



Connecticut Association for Infant Mental Health, Inc.
Concerned with the Healthy Social Emotional Development
of Infants and Young Children

Narrative Description of Applicant's Activities for 1033 IRS
Application Made in 2008

Introduction

The Connecticut Association for Infant Mental Health (CT-AIMH) was established to provide statewide opportunities to enhance knowledge and to promote a positive influence on the social-emotional health and development of infants, young children and their families. Connecticut will apply for membership in the World Association for Infant Mental Health. Currently there are 20 other states that are members of the World Association.

Background

In early 2000 the Child Health and Development Institute, a subsidiary of the Children's Fund of Connecticut, Inc. facilitated a Task Force to assess the needs and plan for promoting the health and mental health of young children in Connecticut. One of the outcomes of that task force was the formation of an infant mental health work group. The first meeting of this group of stakeholders was December 4, 2002. During 2003 the group met monthly to collect and review information from other state Associations for Infant Mental Health, to develop a set of by-laws, and plan for its first meeting.

The goals of the CT Association for Infant Mental Health are to:

- ❖ Facilitate statewide collaboration among individuals and agencies concerned with fostering the optimal development of relationships between caregivers and young children.
- ❖ Encourage the realization that infancy is a critical period in children's social-emotional development.
- ❖ Promote education and research concerning the effects of social-emotional development in early childhood on the full range of mental health, developmental and learning outcomes.
- ❖ Promote awareness that the mental health of parents, families, and other caregivers impacts the development of young children.
- ❖ Promote scientifically based programs of intervention, prevention and care that optimize emotional well-being in infancy and early childhood.

Applicant's Current and Planned Activities

The CT-AIMH has four initiatives:

- ❖ Public awareness and education



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- ❖ Professional and Research Promotion
- ❖ Organization Development
- ❖ Policy and Strategic Planning

Public Awareness and education

Through the initiative of public awareness and education the CT-AIMH will focus on promoting infant/early childhood mental health through workshops and conferences and through print and electronic communications. In the past and anticipated for the future, CT-AIMH will seek collaborators to help sponsor the workshops and conferences. The history of our workshops and conferences is listed below:

CTAIMH Conference/Annual Meeting History

2008 Fall Conference

“Why Relationships are Important for Children with Developmental Disorders.” Dr. Serena Wieder (invited),
Collaborators: Child Health and Development Institute

2008 Annual Meeting

“Taking Care of Children’s Sensory Needs”:
Dr. John Pagano: Touch, Movement and Nurturing: The role of sensory integration in infant mental health
Dr. Margaret Briggs Gowan: New Research findings on sensory issues:

2007 Fall Conference

“Promoting First Relationships.” Dr. Jean Kelly, NCAST, U of Washington,
Three break out leaders: PJ Lussier, MWS; Dr. Dale Saul; Michele White, MED.

2007 Annual Meeting

“Screening for Social Emotional and Behavioral Challenges.” Dr. Margaret Briggs –Gowan, Dr. Darcy Lowell, Joanna Bogin, MS, and Mary Ann Dayton Fitzgerald, MFT.

Fall 2006 Conference

“The Power of Relationships: Supporting Change for Children, Families and Providers.” Dr. Rebecca Shahmoon Shanok

2006 Annual Meeting

“Mental Health in Early Intervention.” Dr. Gil Foley



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Collaborators: Child Health and Development Institute, Building Blocks (a federally funded SAMHSA program to develop a system of care for children birth to five with mental health issues and their families), and the Children's Trust Fund.

Fall 2005 Meeting – a planning retreat for Board of Directors

2005 Annual Meeting

“Positive Behavior Support.” Janette Johnson, Learning Center in Hamden

Fall 2004 Conference

“Infant Mental Health: Stepping Up to the Challenge:”

“Early Childhood Emotional Development and Behavioral Problems: What the research tells us.” Dr. Alice Carter, Professor of Child Psychology, University of Massachusetts.

“Early Childhood in Connecticut – Next Steps.” Dr. Janice Gruendel, Senior Advisor for Early Education, Governor's Office.

2004 First Annual Meeting: “What is Infant Mental Health.” Dr. Marianne Barton, University of Connecticut.

Collaborator: Child Health and Development Institute

The Spring 2009 conference will be in conjunction with Building Blocks and will be a 2-day conference with multiple break out sessions focusing on Early Healthy Relationships.

CT-AIMH has printed and distributed the 12 page brochure “Secure Beginnings: What is Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health?” adapted from Utah Child. CT-AIMH has also created a brochure for distribution and has a web site at www.ct-aimh.org. CT-AIMH plans to create an on-line newsletter and to continue to update its web site over the next three years. In addition to maintaining its current conference schedule, CT-AIMH will offer more small group meeting/discussion opportunities for the workforce beginning in 2009-10.

Professional and Research Promotion

This initiative promotes the professional development and research outcomes of those working in the infant/early childhood mental health fields. Four activities are planned under this initiative.

Early Childhood Mental Health Research Network.



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In January 2007 and in collaboration with the Child Health and Development Institute, CT-AIMH brought together all persons in Connecticut involved in infant/early childhood mental health research. This informal network of researchers continues to meet to learn of research work of their colleagues in Connecticut. An interest group formed from this group that has focused on infant/early childhood workforce development. This interest group has supported the infant/early childhood professional endorsement activity.

Infant/Early Childhood Professional Endorsement

CT-AIMH is partnering with Child Health and Development Institute, Building Blocks, State Head Start Collaboration, and the state funded Early Childhood Consultation Partnership to purchase the Competency Guidelines from Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health. These competencies will guide our work in establishing an infant/early childhood mental health endorsement in Connecticut and thus growing the workforce for infants, toddlers and preschool children with mental health needs. The competencies will be purchased in the fall of 2008. By 2011 CT-AIMH will purchase the license to offer the infant/early childhood endorsement.

Reflective Supervision Network Groups

Part of the competency requirement for the infant/early childhood endorsement is reflective supervision, the regular, collaborative, and reflective time spent with a supervisor to understand the interactive work with children and families. CT-AIMH understands that setting up this important activity is challenging. To that end members of CT-AIMH will be attending a retreat in September 2008 with other states who are using the Michigan model to learn the possibilities and barriers in creating reflective supervision for the infant/early childhood mental health workforce in Connecticut.

Jane C Bourns Award

Annually CT-AIMH recognizes a person in Connecticut who has contributed through research, service, policy development or writings to the understanding of infant/early childhood mental health. This award is in memory of Jane C. Bourns, a devoted advocate in Connecticut for children with mental health issues and their families. Drs. Marianne Barton and Judith Meyers are the recipients to date of the Jane C Bourns award.

Organization Development

This initiative will move CT-AIMH forward in growing our membership and working with neighboring states (e.g. Rhode Island) to promote knowledge and best practice in



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infant/early childhood mental health. CT-AIMH will be making application to the World Association for Infant Mental Health. CT-AIMH will be applying for grants to fund the infrastructure of the organization, specifically staff to manage the endorsement process and administrative activities of CT-AIMH. CT-AIMH will also be searching for a site within the next year and has drafted a proposal listing the Association's needs.

Policy and Strategic Planning

This initiative will result in a long-term plan for CT-AIMH and will work with other programs and groups to support policies and procedures state-wide that impact the mental health of young children and their families. By 2009, CT-AIMH will have an infant/early childhood mental health plan for Connecticut. There exists an Infant/Toddler strategic plan and Infant/Toddler Guidelines for child care providers. There is a need for Connecticut to have a plan that will focus on the mental health (social/emotional wellness) of its youngest citizens.

Another issue that members of CT-AIMH will address is the reimbursement for services to families that involve infant/early childhood mental health. We will look to actions of other states, explore the existing funding, and work to include the home visiting services and services that focus on relationships prior to diagnoses in reimbursement practices.