



# **New Mexico Association for Infant Mental Health**

## **Competency Guidelines**

### **LEVEL 2, INFANT FAMILY SPECIALIST**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Level 2 Competency Guidelines were adopted by the New Mexico Association for Infant Mental Health to clearly describe the areas of expertise, responsibilities, and behaviors that can demonstrate competency at this level. Level 2 practitioners have earned a Bachelors or a Masters degree and meet the competencies defined in the Competency Detail for Level 2. Examples of practitioners for whom Level 2 competencies are appropriate include but are not limited to home visitors, Family Infant Toddler Service Coordinators, Developmental Specialist II or III, NICU nurse, parent educators, and Child Protective Service workers. 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. Level 2 practitioners receive a minimum of 12 hours of reflective supervision and/or consultation per year or at least 24 hours of reflective supervision/consultation in a two-year time frame.





**NMAIMH ENDORSEMENT REQUIREMENTS  
INFANT FAMILY SPECIALIST  
LEVEL 2**

<b>Education:</b>	<b>Requirements: Preparation of a Portfolio</b> A Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BS), Bachelor of Social Work (BSW), or Bachelor of Nursing (BSN); or Masters degree; official transcript
<b>Training:</b>	30 clock hours of relationship-based education and training pertaining to the social and emotional development of infants, toddlers and families
<b>Work Experience:</b>	Two years early childhood-related professional work experience
<b>Reflective Supervision/Consultation:</b>	Minimum one year, post-Bachelors, relationship-based, reflective supervision or consultation, individually or in a group while providing services to infants, toddlers and families; minimum 24 clock hours within a maximum two-year time frame.
<b>Professional reference ratings:</b>	Three ratings from: Teacher, program supervisor, instructor, consultant and/or colleague  At least one of the ratings must be from a current teacher, program supervisor, instructor, or consultant. Also, at least one of the ratings must come from an individual who meets NMAIMH Endorsement requirements at Level 3 or 4 (see Level 3 or 4).
<b>Code of Ethics Statement, Agreement, Candidate's Waiver:</b>	Signed
<b>Documentation of Competencies:</b>	Written examination is not required for applicants seeking Endorsement at Level 2
<b>Professional Membership:</b>	Membership in NMAIMH or another infant mental health association
<b>Continuing Endorsement Requirements:</b>	
<b>Education and Training:</b>	15 hours per year of relationship-based education and training, approved by the organization, specific to the social and emotional well-being of infants, toddlers and families (e.g. regional training, related course work at colleges or universities, infant mental health conference attendance, local trainings); documentation of training hours submitted with membership renewal
<b>Professional Membership:</b>	Annual renewal of membership in NMAIMH or another infant mental health association





## COMPETENCY DETAIL

### Area of Expertise

#### Theoretical Foundations

Knowledge Areas  
*pregnancy & early parenthood  
infant & young child development and behavior  
Infant/young child & family-centered practice  
relationship-based, therapeutic practice  
family relationships & dynamics  
attachment, separation & loss disorders of infancy/early childhood  
cultural competence*

#### Law, Regulation & Agency Policy

Knowledge Areas  
*ethical practice  
government, law & regulation  
agency policy*

### As Demonstrated By

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

- During observations and assessments, identifies emerging competencies of the infant and young child within a relationship context
  - Supports and reinforces parent's capacity to seek appropriate care during pregnancy
  - Supports and reinforces each parent's strengths, emerging parenting competencies, and positive parent-infant/young child interactions and relationships
  - Helps parents to:
    - "See" the infant/young child as a person, as well as all the factors (playing, holding, teaching, etc.) that constitute effective parenting of that child
    - Derive pleasure from daily activities with their children
  - Shares with families realistic expectations for the development of their infants/young children and strategies that support those expectations
  - Demonstrates familiarity with conditions that optimize early infant brain development
  - Recognizes risks and disorders of infancy/early childhood conditions which require the assistance of other professionals from health, mental health, education, and child welfare systems
  - Shares with families an understanding and appreciation of 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
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- 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
  - 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, child or foster care staff, community-based programs
  - 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
    - Professional code of conduct



## COMPETENCY DETAIL

### 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 & other services from public agencies and community resources
- Actively seeks resources to address 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, 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
- Provides services to children and families with multiple, complex risk factors
- 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
- Conducts formal and informal assessments of infant/young child development, in accordance with established practice
- Effectively implements relationship-based, therapeutic parent-infant/young child interventions that enhance the capacities of parents and infants/young children
- 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
- 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 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/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 & 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 (e.g. through nurturing programs, parent-child interaction groups, etc.)
- 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 (e.g., 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 do not speak English
- Writes clearly, concisely, and with the appropriate style (business, conversational, etc.) in creating notes, reports and correspondence



## COMPETENCY DETAIL

### 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 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

#### Reflection

##### Skill Areas

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

- 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-based practice
- Uses reflective practice throughout work with infants/young children and families to understand own emotional response to infant/family work and to recognize areas for professional and/or personal development