

COMPETENCY DETAILS

INFANT FAMILY ASSOCIATE (IFA)

1. Theoretical Foundations

Knowledge Areas:

- pregnancy and early parenthood
- infant/young child development and behavior
- infant/young child and family-centered practice
- relationship-focused practice
- family relationships and dynamics
- attachment, separation, trauma, grief, and loss
- cultural competence

As Demonstrated by:

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

- Informally (and in some cases, formally) observes and assesses the infant or young child, parent, and their relationship to identify landmarks of typical child development; behavior; and healthy, secure relationships
- Supports and reinforces parent's ability to seek appropriate care during pregnancy
- Supports and reinforces each parent's strengths, emerging parenting competencies, and positive parent-infant/young child interactions
- Demonstrates awareness of conditions that optimize early infant brain development
- Recognizes conditions that require the assistance of other service providers and refers these situations to the supervisor
- Shares with families an understanding of infant and 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



2. Law, Regulation, and Agency Policy

Knowledge Areas:

- ethical practice
- government, law, and regulation
- agency policy

As Demonstrated by:

- Exchanges complete and unbiased information in a supportive manner with families and other team members
- Practices confidentiality with each family's information in all contexts, with the only exception being when making necessary reports to protect the safety of a family member (eg, Children's Protective Services, Duty to Warn)
- 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 Children's Protective Services after discussion with supervisor
- 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
- Is knowledgeable about the rights of citizen children of non-citizen parents
- Personally works within the requirements of:
 - Federal and state law
 - Agency policies and practices
 - Agency code of conduct

3. Systems Expertise

Knowledge Areas:

- service delivery systems
- community resources

As Demonstrated by:

- Assists families to anticipate and obtain the basic requirements of living and other needed services from public agencies and community resources
 - Collaborates and communicates with other service agencies to ensure that the child(ren) and family receive 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 as needed and as available in the community
 - Makes families and service providers/agencies aware of community resources available to families during pregnancy, the newborn period, and the early years
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4. Direct Service Skills

Knowledge Areas:

- observation and listening
- screening and assessment
- responding with empathy
- advocacy
- life skills
- safety

As Demonstrated by:

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 facilitates needed change
- Uses example, encouragement, and, when appropriate, own life experience to:
 - Empower families to become socially and emotionally self-sufficient
 - Create nurturing, stable infant/young child-caregiver relationships
- Provides direct care and teaching/developmental activities to infants, young children, and families with multiple, complex risk factors to help ensure healthy pregnancy outcomes and the optimal development of the child in all domains (eg. physical, social, emotional, cognitive)
- Participates in formal and informal assessments of the development infant/young child, in accordance with standard practice
- 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
- 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 infants/young children
- Promotes parental competence in:
 - Facing challenges
 - Resolving crises and reducing the likelihood of future crises
 - Solving problems of basic needs and familial conflict

Please note: In some organizations, this may be the responsibility of the supervisor/Infant Family Specialist practitioner

- Advocates for services needed by infants, child(ren) and families with the supervisor, agencies, and programs
- Recognizes environmental and caregiving risks to the health and safety of the infant/young child and parents and takes appropriate action

5. Working With Others

Skill Areas:

- building and maintaining relationships
- supporting others
- collaborating
- resolving conflict
- empathy and compassion

As Demonstrated by:

- 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 communication and updates
- Works with and responds to families and colleagues in a tactful and understanding manner
- Collaborates and shares information with other service providers and agencies to ensure the safety of the infant/young child, coordinated services, and to promote awareness of relationship-focused approaches to working with children
- Works constructively to find “win-win” solutions to conflicts with colleagues (eg, interagency, peer-peer, and/or supervisor-supervisee conflicts)

6. Communicating

Skill Areas:

- listening
- speaking
- writing

As Demonstrated by:

- Actively listens to others and asks questions for clarification
- Uses appropriate non-verbal behavior and correctly interprets others’ non-verbal behavior
- Communicates honestly, sensitively, and empathically 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 (eg, business, conversational, etc) in creating notes, reports, and correspondence



7. Thinking

Knowledge Areas:

- analyzing information
- solving problems
- exercising sound judgment
- maintaining perspective
- planning and organizing

As Demonstrated by:

- Sees and can explain the “big picture” when analyzing situations
- Sees and can explain the interactions of multiple factors and 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

8. Reflection

Skill Areas:

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

As Demonstrated by:

- Regularly examines own thoughts, feelings, strengths, and growth areas
 - Seeks the ongoing support and guidance of the supervisor to:
 - Ensure that the family's progress and issues are communicated and addressed
 - Determine actions to take
 - Help maintain appropriate boundaries between self and families
 - Seeks a high degree of agreement between self-perception and the way others perceive him/her
 - Remains open and curious
 - Identifies and participates in appropriate learning activities
 - Keeps up-to-date on current and future trends in child development, behavior, and relationship-focused practice
 - Uses reflective practice throughout work with infants/young children and families to understand own emotional response to infant/family work
 - Understands capacity of families to change
 - Recognizes areas for professional and/or personal development
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ENDORSEMENT® REQUIREMENTS INFANT FAMILY ASSOCIATE (IFA)

EDUCATION AND/OR WORK EXPERIENCE

1. Official transcripts from any academic coursework including Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, and/or Doctorate degrees
OR
2. Official transcript/certificate from Child Development Associate (CDA) program
OR
3. Two years of infant²-related paid work experience³

TRAINING

- Applicants will include as many hours of training and/or continuing education as necessary to document that competencies (as specified in *Competency Guidelines*®) have been met
- For those whose degree is in a field that is unrelated to infancy, more specialized in-service training may be required to meet the breadth and depth of the competencies
- Training content will include the promotion of social-emotional development and/or the relationship-based principles of infant and early childhood mental health
- **Minimum** 30 clock hours required
- Typically, successful IFA applications include 40 or more hours of specialized training unless the applicant has completed coursework specific to the *Competency Guidelines*®

REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION/CONSULTATION

Encouraged, but not required for Infant Family Associate

PROFESSIONAL REFERENCE RATINGS

Total of three required:

1. One must come from a current supervisor
2. At least one must come from an individual who is IMH or ECMH endorsed, meets Endorsement® Requirements, or is familiar with the *Competency Guidelines*® and vetted by an Endorsement® Coordinator⁴
3. One can come from a colleague, or a parent/recipient of services (paid or volunteer), teacher, CDA mentor, or Board member

CODE OF ETHICS AND ENDORSEMENT® AGREEMENT

Signed

2. Infant, for the purposes of this Endorsement®, is defined as birth to 36 months

3. Volunteer experience may meet this criterion if it was: a) supervised experience with infants/toddlers (birth to 36 months) and families *and* b) included specialized training. Examples include court-appointed special advocate (CASA) and Child Life Specialist. Please contact your association's Endorsement® Coordinator to see if your volunteer experience fits

4. The vetting of a reference rater who is not endorsed consists of a phone call with the proposed rater so the Endorsement® Coordinator can determine if proposed rater has a copy of the *Competency Guidelines*® and is familiar enough with them to rate the applicant's knowledge and skills as defined in them. The decision to accept the vetted reference rater will be documented by an Endorsement® Coordinator in the References section of the applicant's Endorsement® Application System (EASy) application

DEMONSTRATION OF COMPETENCIES

Application will demonstrate that competencies have been adequately met through course work, in-service training and work/volunteer experiences. Reflective supervision/consultation, although not required, is recommended and will support demonstration of competencies. Written examination not required for applicants seeking Infant Family Associate Endorsement®

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Infant Mental Health Association

ENDORSEMENT® RENEWAL REQUIREMENTS INFANT FAMILY ASSOCIATE (IFA)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Minimum of 15 clock hours per year of relationship-based education and training pertaining to the promotion of social-emotional development, in the context of family and other caregiving relationships, of children from birth to the age of 36 months, including the principles of infant and early childhood 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, or community practice). Documentation of training hours submitted with membership renewal

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Annual renewal of membership in the Infant Mental Health Association

REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION/CONSULTATION

All endorsed professionals are encouraged to seek reflective supervision or consultation

