

# **Connecticut Association for Infant Mental Health**

## **Competency Guidelines**

### **LEVEL 1, INFANT FAMILY ASSOCIATE**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Level 1 Competency Guidelines were developed by the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health and adopted by the Connecticut Association for Infant Mental health to describe clearly the areas of expertise, responsibilities, and behaviors that demonstrate competency at this level.

## COMPETENCY DETAIL

---

### Area of Expertise

### As Demonstrated By

#### **Theoretical Foundations**

##### Knowledge Areas

*pregnancy & early parenthood  
infant & young child development  
and behavior  
Infant/young child & family-centered  
practice  
relationship-based practice  
family relationships & dynamics  
attachment, separation & loss  
cultural competence*

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

- Informally (and in some cases, formally) observes and assesses the infant/young child, parent, and parent-infant/young child 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 strengths, emerging parenting competencies, and positive parent-infant/young child interactions
- Demonstrates awareness of conditions that optimize early infant brain development
- Recognizes conditions which require the assistance of other service providers; 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 client family's culture

#### **Law, Regulation & Agency Policy**

##### Knowledge Areas

*ethical practice  
government, law & regulation  
agency policy*

- 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 (e.g., Children's Protective Services, Duty to Warn, etc.)
- Maintains appropriate personal boundaries with infants/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 Protective Services after discussion with supervisor.
- Accurately and clearly explains the provisions and requirements of federal, state and local laws affecting infants/young children and families (e.g., Part C of IDEA, child protection, child care licensing rules and regulations) to families
- Shares information with non-citizen families and service agencies about the rights of citizen children of non-citizen parents
- Personally works within the requirements of :
  - Federal and state law
  - Agency policies and practices
  - Agency code of conduct

## COMPETENCY DETAIL

---

### Area of Expertise

### As Demonstrated By

#### Systems Expertise

Knowledge Areas  
service delivery systems  
community resources

- Assists families to anticipate and obtain the basic requirements of living & 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 and the child's early years

#### Direct Service Skills

Knowledge Areas  
observation & listening  
screening & assessment  
responding with empathy  
advocacy  
life skills  
safety

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

- Establishes trusting relationship that supports the parent(s) and infant/young child in their relationship with each other, and that facilitates needed change
  - Uses example, encouragement, and own life experience to:
    - 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 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, 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:
    - Understand their role in the social and emotional development of infants/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/young children
  - Promotes parental competence in:
    - Facing challenges
    - Resolving crises and reducing the likelihood of future crises
    - Solving problems of basic needs and familial conflict
- Note:** In some agencies, this may be the responsibility of the supervisor/Level 2 practitioner.
- Advocates for services needed by child(ren) and families with the supervisor, agencies, and programs
  - Recognizes environmental and care giving risks to the health and safety of the infant/young child and parents, and takes appropriate action

## COMPETENCY DETAIL

---

### Area of Expertise

### As Demonstrated By

#### **Working with Others**

##### Skill Areas

*building & maintaining relationships  
supporting others  
collaborating  
resolving conflict  
empathy & compassion*

- Builds and maintains effective interpersonal relationships with families and professional colleagues by:
  - 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 to promote awareness of relationship-based approaches to working with children
- Works constructively to find "win-win" solutions to conflicts with colleagues (e.g., interagency, peer-peer, and/or supervisor-supervisee conflicts)

#### **Communicating**

##### Skill Areas

*listening  
speaking  
writing*

- 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 do not speak English
- Writes clearly, concisely, and with the appropriate style (business, conversational, etc.) in creating notes, reports, and correspondence

#### **Thinking**

##### Skill Areas

*analyzing information  
solving problems  
exercising sound judgment  
maintaining perspective  
planning & organizing*

- Sees and can explain the "big picture" when analyzing situations
- Sees and can explain the interactions of various factors
- 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-based, 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, for assuring follow up, and for monitoring the effectiveness of service delivery as a whole

## COMPETENCY DETAIL

---

### Area of Expertise

### As Demonstrated By

#### **Reflection**

#### Skill Areas

*contemplation*  
*self awareness*  
*curiosity*  
*professional/personal development*  
*emotional response*

- Regularly examines own thoughts, feelings, strengths, and growth areas
- Seeks the ongoing support and guidance of the supervisor to:
  - 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 and relationship-based 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