

# **Infant Toddler Mental Health Coalition of Arizona**

## *Competency Guidelines*

### **INFANT FAMILY SPECIALIST (LEVEL II)**

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 SPECIALIST Competency Detail

<u>Area of Expertise</u>	<u>As Demonstrated by</u>
<p><b>Theoretical Foundations</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><u>Knowledge Areas</u></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>pregnancy &amp; early parenthood</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>infant/very young child development &amp; behavior</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>infant/very young child &amp; family-centered practice</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>relationship-focused, therapeutic practice</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>family relationships &amp; dynamics</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>attachment, separation, trauma, &amp; loss</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>disorders of infancy/early childhood</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><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"> <li>• During observations and assessments, identifies emerging competencies of the infant and very young child within a relationship context</li> <li>• Supports and reinforces parent’s capacity to seek appropriate care during pregnancy</li> <li>• Supports and reinforces each parent’s strengths, emerging parenting competencies, and positive parent-infant/very young child interactions and relationships</li> <li>• Helps parents to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ "See" the infant/very young child as a person, as well as all the factors (playing, holding, teaching, etc) that constitute effective parenting of that child</li> <li>○ Derive pleasure from daily activities with their children</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Shares with families realistic expectations for the development of their infants/very young children and strategies that support those expectations</li> <li>• Demonstrates familiarity with conditions that optimize early infant brain development</li> <li>• Recognizes risks and disorders of infancy/early childhood conditions that require the assistance of other professionals from health, mental health, education, and child welfare systems</li> <li>• Shares with families an understanding and appreciation of family relationship development</li> <li>• Applies understanding of cultural competence to communicate effectively, establish positive relationships with families, and demonstrate respect for the uniqueness of each client family’s culture</li> </ul>
<p><b>Law, Regulation, &amp; Agency Policy</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><u>Knowledge Areas</u></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>ethical practice</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>government, law, &amp; regulation</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>agency policy</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exchanges complete and unbiased information in a supportive manner with families and other team members</li> <li>• 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)</li> <li>• Maintains appropriate personal boundaries with infants/very young children and families served, as established by the employing agency</li> <li>• Promptly and appropriately reports harm or threatened harm to a child’s health or welfare to Children’s Protective Services</li> <li>• 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 and other service providers working with the family</li> <li>• Shares information with non-citizen families and service agencies about the rights of citizen children of non-citizen parents</li> <li>• Personally works within the requirements of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Federal and state law</li> <li>○ Agency policies and practices</li> <li>○ Professional code of conduct</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## INFANT FAMILY SPECIALIST Competency Detail

### Area of Expertise

### As Demonstrated by

#### **Systems Expertise**

##### Knowledge Areas

*service delivery systems*

*community resources*

- Assists families to anticipate, obtain, and advocate for concrete needs and other services from public agencies and community resources
- Actively seeks resources to address infant/very young child and family needs
- Works collaboratively with and makes referrals to 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

#### **Direct Service Skills**

##### Knowledge Areas

*observation & listening*

*screening & assessment*

*responding with empathy*

*advocacy*

*life skills*

*safety*

*For infants, very young children, and families referred and enrolled for services:*

- Establishes trusting relationship that supports the parent(s) and infant/very young child in their relationship with each other, and that facilitates needed change
- Provides services to children and families with multiple, complex risk factors
- Formally and informally observes the parent(s) or caregiver(s) and infant/very young child to understand the nature of their relationship, developmental strengths, and capacities for change
- Conducts formal and informal assessments of infant/very young child development, in accordance with established practice
- Effectively implements relationship-focused, therapeutic parent-infant/very young child interventions that enhance the capacities of parents and infants/very young children
- Provides information and assistance to parents/or caregivers to help them:
  - 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
- Nurtures the parents' relationship with each other, if one exists; alternatively, helps the custodial parent manage appropriate contact with the non-custodial parent
- Promotes parental competence in:
  - Facing challenges
  - Advocating on behalf of themselves and their children
  - Resolving crises and reducing the likelihood of future crises
  - Solving problems of basic needs and familial conflict
- Advocates for services needed by children and families with the supervisor, agencies, and programs
- Recognizes environmental and caregiving risks to the health and safety of the infant/very young child and parents, and takes appropriate action

## INFANT FAMILY SPECIALIST Competency Detail

<u>Area of Expertise</u>	<u>As Demonstrated by</u>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Working With Others</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Skill Areas</u></p> <p><i>building &amp; maintaining relationships</i></p> <p><i>supporting others/mentoring</i></p> <p><i>collaborating</i></p> <p><i>resolving conflict</i></p> <p><i>empathy &amp; compassion</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Builds and maintains effective interpersonal relationships with families and professional colleagues by:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Respecting and promoting the decision-making authority of families</li><li>○ Understanding and respecting the beliefs and practices of the family's culture</li><li>○ Following the parents' lead</li><li>○ Following through consistently on commitments and promises</li><li>○ Providing regular communications and updates</li></ul></li><li>• Works with and responds to families and colleagues in a tactful and understanding manner</li><li>• Provides positive, specific feedback to encourage and reinforce desired behaviors and interactions in families</li><li>• Assists families to develop the skills they need to become their own advocates</li><li>• Models appropriate behavior and interventions for new staff as they observe home visits</li><li>• Encourages parents to share with other parents (eg, through nurturing programs, parent-child interaction groups)</li><li>• Collaborates and shares information with staff of child care, foster care, community-based programs, and other service agencies to ensure effective, coordinated services</li><li>• Works constructively to find "win-win" solutions to conflicts with colleagues (eg, interagency, peer-peer, and/or supervisor-supervisee conflicts)</li><li>• Provides emotional support to parents/caregivers and children when sad, distressed, etc</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Communicating</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Skill Areas</u></p> <p><i>listening</i></p> <p><i>speaking</i></p> <p><i>writing</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Actively listens to others; asks questions for clarification</li><li>• Uses appropriate non-verbal behavior and correctly interprets others' non-verbal behavior</li><li>• Communicates honestly, sensitively, and empathetically with families, using non-technical language</li><li>• Obtains translation services as necessary to ensure effective communication with families who may experience a communication barrier</li><li>• Writes clearly, concisely, and with the appropriate style (business, conversational, etc) in creating notes, reports, and correspondence</li></ul>



## INFANT FAMILY SPECIALIST Endorsement Requirements

<b>Requirements</b>	
Education	Minimum of Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BS), Bachelor of Social Work (BSW), Bachelor of Nursing (BSN); and including Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MS), Master of Social Work (MSW), Master of Education (MEd), Master of Nursing (MSN), Master of Applied Studies (MAS); official transcript.
Training	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.
Work Experience	Minimum two years of paid, post-Bachelor's, professional work experience providing services that promote infant mental health. Work experience meets this criterion as long as the applicant has: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Served a minimum of 10 families of infants/toddlers (birth to 36 months), and</li> <li>2. A primary focus of the services provided is the social-emotional needs of infant/toddler, and</li> <li>3. Services include attention to the relationships surrounding the infant/toddler.</li> </ol>
Reflective Supervision/Consultation	Minimum 24 clock hours within one- to two-year timeframe; post-Bachelor's, relationship-based, reflective supervision or consultation, individually or in a group while providing services to infants, very young children, and families. Provider of reflective supervision/consultation must have earned endorsement at Level III or IV-Clinical. For Bachelor's-prepared Level II applicants, reflective supervision/consultation that meets criteria for Endorsement may come from a Master's-prepared professional who has earned Level II.
Professional Reference Ratings	Total of three ratings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. One from current program supervisor, teacher, trainer, or consultant, and</li> <li>2. One from person providing reflective supervision/consultation, and</li> <li>3. One from another supervisor, teacher, trainer, consultant, or colleague.</li> </ol> <p>Please note: At least one rating must come from someone endorsed at Level II, III, or IV.</p>
Code of Ethics & Endorsement Agreement	Signed
Documentation of Competencies	Professional portfolio will document that competencies have been adequately met through course work, in-service training, and reflective supervision/consultation experiences. Written examination not required for applicants seeking Endorsement at Level II.
Professional Membership	Membership in ITMHCA or another infant mental health association.
<b>Continuing Endorsement Requirements</b>	
Education & Training	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.
Professional Membership	Annual renewal of membership in ITMHCA or another infant mental health association.
<b>Continuing Endorsement Recommendations</b>	
Reflective Supervision	ITMHCA recommends that all Endorsed professionals seek reflective supervision or consultation.