhood mental health and future implementation of the DECIDE Tool.

Methods

In order to produce an effective interview guide, I completed the following steps:

1 Training

- Build a foundational knowledge in qualitative research
 - Platform: CenterStat Applied Qualitative Research Workshop
- Become proficient in our participant recruitment/survey platform, REDCap
 - Platform: Indiana University, Integrated Food Safety Centers of Excellence

2 Literature Review

- To build domains for our interview guide, I reviewed the existing literature on: universal mental health screening, risk calculators, interview guide development, parental attitudes, and mental health care barriers.
- This revealed areas that require further exploration in order to implement the DECIDE Tool, in turn shaping the questions we included on the interview guide.

3 Resource Guides

- It is critical that participants feel equipped to get help for their families.
- I developed four resource guides that include **over 60 resources for families**, complete with a description of services and a web link.



I screened each resource to ensure accessibility, affordability, and legitimacy, and reached out personally to establish ties with each organization.

Results

Interview Guide

- The interview guide includes **6 domains**.
- After quantitative surveys are completed by 100 Indiana caregivers in the fall, we will recruit 20 of these caregivers to conduct hour-long qualitative interviews.

DOMAIN: Information About This Study

DOMAIN: Preliminary Questions

SAMPLE QUESTION: "How is your child enjoying preschool currently?"

DOMAIN: General Attitudes, Beliefs, and Confidence

SAMPLE QUESTION: "How important is it to discuss emotions or feelings with your child at home?"

DOMAIN: DECIDE Tool

SAMPLE QUESTION: "What information would you need to know about the tool to trust that the results are fair and accurate?"

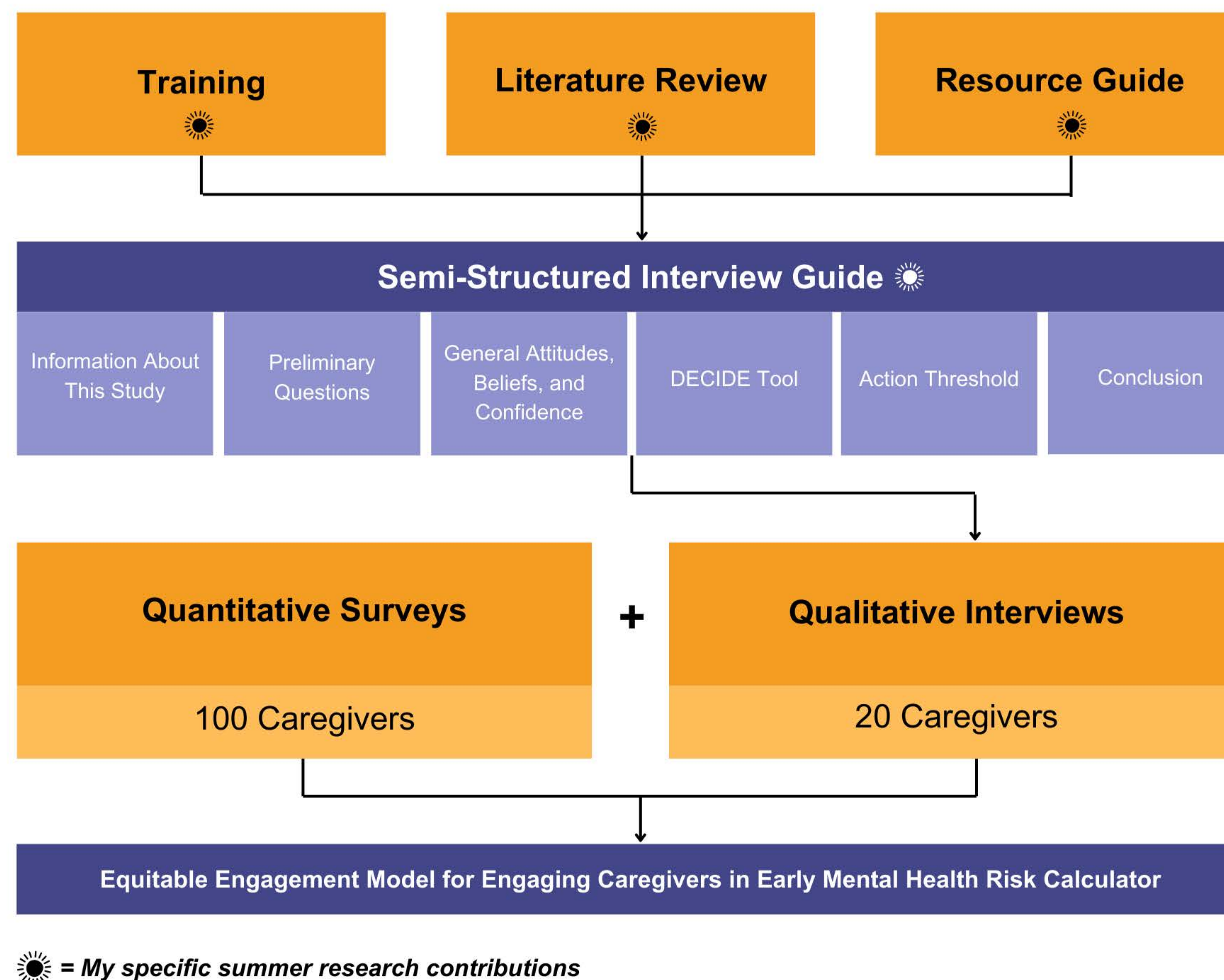
DOMAIN: Action Threshold

SAMPLE QUESTION: "What are your thoughts on children. . . being missed resulting from the threshold being set too high?"

DOMAIN: Conclusion

SAMPLE QUESTION: "What is something you love to do together as a family?"

Roadmap for the Equitable Engagement Model



Conclusions & Future Work

Conclusions

- A well-constructed interview guide is crucial to productive interviews.
- Further work (including more literature review, peer editing, mock interviews, piloting, etc.) is necessary to ensure the interview guide can be successfully implemented.
- Future feedback from different constituencies will also improve the interview guide.
- It is essential that we continue to foster strong relationships with local and national resources to connect families with the help they need.

50% of all lifetime mental illness starts by age 14

Early mental health intervention is the key to addressing the mental health crisis.

Future Work

- This work will be repeated with Indiana preschool teachers for a more holistic understanding of how to best implement the DECIDE Tool.
- Themes identified will be paired with survey findings for the development of an equitable engagement model for engaging caregivers in the DECIDE Tool.
- To encourage a community-based participatory approach, we will actively involve caregivers, teachers, etc. in the implementation of the DECIDE Tool.

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