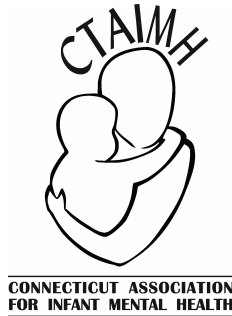


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## **Connecticut Association for Infant Mental Health, Inc.**

### *Competency Guidelines*

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

The Infant Family Specialist (Level II) *Competency Guidelines* were developed by the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health and adopted by the Connecticut Association for Infant Mental Health to clearly describe the areas of expertise, responsibilities, and behaviors that can demonstrate competency at this level.

The Infant Family Specialist (Level II) practitioners have earned a minimum of a Bachelors degree and meet the competencies defined in the Competency Detail for Level 2. Examples of practitioners for whom Infant Family Specialist (Level 2) competencies may be appropriate include but are not limited to DCF case workers, Birth to Three early interventionists, parent educators, child health providers, social workers working under licensed clinicians, early childhood consultants.

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. Infant Family Specialists (Level II) practitioners receive a minimum of 12 hours of reflective supervision and/or consultation per year.

# INFANT FAMILY SPECIALIST

## Competency Detail

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<b><u>Area of Expertise</u></b>	<b><u>As Demonstrated by</u></b>
<b>Theoretical Foundations</b>	
<b><u>Knowledge Areas</u></b>	<i>For infants, very young children, and families referred and enrolled for services:</i>
<i>pregnancy &amp; early parenthood</i>	<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></ul>
<i>infant/very young child development &amp; behavior</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><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></ul>
<i>infant/very young child &amp; family-centered practice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><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></ul>
<i>relationship-focused, therapeutic practice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shares with families realistic expectations for the development of their infants/very young children and strategies that support those expectations</li></ul>
<i>family relationships &amp; dynamics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><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></ul>
<i>attachment, separation, trauma, &amp; loss</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shares with families an understanding and appreciation of family relationship development</li></ul>
<i>disorders of infancy/early childhood</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><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>
<i>cultural competence</i>	
<b>Law, Regulation, &amp; Agency Policy</b>	
<b><u>Knowledge Areas</u></b>	
<i>ethical practice</i>	<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></ul>
<i>government, law, &amp; regulation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><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></ul>
<i>agency policy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><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

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### 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**

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**Area of Expertise**

**As Demonstrated by**

**Working With Others**

Skill Areas

*building & maintaining relationships*

*supporting others/mentoring*

*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
- Provides positive, specific feedback to encourage and reinforce desired behaviors and interactions in families
- Assists families to develop the skills they need to become their own advocates
- Models appropriate behavior and interventions for new staff as they observe home visits
- Encourages parents to share with other parents (eg, through nurturing programs, parent-child interaction groups)
- Collaborates and shares information with staff of child care, foster care, community-based programs, and other service agencies to ensure effective, coordinated services
- Works constructively to find "win-win" solutions to conflicts with colleagues (eg, interagency, peer-peer, and/or supervisor-supervisee conflicts)
- Provides emotional support to parents/caregivers and children when sad, distressed, etc

**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 empathetically 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

## INFANT FAMILY SPECIALIST Competency Detail

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### Area of Expertise

### As Demonstrated by

#### **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

#### **Reflection**

#### Skill Areas

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

- Regularly examines own thoughts, feelings, strengths, and growth areas; discusses issues, concerns, actions to take with supervisor, consultants, or peers
- Consults regularly with supervisor, consultants, peers to understand own capacities and needs, as well as the capacities and needs of 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 learning activities related to the promotion of infant mental health
- Keeps up-to-date on current and future trends in child development and relationship-focused practice
- Uses reflective practice throughout work with infants/very young children and families to understand own emotional response to infant/family work and recognize areas for professional and/or personal development

