



Texas Association for Infant Mental Health

Competency Guidelines

LEVEL 4, INFANT MENTAL HEALTH MENTOR

INTRODUCTION

The Level 4 Competency Guidelines were developed by the Texas Association for Infant Mental Health to clearly describe the areas of expertise, responsibilities, and the behaviors that demonstrate competency.

In both the Impact Map and the Competency Detail, you'll notice alphabetic codes in parentheses besides certain Competencies. These codes indicate the specific area(s) of responsibility that the competency most directly impacts, as follows:

- C** Core Responsibilities
- S** Clinical Supervision, Consultation & Training
- T** Teaching, Research & Evaluation
- P** Policy/Program Administration

For example, the code "C" beside "Working with Others" indicates that this competency group directly impacts the Core Responsibilities area.



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
psychotherapeutic & behavioral
theories of changes
disorders of infancy/early childhood
mental & behavioral disorders in adults
cultural competence
adult learning theory & practice
statistics
research & evaluation

As Demonstrated By

*May practice each of the following oneself, but more importantly nurtures these skills in novice practitioners, students, clients and other colleagues. All are **C** and/or **S**:*

- 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/young child and family
- Provides information, guidance, and support to families related to the development and care of infants and young children to further develop their parenting capabilities and the attachment relationship
- Demonstrates expertise regarding the conditions that optimize early infant brain development
- Provides interpreters and literature in languages that meets community's needs
- 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 young children served
- Accurately interprets information from informal and formal observations and assessments to identify capacities and strengths, as well as relationship disturbance, disorders, and risks in early childhood families
- Develops service plans that take into account each infant's/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 psychotherapy to explore issues (including attachment, separation, loss) that affect the development and care of the infant/young child.
- Recognizes conditions which require the assistance of other professionals from health, mental health, education, and child welfare systems
- Shares with families an understanding of family relationship development, with sensitivity to cultural differences

Typically demonstrates these skills oneself:

- Applies understanding of cultural competence to communicate effectively and establish positive relationships with a wide range of people and organizations, and demonstrate respect for the uniqueness of each family's culture and practices (**C**)
- Writes articles, books, manuals on infant mental health principles and practice (**T**)
- Designs, develops, and delivers effective learning interventions as part of conferences, workshops, university courses and other opportunities to educate on effective infant mental health principle and practice (**T**)
- Monitors or evaluates service process and outcomes (**S, T**)
- Designs, leads, and manages research projects intended to increase the body of knowledge on infant mental health, early development, and effective interventions (**T**)
- Develops or impacts policy and practice intended to increase the extent or effectiveness of infant mental health interventions (**P**)



COMPETENCY DETAIL

Area of Expertise

As Demonstrated By

Law, Regulation & Agency Policy

All are **C, S, T** and **P**:

Knowledge Areas
ethical practice
government, law & regulation
agency policy

- Models the exchange of complete and unbiased information in a supportive manner with families, colleagues, other practitioners, students, agency representatives, legislators and others
- Models and coaches the maintenance of 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)
- Models and coaches colleagues regarding the maintenance of appropriate personal boundaries with infants/young children and families served
- Models and provides coaching to novice service providers in the negotiation of the dual roles of family advocate and infant/young child advocate in situations in which an infant's/young child's health and safety may be at risk
- Models and coaches respect and advocacy for, and the upholding of, the rights of infants, young children, and families
- Accurately and clearly explains the provisions and requirements of federal, state, and local laws affecting infants/young children and families (early intervention, child protection) to families, students, practitioners, infant mental health programs, community groups, etc., including the rights of citizen children of non-citizen parents
- When consulting/providing expert testimony to agencies, programs, legislative bodies, and service systems, develops conclusions and recommendations that reflect the needs and best interests of the infant/young child within the context of the family
- In all activities, personally models working within the letter and spirit of:
 - Federal, state, and local law
 - Agency policies and practices
 - Professional code of conduct

Systems Expertise

All are **C, S, T** and **P**:

Knowledge Areas
service delivery systems
community resources

- Provides advice and referral information to colleagues, practitioners, agencies, community organizations, and families on the services available through the formal service delivery systems (Protective Services, Department of Education, Community Mental Health, etc.) and through other community resources (e.g., churches, food banks, day care centers, family members, friends, other families)
- Bases consulting advice and recommendations on an expert knowledge of the formal service delivery systems and community resources
- Receives on-going in-service training on cultural competence in regards to service delivery



COMPETENCY DETAIL

Area of Expertise

Direct Service Skills

Knowledge Areas
 observation & listening
 screening & assessment
 responding with empathy
 treatment planning
 developmental guidance
 supportive counseling
 parent-infant/toddler psychotherapy
 advocacy
 safety
 reflective clinical supervision

As Demonstrated By

For Level 4 professionals focused on Clinical Supervision and/or Training-models, coaches and otherwise instructs in the following competencies (S, T):

- Establishes trusting relationship that supports the parent(s) and infant/young child in their relationship with each other, and facilitates change
- Works with the parent(s) and infant/young child together, primarily in the home, in accordance with accepted practice
- Observes the parent(s) or caregiver(s) and infant/young child together to understand the nature of their relationship, culture, developmental strengths, and capacities for change
- Conducts observations, discussions, and formal and informal assessments of infant/young child development, in accordance with established practice
- Interprets information (including family perceptions and priorities) from observations, discussions, and formal and informal assessments to:
- Identify and feed back to the parent(s) or caregiver(s) the strengths, capacities, needs and progress of the infant/young child and family/caregivers
- Develop mutually agreed upon service plans incorporating explicit objectives and goals
- Effectively implements relationship-based, therapeutic parent-infant/young child interventions that enhance the capacities of parents and infants/young children
- Helps parents identify goals and activities that encourage interaction and that can be woven into the infant's/ young child's and family's daily routines
- Uses multiple strategies to help parents/caregivers:
- Understand their role in the social and emotional development of infants and 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
- Promotes parental competence in:
- 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
- Diagnoses disturbances or disorders of infancy and mental illness in family members, as appropriate, using available diagnostic tools (e.g., *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)*, *Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood (DC-0 to 3R)*)
- Attends and responds to parental histories of loss as they affect the care of the infant/young child, the parent's development, the emotional health of the infant/young child, and the developing relationship
- Recognizes environmental and care giving threats to the health and safety of the infant/young child and parents, and takes appropriate action
- Enables supervisees to use the supervisory/consultative relationship to reflect upon direct work with families, including:
- Observation of own feelings and thoughts regarding the selection and use of clinical interventions in various settings
- Effects of treatment relationships and of specific interventions



COMPETENCY DETAIL

Area of Expertise

Working with Others

Skill Areas
building & maintaining relationships
supporting others
coaching & mentoring
collaborating
resolving conflict
crisis management
empathy & compassion
consulting

As Demonstrated By

All are Core Responsibilities (C):

- Builds and maintains effective interpersonal relationships with a broad range of people: families, colleagues, agency and community representatives, and/or legislators, as the individual role requires by:
- Being proactive in establishing connections
- Sharing information
- Partnering on projects (e.g., research, publication, program development, legislation, education initiatives)
- Identifying and reaching out to cultural families not being served or being under-served
- Deals with all people in a tactful and understanding manner
- Provides a safe and supportive supervisory relationship in which the supervisee can explore ideas, reflect about cases, and grow
- Actively participates and works cooperatively with interagency teams, planning committees, and ongoing work groups
- As an expert resource, provides guidance and feedback, often in one-on-one mentoring relationships, to novice practitioners, graduate students, and other colleagues as requested
- Models and coaches strategies for identifying “win-win” solutions to conflicts and for improving families’ ability to resolve conflicts themselves, with sensitivity to cultural differences
- Models and coaches sensitive, caring approach to families served
- Provides expert advice, testimony, and/or recommendations to programs, agencies, legislative bodies, service systems, taking into account needs, goals, context, and constraints to:
- Help develop policy & procedure that support relationship-based work
- Advocate for policy, program, and/or system improvement
- Obtain funding

Leading People

All are **S, T and P:**

Skill Areas
motivating
advocacy
developing talent

- Models personal commitment and empathy in all aspects of the practice of infant mental health
- Uses influencing and persuading skills, backed by own and others expert knowledge, to promote effective infant mental health principles, practice, and programs
- Coaches novice practitioners, students, colleagues, reporting employees, clients in a range of skills to help them become:
- Highly effective infant mental health practitioners/professionals
- Positively contributing human beings
- Culturally aware individuals



COMPETENCY DETAIL

Area of Expertise As Demonstrated By

Communicating *All are S, T and P:*

Skill Areas

*listening
speaking
writing
group process*

- Actively listens to others; clarifies others' statements to ensure understanding
- Appropriately uses and interprets non-verbal behavior
- Communicates honestly, professionally, sensitively, and empathetically with any audience
- Demonstrates clarity, focus, accuracy, and diplomacy when speaking at workshops, meetings, conferences, legislative sessions, committee meetings
- Writes clearly, concisely, and with the appropriate style (business, conversational, etc.) in creating books, articles, research, Web content, grant applications, instructional and meeting materials, reports, and correspondence
- Effectively facilitates small groups (e.g., interdisciplinary or interagency teams)

Thinking

Practices each of the following oneself, but also nurtures these skills in novice practitioners, students, clients, and other colleagues (S, T and P):

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 own expertise in making 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 achieve goals (especially goals related to complex, organizational initiatives)
- Employs effective systems for tracking progress and assuring follow-up

Reflection

Practices each of the following oneself, but also nurtures these skills in novice practitioners, students, clients, and other colleagues. All are C and S:

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 with supervisor or mentor
- Seeks a high degree of congruence between self-perceptions and the way others perceive him/her
- Consults regularly with others to understand own capacities and needs, as well as the capacities and needs of families
- Encourages others (peers, supervisees, et al.) to examine their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences in determining actions to take
- Remains open and curious
- Uses results of reflection to identify areas for personal development; identifies and participates in value-added learning activities
- Keeps up-to-date on current and future trends in infant/young child development and infant mental health practice



COMPETENCY DETAIL

Area of Expertise

As Demonstrated By

Administration

For Level 4 professionals focused on Policy/Program Administration (all are P):

Skill Areas
*program management
program development
program evaluation
program funding*

- Manages one's organization from the perspective of relationship-based service and infant/young child- and family-centered practice
- Identifies opportunities and needs for program improvements, expanded services, and new services
- Partners with agencies, programs, legislative bodies, and/or service systems to develop new programs and/or achieve program improvements
- May take the lead in realizing new programs/improvements
- Establishes and monitors process and outcomes measures for continuous quality improvement; feeds information back to staff
- Assists agencies, programs, legislative bodies, and service systems in obtaining funding, including grant development and preparation
- Advocates for funds/programming for effective service delivery to families outside of the dominant culture
- Promotes research for program improvements in regards to multi-cultural service delivery

Research and Evaluation

For Level 4 professionals focused on Teaching, Research and Evaluation (all are T):

Skill Areas
*study of infant relationships & attachment
study of infant development and behavior
study of families*

- Generates research questions that promote infant mental health
- Generates new knowledge and understanding of infants, parents, caregivers and relationship-based practice based on sound research
- Assists programs and agencies in measuring outcomes related to the optimal well-being of infants, toddlers, families and their caregiving communities
- Generates research that reflects cultural competence in the infant-family field
- Applies research findings to culturally sensitive, relationship-based practice promoting infant mental health
- Shares his/her generated knowledge with other via publication and/or presentations in/at infant-family related books, journals, and conferences

Infant Mental Health Mentor (Level 4) Impact Map

NOTE: Level 4 candidates will all perform the Core Responsibilities & have a Primary Responsibility in 1 of the other 3 areas. In addition, they may perform responsibilities from the remaining two areas.

Capabilities

- Working With Others (C)**
 - Building & maintaining relationships
 - Supporting others
 - Coaching & mentoring
 - Collaborating
 - Resolving conflict
 - Crisis management
 - Empathy & compassion
 - Consulting
- Reflection (C, S)**
 - Contemplation
 - Self-awareness
 - Curiosity
 - Professional and personal development
 - Emotional response
- Theoretical Foundations**
 - Infant/young child- and family-centered practice
 - Relationship-based therapeutic practice
 - Attachment, separation & loss
 - Psychotherapeutic & behavioral theories of change
 - Family relationships and dynamics
 - Infant & young child development
 - Disorders of infancy/early childhood
 - Mental & behavioral disorders in adults
 - Diversity
 - Adult learning theory & practice
 - Statistics, research & evaluation
 - Research & evaluation
- Law, Regulation & Agency Policy**
 - Ethical practice
 - Government law & regulation
 - Agency policy
- Systems Expertise**
 - Service delivery systems
 - Community resources
- Direct Service Skills**
 - Observation, listening & assessment
 - Responding
 - Treatment planning
 - Developmental guidance
 - Supportive counseling
 - Parent-infant/young child psychotherapy
 - Grief counseling
 - Safety
 - Reflective clinical supervision
- Leading People**
 - Motivating
 - Advocacy
 - Developing talent
- Communicating**
 - Listening
 - Speaking
 - Writing
 - Group process
- Thinking**
 - Analyzing information
 - Solving problems
 - Exercising sound judgment
 - Maintaining perspective
 - Planning & organizing
- Administration (P)**
 - Program management
 - Program development
 - Program evaluation
 - Program funding

Key Responsibilities

- Core Responsibilities (C)**
 - Model effective, trusting working relationships
 - Develop relationships with agencies, programs & systems to ensure alignment of activities with infant mental health principles
 - Engage in reflective practice to identify own strengths & areas for growth; engage in learning & development for professional and/or personal improvement
 - Educate &/or mentor students, staff, colleagues, and decision makers on Infant Mental Health principles and practice
- Clinical Supervision, Consultation & Training (S)**
 - Provide reflective supervision, training, feedback & guidance to Infant Mental Health practitioners to help them:
 - Become more effective practitioners
 - Develop as human beings
 - Communicate effective infant mental health principles and practice to colleagues & staff in:
 - Observations & assessments
 - Supportive counseling & developmental guidance to parents
 - Parent-infant/young child psychotherapy
 - Provide case & program consultation to staff of other agencies to enhance social and emotional development of infants and young children
- Teaching, Research & Evaluation (T)**
 - Teach, speak publicly, and/or publish written works
 - Conduct research that increases the body of knowledge on infant mental health and effective interventions
 - Conduct process & outcome evaluations
- Policy/Program Administration (P)**
 - Run one's organization from a relationship-based, outcome-oriented perspective
 - Participate in interagency planning & service implementation
 - Provide consulting, recommendations, & expert testimony to local & state programs, agencies, service systems & legislative bodies to:
 - Help develop policy & procedure that support relationship-based work
 - Advocate for policy/program/system improvements
 - Obtain funding

Level 4 Results

- High quality, highly effective services to infants/young children & parents – by IMH staff & staff of other agencies
- Timely & effective resolution of performance & service problems
- Highly motivated & satisfied practitioners and reporting staff
- Increased number of highly effective infant mental health (IMH) & other practitioners at all levels
- Increased body of knowledge of effective IMH principles & practice
- Continuously improved:
 - Public/agency policy & procedure
 - IMH services
 - Collaborative interagency systems of care

Service Objectives

- Securely attached infants & young children
- Enhanced infant/young child capacities to enter into social relationships, to explore & master their environment & to learn
- Optimal parent capability to care for and nurture an emotionally healthy, competent infant/young child
- Reduced risks of disorder in infancy & early childhood, developmental delays, & later anti-social/problematic behavior
- Positive parental mental health, including improved relationships, networks & problem solving
- Safe & appropriate environments for the infant/young child
- Continuous improvement in Infant Mental Health practice
- Responsive, thoughtful community systems of care for infants, young children & their families

Service Goal

- Optimal social, emotional & cognitive development of infants/young children within the context of strong, nurturing, parent-infant/young child relationships