Level I, Infant Family Associate
Competency Guidelines

The Level I Competency Guidelines were developed to clearly describe the areas of expertise, responsibilities, and behaviors that demonstrate competency at this level.
Area of Expertise

Theoretical Foundations

Knowledge Areas
- pregnancy & early parenthood
- infant/young child development & behavior
- infant/young child & family-centered practice
- relationship-based practice
- family relationships & dynamics
- attachment, separation & 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/young child, parent, and parent-infant/young child 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 parent strengths, emerging parenting competencies, and positive parent-infant/young child interactions
- Demonstrates awareness of conditions that optimize early infant brain development
- Recognizes conditions which require the assistance of other service providers; 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

Law, Regulation & Agency Policy

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

- 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 after discussion with supervisor.
- 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
- 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
  - Agency code of conduct

Systems Expertise

Knowledge Areas
- service delivery systems
- community resources

- Assists families to anticipate and obtain the basic requirements of living & other needed services from public agencies and community resources
- Collaborates and communicates with 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 during pregnancy and the child’s early years
Area of Expertise

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
- Uses example, encouragement, and own life experience to:
  o Empower families to become socially and emotionally self-sufficient
  o Create nurturing, stable infant/young child-caregiver relationships
- Provides direct care and teaching/developmental activities to children and families with multiple, complex risk factors to help ensure healthy pregnancy outcomes and the optimal development of the child in all domains (physical, emotional, cognitive)
- Participates in formal and informal assessments of the infant’s/young child’s development, 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:
  o Understand their role in the social and emotional development of infants/young children
  o Understand what they can do to promote health, language and cognitive development in infancy and early childhood
  o Find pleasure in caring for their infants/young children
- Promotes parental competence in:
  o Facing challenges
  o Resolving crises and reducing the likelihood of future crises
  o Solving problems of basic needs and familial conflict
  
  Note: In some agencies, this may be the responsibility of the supervisor/Level 2 practitioner.
- Advocates for services needed by child(ren) 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

Working with Others

- Builds and maintains effective interpersonal relationships with families and professional colleagues by:
  o Respecting and promoting the decision-making authority of families
  o Understanding and respecting the beliefs and practices of the family’s culture
  o Following the parents’ lead
  o Following through consistently on commitments and promises
  o Providing regular communications 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 and effective, coordinated services, and to promote awareness of relationship-based approaches to working with children
- Works constructively to find “win-win” solutions to conflicts with colleagues (e.g., interagency, peer-peer, and/or supervisor-supervisee conflicts)
Area of Expertise

Communicating
Skill Areas
- **listening**
- **speaking**
- **writing**

As Demonstrated By
- Actively listens to others; 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 do not speak English
- Writes clearly, concisely, and with the appropriate style (business, conversational, etc.) in creating notes, reports, and correspondence

Thinking
Skill Areas
- **analyzing information**
- **solving problems**
- **exercising sound judgment**
- **maintaining perspective**
- **planning & organizing**

As Demonstrated By
- 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**

As Demonstrated By
- Regularly examines own thoughts, feelings, strengths, and growth areas
- Seeks the ongoing support and guidance of the supervisor to:
  - Ensure that family 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-perceptions 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 and relationship-based 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