

Infant Toddler Mental Health Coalition of Arizona

Competency Guidelines

INFANT FAMILY ASSOCIATE (LEVEL I)

The Infant Mental Health Specialist *Competency Guidelines* were developed by the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health (MI-AIMH) and licensed to the Infant Toddler Mental Health Coalition of Arizona (ITMHCA) to clearly describe the areas of expertise, responsibilities, and behaviors that demonstrate competency at this level.

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INFANT FAMILY ASSOCIATE Competency Detail

<u>Area of Expertise</u>	<u>As Demonstrated by</u>
<p>Theoretical Foundations</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Knowledge Areas</u></p> <p><i>pregnancy & early parenthood</i></p> <p><i>infant/very young child development & behavior</i></p> <p><i>infant/very young child & family-centered practice</i></p> <p><i>relationship-focused practice</i></p> <p><i>family relationships & dynamics</i></p> <p><i>attachment, separation, trauma, & loss</i></p> <p><i>cultural competence</i></p>	<p><i>For infants, very young children, and families referred and enrolled for services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informally (and in some cases, formally) observes and assesses the infant or very young child, parent, and their relationship to identify landmarks of typical child development; behavior; and healthy, secure relationships • Supports and reinforces parent’s ability to seek appropriate care during pregnancy • Supports and reinforces parent’s strengths, emerging parenting competencies, and positive parent-infant/very young child interactions • Demonstrates awareness of conditions that optimize early infant brain development • Recognizes conditions that require the assistance of other service providers and refers these situations to the supervisor • Shares with families an understanding of infant and family relationship development • Applies understanding of cultural competence to communicate effectively, establish positive relationships with families, and demonstrate respect for the uniqueness of each family’s culture
<p>Law, Regulation, & Agency Policy</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Knowledge Areas</u></p> <p><i>ethical practice</i></p> <p><i>government, law, & regulation</i></p> <p><i>agency policy</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchanges complete and unbiased information in a supportive manner with families and other team members • Practices confidentiality of each family’s information in all contexts, with exception only when making necessary reports to protect the safety of a family member (eg, Children’s Protective Services, Duty to Warn) • Maintains appropriate personal boundaries with infants/very young children and families served, as established by the employing agency • Promptly and appropriately reports harm or threatened harm to a child’s health or welfare to Children’s Protective Services after discussion with supervisor • Accurately and clearly explains the provisions and requirements of federal, state, and local laws affecting infants/very young children and families (eg, Part C of IDEA, child protection, child care licensing rules and regulations) to families • Is knowledgeable about the rights of citizen children of non-citizen parents • Personally works within the requirements of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Federal and state law ○ Agency policies and practices ○ Agency code of conduct

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<u>Area of Expertise</u>	<u>As Demonstrated by</u>
<p>Systems Expertise</p> <p><u>Knowledge Areas</u></p> <p><i>service delivery systems</i></p> <p><i>community resources</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists families to anticipate and obtain the basic requirements of living and other needed services from public agencies and community resources • Collaborates and communicates with other service agencies to ensure that the child(ren) and family receives services for which they are eligible and that the services are coordinated • Helps parents build the skills they need to access social support from extended family, neighbors, and friends needed and as available in the community • Makes families and service providers/agencies aware of community resources available to families during pregnancy, the newborn period, and the early years
<p>Direct Service Skills</p> <p><u>Knowledge Areas</u></p> <p><i>observation & listening</i></p> <p><i>screening & assessment</i></p> <p><i>responding with empathy</i></p> <p><i>advocacy</i></p> <p><i>life skills</i></p> <p><i>safety</i></p>	<p><i>For infants, very young children, and families referred and enrolled for services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes trusting relationship that supports the parent(s) and infant/very young child in their relationship with each other and that facilitates needed change • Uses example, encouragement, and, when appropriate, own life experience to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Empower families to become socially and emotionally self-sufficient ○ Create nurturing, stable infant/young child-caregiver relationships • Provides direct care and teaching/developmental activities to infant, very young children, and families with multiple, complex risk factors to help ensure healthy pregnancy outcomes and the optimal development of the child in all domains (physical, social, emotional, cognitive) • Participates in formal and informal assessments of the infant's/young child's development, in accordance with standard practice • Formally and informally observes the parent(s) or caregiver(s) and infant/young child to understand the nature of their relationship, developmental strengths, and capacities for change • Provides information and assistance to parents or caregivers to help them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understand their role in the social and emotional development of infants/very young children ○ Understand what they can do to promote health, language, and cognitive development in infancy and early childhood ○ Find pleasure in caring for their infants/very young children • Promotes parental competence in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facing challenges ○ Resolving crises and reducing the likelihood of future crises ○ Solving problems of basic needs and familial conflict • <i>Note: In some agencies, this may be the responsibility of the supervisor/Infant Family Specialist (Level II) practitioner</i> • Advocates for services needed by infants, child(ren) and families with the supervisor, agencies, and programs • Recognizes environmental and caregiving risks to the health and safety of the infant/young child and parents and takes appropriate action

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<u>Area of Expertise</u>	<u>As Demonstrated by</u>
<p>Working With Others</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><u>Skill Areas</u></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>building & maintaining relationships</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>supporting others</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>collaborating</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>resolving conflict</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>empathy & compassion</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds and maintains effective interpersonal relationships with families and professional colleagues by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Respecting and promoting the decision-making authority of families ○ Understanding and respecting the beliefs and practices of the family's culture ○ Following the parents' lead ○ Following through consistently on commitments and promises ○ Providing regular communications and updates • Works with and responds to families and colleagues in a tactful and understanding manner • Collaborates and shares information with other service providers and agencies to ensure the safety of the infant/young child and effective, coordinated services, and promote awareness of relationship-focused approaches to working with children • Works constructively to find "win-win" solutions to conflicts with colleagues (eg, interagency, peer-peer, and/or supervisor-supervisee conflicts)
<p>Communicating</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><u>Skill Areas</u></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>listening</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>speaking</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>writing</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively listens to others; asks questions for clarification • Uses appropriate non-verbal behavior and correctly interprets others' non-verbal behavior • Communicates honestly, sensitively, and empathically with families, using non-technical language • Obtains translation services as necessary to ensure effective communication with families who may experience a communication barrier • Writes clearly, concisely, and with the appropriate style (business, conversational, etc) in creating notes, reports, and correspondence
<p>Thinking</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><u>Skill Areas</u></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>analyzing information</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>solving problems</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>exercising sound judgment</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>maintaining perspective</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>planning & organizing</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees and can explain the "big picture" when analyzing situations • Sees and can explain the interactions of multiple factors & perspectives • Assigns priorities to needs, goals, and actions • Considers difficult situations carefully • Evaluates alternatives prior to making decisions • Integrates all available information and consults with others when making important decisions • Generates new insights and workable solutions to issues related to effective relationship-focused, family-centered care • Defines, creates a sequence for, and prioritizes tasks necessary to perform role and meet the needs of families • Employs effective systems for tracking individual progress, ensuring follow-up, and monitoring the effectiveness of service delivery as a whole

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<u>Area of Expertise</u>	<u>As Demonstrated by</u>
<p>Reflection</p> <p><u>Skill Areas</u></p> <p><i>contemplation</i></p> <p><i>self awareness</i></p> <p><i>curiosity</i></p> <p><i>professional/personal development</i></p> <p><i>emotional response</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly examines own thoughts, feelings, strengths, and growth areas • Seeks the ongoing support and guidance of the supervisor to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure that family progress and issues are communicated and addressed ○ Determine actions to take ○ Help maintain appropriate boundaries between self and families • Seeks a high degree of agreement between self-perceptions and the way others perceive him/her • Remains open and curious • Identifies and participates in appropriate learning activities • Keeps up-to-date on current and future trends in child development, behavior, and relationship-focused practice • Uses reflective practice throughout work with infants/young children and families to understand own emotional response to infant/family work • Understands capacity of families to change • Recognizes areas for professional and/or personal development

INFANT FAMILY ASSOCIATE Endorsement Requirements

Requirements

Education and/or Work Experience	<p>Official transcript from Child Development Associate (CDA)</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Official transcript from Associate's degree (AD) in related area</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Two years of infant and early childhood-related paid work experience (include official transcripts from any college courses completed toward CDA or AD).</p>
Training	<p>Minimum 30 clock hours of relationship-based education and training pertaining to the promotion of social-emotional development and/or the practice of infant mental health. Applicants will include as many hours as necessary to document that competencies (as specified in <i>Competency Guidelines</i>) have been met.</p>
Professional Reference Ratings	<p>Total of three ratings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One must come from a current teacher, CDA mentor, instructor, or supervisor, and 2. One must come from an individual who meets ITMHCA Endorsement[®] requirements at Level II, III, or IV, and 3. One can come from a colleague, or a parent/recipient of services.
Code of Ethics & Endorsement Agreement	Signed.
Documentation of Competencies	<p>Professional portfolio will document that competencies have been adequately met through course work, in-service training, or paid work experiences. Written examination not required for applicants seeking Endorsement at Level I.</p>
Professional Membership	Membership in ITMHCA or another infant mental health association.

Continuing Endorsement Requirements

Education & Training	<p>Minimum of 15 clock hours per year of relationship-based education and training, pertaining to the promotion of social-emotional development and/or the practice of infant mental health (eg, regional training, related course work at colleges or universities, infant mental health conference attendance). Documentation of training hours submitted with membership renewal.</p>
Professional Membership	Annual renewal of membership in ITMHCA or another infant mental health association.

Continuing Endorsement Recommendations

Reflective Supervision	ITMHCA recommends that all Endorsed professionals seek reflective supervision or consultation.
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