

GLOSSARY

Attachment: An emotional bond between a parent/primary caregiver and infant that develops over time and as a result of positive careseeking behaviors (e.g., crying, smiling, vocalizing, grasping, reaching, calling, following) and responsive caregiving (e.g., smiling, talking, holding, comforting, caressing).

Children's Protective Services: a state-wide system to prevent or treat the abuse and neglect of children within the Family Independence Agency.

Collaborate: Work willingly with other direct service providers, parents, community agencies, faculty, and other professionals to obtain, coordinate, and research services that effectively nurture infants and families.

Competency Guidelines: Describe specific areas of expertise, responsibilities and behaviors that have been adopted by the Connecticut Association for Infant Mental Health at Level 1 (Infant Family Associate), Level 2 (Infant Family Specialist), Level 3 (Infant Mental Health Specialist), and Level 4 (Infant Mental Health Mentor). Areas of expertise, very generally described here, include theoretical foundations; law, regulation and policy; service systems; direct service skills; working with others; communicating; reflection; and thinking.

Consultation: an opportunity for professionals/service providers to meet regularly with an experienced infant mental health professional to examine thoughts and feelings in relationship to work with infants, toddlers, and families.

Cultural Competence: The ability to observe, understand and respond, appreciating individual capacities and needs of infants, toddlers and families with respect for their culture, including race, ethnicity, values, behaviors and traditions.

Cultural Sensitivity: The ability to respect and acknowledge differences in beliefs, attitudes and traditions related to the care and raising of young children, remaining open to different points of view and approaching families with respect for their cultural values.

Early Childhood-Related Professional: a professional/service provider who works with infants and very young children (birth to five years). Examples include a child care provider, an early head start teacher, a family support specialist, a home visitor, a maternal support specialist, and an infant mental health specialist.

Family-Centered Practice: the infant and family professional/service provider's ability to focus on the infant or toddler within the context of the family and to respect the family's strengths and needs as primary.

Infant Family Associate: a professional/service provider who meets the requirements for Level 1.

Infant Family Specialist: A professional/service provider who meets the requirements for Level 2.

Infant Mental Health: An interdisciplinary field dedicated to promoting the social and emotional well-being of all infants, toddlers, and families within the context of secure and nurturing relationships. Infant mental health services support the growth of healthy attachment relationships in early infancy, reducing the risk of delays or disorders and enhancing enduring strengths.

Infant Mental Health Mentor: a professional/service provider who meets the requirements for Level 4.

Infant mental health specialist: a professional/service provider who meets the requirements for Level 3.

Intensive In-Service Training: training experiences that offer opportunities for discussion and reflection about the development, behavior or treatment of infants and toddlers within the context of the family; full day training experiences or training over time, e.g., 6 hours monthly for 6 months; 3 hours monthly for 12 months.

Mentor: an experienced infant mental health professional who offers guidance, support and learning opportunities to professionals/service providers within the infant and family field. An Infant Mental Health Mentor meets the requirements at the highest level, Level 4.

Observation: the infant and family professional/service provider's ability to describe what he/she sees when working with infants and families and to examine and reflect on the meaning of those observations with a colleague or supervisor/consultant.

Professional Development Plan: an individual approach to professional growth within the infant and family field that encourages the achievement of competencies through education, training, and supervised work experiences.

Reflective practice: Able to examine one's thoughts and feelings related to professional and personal responses within the infant and family field.

Relationship-based practice: Values early developing relationships between parents and young children as the foundation for optimal growth and change; directs all services to nurture early developing relationships within families; values the working relationship between parents and professionals as the instrument for therapeutic change; values all relationship experiences, past and present, as significant to one's capacity to nurture and support others.

Service Plan: a plan for family guidance, support and intervention that is discussed and mutually agreed upon by a professional/service provider and parent(s).