



INFANT MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST Competency Detail

Area of Expertise	As Demonstrated by
<p style="text-align: center;">Theoretical Foundations</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Knowledge Areas</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>pregnancy & early parenthood</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>infant/very young child development & behavior</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Infant/very young child & family-centered practice</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>relationship-focused, therapeutic practice</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>family relationships & dynamics</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>attachment, separation, trauma & loss</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>psychotherapeutic & behavioral theories of change</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>disorders of infancy/early childhood</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>mental and behavioral disorders in adults</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>cultural competence</i></p>	<p><i>For infants, very young children, and families referred and enrolled for services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports and reinforces parent's capacity to seek appropriate care during pregnancy • Identifies both typical and atypical development during pregnancy, infancy, and early childhood through formal observation, assessment, and in day-to-day interactions with the infant/very young child and family • Provides information, guidance and support to families related to the development and care of infants/very young children to further develop their parenting capabilities and the parent-infant/very young child relationship; <i>ensures that the information is provided in the family's language</i> • Develops service plans that take into account each infant's/very young child's and family's unique needs, desires, history, lifestyle, concerns, strengths, resources, cultural community, and priorities • During observations and assessments, identifies emerging competencies of the infant and very young child within a relationship context • Supports and reinforces each parent's strengths, emerging parenting competencies, and positive parent-infant/very young child interactions and relationships • Helps parents to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "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 ○ Derive pleasure from daily activities with their children • Shares with families realistic expectations for the development of their infants/very 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 that require treatment, intervention, and/or 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 • Accurately interprets information from informal and formal observations and assessments to identify capacities and strengths, as well as developmental delays and/or emotional disturbance in infants and very young children served • Accurately interprets information from informal and formal observations and assessments to identify capacities and strengths, as well as relationship disturbances, disorders, and risks in early childhood families • Develops service plans that take into account each infant's/very young child's and family's unique needs, desires, history, lifestyle, concerns, strengths, resources, and priorities • Provides services that reinforce and nurture the caregiver-infant/young child relationship • Engages in parent-infant/young child relationship-based therapies and practices to explore issues (including attachment, separation, trauma, loss) that affect the development and care of the infant/very young child



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<p>Law, Regulation, & Agency Policy</p> <p><u>Knowledge Areas</u></p> <p><i>ethical practice</i></p> <p><i>government, law, & regulation</i></p> <p><i>agency policy</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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) • 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 • Accurately and clearly explains the provisions and requirements of federal, state, and local laws affecting infants/young children and families (eg, 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Federal and state law ○ Agency policies and practices ○ Professional code of conduct
<p>Systems Expertise</p> <p><u>Knowledge Areas</u></p> <p><i>service delivery systems</i></p> <p><i>community resources</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists families to anticipate, obtain, and advocate for concrete needs and 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



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<p>Direct Service Skills</p> <p><u>Knowledge Areas</u></p> <p><i>observation & listening</i></p> <p><i>screening & assessment</i></p> <p><i>responding with empathy</i></p> <p><i>intervention/treatment planning</i></p> <p><i>developmental guidance</i></p> <p><i>supportive counseling</i></p> <p><i>parent-infant/very young child relationship-based therapies & practices</i></p> <p><i>advocacy</i></p> <p><i>life skills</i></p> <p><i>safety</i></p>	<p><i>For infants, young children, and families referred and enrolled for services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes trusting relationship that supports the parent(s) and infant/very young child in their relationship with each other and that facilitates change • Works with the parent(s) and the infant/very young child together, often in the home, in accordance with accepted practice • Observes the parent(s) or caregiver(s) and infant/very young child together to understand the nature of their relationship, developmental strengths, and capacities for change • Conducts observations, discussions, and formal and informal assessments of infant/very young child development, in accordance with established practice • Observes and articulates the infant's and parent's perspectives within a relationship context • Recognizes and holds multiple viewpoints, eg, the infant, the parent, the service provider • Interprets and synthesizes information (including family perceptions and priorities) from observations, discussions, and formal and informal assessments to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify and feed back to the parent(s) or caregiver(s) the strengths, capacities, needs, and progress of the infant/very young child and family/caregiver(s) ○ Develop mutually agreed upon service plans incorporating explicit objectives and goals ○ Formulate clinical recommendations that guide best practice • Effectively implements relationship-focused, therapeutic parent-infant/young child interventions that enhance the capacities of parents and infants/very young children • Helps parents identify goals and activities that encourage interaction and that can be woven into the infant's/very young child's and family's daily routines • Uses multiple strategies to help parents or caregivers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facing challenges ○ Resolving crises and reducing the likelihood of future crises ○ Solving problems of basic needs and familial conflict • Uses toys, books, media, etc, as appropriate to support developmental guidance • Identifies/diagnoses disturbances or disorders of infancy and mental illness in family members, as appropriate, using available diagnostic tools (eg, <i>Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders</i> (DSM-IV), <i>Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood</i> (DC-0 to 3R)) • Attends and responds to parental histories of loss as they affect the care of the infant/very young child, the parent's development, the emotional health of the infant/young child, and the developing relationship • Recognizes environmental and caregiving threats to the health and safety of the infant/very young child and parents, and takes appropriate action



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<p style="text-align: center;">Working With Others</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Skill Areas</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>building & maintaining relationships</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>supporting others/mentoring</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>collaborating</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>resolving conflict</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>empathy & compassion</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>consulting</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds and maintains effective interpersonal relationships with families and professional colleagues by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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 • Encourages parents to share with other parents (eg, through nurturing programs, parent-child interaction groups) • Provides emotional support to parents/caregivers and children when sad, distressed, etc • 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 • 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) • Training/coaching of caregivers and/or other professionals (e.g. childcare teacher, foster parent, health, mental health, legal)
<p style="text-align: center;">Communicating</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Skill Areas</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>listening</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>speaking</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>writing</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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



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<p style="text-align: center;">Thinking</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Skill Areas</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>analyzing information</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>solving problems</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>exercising sound judgment</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>maintaining perspective</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>planning & organizing</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
<p style="text-align: center;">Reflection</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Skill Areas</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>contemplation</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>self awareness</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>curiosity</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>professional/personal development</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>emotional response</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>parallel process</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 infant and very young 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 • Recognizes and responds appropriately to parallel process

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