

# Competency Guidelines for Culturally Sensitive, Relationship-Focused Practice Promoting Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

## INFANT MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENT® REQUIREMENTS

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| Education   | <p>Transcript(s) from all degrees earned and from any college credits earned. Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MS), Master of Education (MEd), Doctorate in Education (EdD), Master of Social Work (MSW), Master of Nursing (MSN), Doctor of Psychology (PsyD), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Medical Doctor (MD), Doctor of Osteopathy (DO) or other degree specific to one’s professional focus in infant mental health; university certificate program, and/or course work in areas such as infant/very young child development, family-centered practice, cultural sensitivity, family relationships and dynamics, assessment, and intervention, in accordance with Competency Guidelines®.</p>  |
| Training  | <p>Applicants will include as many hours of relationship-based training and/or continuing education as necessary to document that competencies (as specified in Competency Guidelines®) have been met.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For those whose degree is in a field that is unrelated to IMH, more specialized in-service training may be required to meet the breadth and depth of the competencies</li> <li>• Training received will include the promotion of social-emotional development and the relationship-based principles and practices of infant mental health</li> <li>• Typically, successful IMHS applications include an average of 75 or more hours of specialized training unless the applicant has completed coursework specific to IMH competencies</li> <li>• Minimum 30 clock hours required</li> </ul>  |
| Specialized Work Experience   | <p>Two years, postgraduate, supervised paid work experiences providing culturally sensitive, relationship-focused, infant mental health services. This specialized work experience must be with <b>both</b> the infant/toddler and his/her biological, foster, or adoptive parent<sup>1</sup> on behalf of the parent-infant relationship. Infant mental health services will include early relationship assessment, and parent-infant/very young child relationship-based therapies and practices. Infant mental health services include parent-infant psychotherapy, interaction guidance, and child-parent psychotherapy. These therapies and practices are intended to explicitly address issues related to attachment, separation, trauma, and unresolved losses as they affect the development, behavior, and care of the infant/very young child. The unresolved losses, or “ghosts” might be from adverse childhood experiences that occurred during the caregivers’ own infancy/early childhood or may be more recent for the infant/very young child. Strong feelings, such as grief and loss, could also be associated with diagnosis or manifestation of a chronic illness, delay, or disability.</p> <p>Professionals from a variety of disciplines, not only licensed mental health professionals, may perform the work that meets these criteria. However, the applicant will need to have received the training necessary to provide this level of intervention AND receive RSC from a qualified professional about the intervention. We acknowledge that it may be easier for a licensed mental health professional to find paid work in a program that provides this level of intervention. However, professionals from other disciplines are not excluded from earning Endorsement® at IMHS if they meet the criteria.</p> <p>In some cases, 1 year of a supervised graduate internship with direct IMH practice experience as described above may be counted toward the 2 years paid work experience requirement if the supervisor of the internship has earned IMH-E® at IMHM-Clinical or IMHS. Applicant will submit description of internship for application reviewers’ consideration</p> |
| Reflective Supervision/Consultation   | <p>Relationship-focused, reflective supervision/consultation, individually or in a group, post-Masters, while providing services to infants, very young children, and families. Provider of reflective supervision/consultation must have earned IMH-E® at IMHS or IMHM-Clinical or someone “vetted”<sup>2</sup> as such. Minimum: 50 clock hours within a one- to two-year timeframe.</p>  |
| Professional Reference Ratings<br><i>Please note: At least one rating must come from someone Endorsed of “vetted”<sup>2</sup></i> | <p>Total of three ratings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. One from current program supervisor</li> <li>2. One from person providing reflective supervision/consultation</li> <li>3. One from another supervisor, teacher, trainer, or consultant; colleague; or supervisee (if applicant is a supervisor) who is familiar with the applicant’s capacity to implement infant mental health principles into practice</li> </ol>  |

<sup>1</sup> Infant mental health services that meet IMHS specialized work criteria are provided by professionals whose role includes intervention or treatment of the infant/toddler’s primary caregiving relationship, (ie, biological, foster, or adoptive parent); these experiences are critical to the development of a specialization in infant mental health. IFS is broader and includes practitioners whose work experiences come solely from programs that provide education/support/consultation to infant and early childhood care providers or whose intent is primarily to educate parents.

<sup>2</sup> “Vetted” professionals are those interviewed by NCIMHA for their familiarity with the Competency Guidelines® and/or their experience providing reflective supervision/consultation (RSC). NCIMHA will utilize vetted professionals as we grow our capacity of Endorsed professionals. NCIMHA will discontinue the use of on or before December 21, 2027.

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### IMH SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENT® REQUIREMENTS, CONTINUED

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| Code of Ethics Statement & Endorsement® Agreement | Signed  |
| Demonstration of Competencies:                    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Application will document that competencies have been adequately met through course work, in-service training, and reflective supervision/consultation experiences</li> <li>2. Successful completion of the written examination, which includes a multiple choice and an essay portion</li> </ol> |
| Professional Membership:                          | Membership in the North Carolina Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Association (NCIMHA)  |

### CONTINUING ENDORSEMENT® REQUIREMENTS for IMH SPECIALIST

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| Education and Training  | Minimum of 15 clock hours per year of relationship-based education and training, pertaining to the promotion of social-emotional development and/or the practice of infant mental health (eg, regional training, related course work at colleges or universities, infant mental health conference attendance, participation in competency-based activities such as professional reading group, community of practice, mentorship group). For those who earn Endorsement® at IMHS and provide reflective supervision or consultation to others, at least three of the hours of specialized training must be about reflective supervision or consultation |
| Professional Membership | Annual renewal of membership in NCIMHA  |
| Reflective Supervision  | All professionals Endorsed at IMHS must receive a minimum of 12 hours of reflective supervision or consultation annually.   |