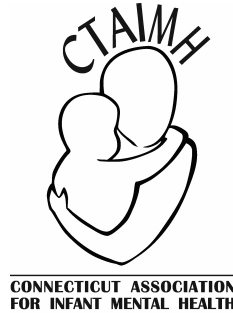


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Connecticut Association for Infant Mental Health, Inc.

Competency Guidelines

INFANT FAMILY ASSOCIATE (LEVEL I)

The Infant Family Associate (Level I) *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.

The Infant Family Associate (Level I) practitioners have earned or are working toward a minimum of an associates degree or a Child Development Associate (CDA) and meet the competencies defined in the Competency Detail for Level 1. Examples of practitioners for whom Infant Family Associate (Level I) competencies may be appropriate include but are not limited to child care, Early Head Start professionals, Nurturing Family Network home visitors, Birth to Three early intervention assistants/associates, Family Partners, Family Advocates, Doulas, and Parent Aides.

Each professional who works with families, infants and toddlers deserves and requires supervision and/or consultation that enhances his/her ability to be self aware, and to examine his/her professional and personal thoughts and feelings in response to work within the infant and family field. Reflective supervision and/or consultation are recommended for Infant Family Associates (Level I) practitioners.

INFANT FAMILY ASSOCIATE Competency Detail

Area of Expertise

As Demonstrated by

Theoretical Foundations

Knowledge Areas

pregnancy & early parenthood

infant/very young child development & behavior

infant/very young child & family-centered practice

relationship-focused practice

family relationships & dynamics

attachment, separation, trauma, & loss

cultural competence

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

- 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

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 (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:
 - Federal and state law
 - Agency policies and practices
 - Agency code of conduct

INFANT FAMILY ASSOCIATE 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 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

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
- Uses example, encouragement, and, when appropriate, 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 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:
 - 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:
 - 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/Infant Family Specialist (Level II) practitioner*
- 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

INFANT FAMILY ASSOCIATE 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 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)

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 may experience a communication barrier
- 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 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

INFANT FAMILY ASSOCIATE
Competency Detail

<u>Area of Expertise</u>	<u>As Demonstrated by</u>
Reflection	
<u>Skill Areas</u>	
<i>contemplation</i>	
<i>self awareness</i>	
<i>curiosity</i>	
<i>professional/personal development</i>	
<i>emotional response</i>	
	<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