

Endorsement: Building Capacity in the Infant and Family Field

A Systematic Approach through Endorsement



What is the Value of Endorsement?

- *Provides a level of assurance to families, agencies and the public at large that the person delivering services meets professional standards.
- *Provides a pathway for development in the infant and family field for the span of one's career.
- *Provides a set of competencies to guide training, service, policy and research.

The Birth of a Professional System

§*1970's Selma Fraiberg developed services in Michigan, coining the phrase, *infant mental health*

§In 1983, the Michigan Department of Mental Health funded infant mental health services through community mental health agencies where staff training was integral to program design.

Training Guidelines

§ In 1986, MI-AIMH approved and published a two-page document, *Training Guidelines*, summarizing guidelines for IMH training and supervision, inspired by Fraiberg's work.

§ In 1990, ZERO TO THREE published *Task Documents* for the infant and family field, encouraging knowledge, skills, collegial and supervisory support.

Early Intervention Services

§ Federal legislation under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and activity at the state level through PL 99-457-Part H gave further impetus to serve infants and toddlers from a family perspective.

Professional Competencies

§ By 1986, Michigan Department of Education identified core competencies for early intervention professionals:

§ Theoretical Foundations

§ Legal/ethical Foundations

§ Interpersonal/team skills

§ Direct service skills

§ Advocacy skills

MI-AIMH Endorsement Committee

§ By 1997, MI-AIMH committee members completed the areas of core competency for IMH professionals by adding to the identified areas:

§ Systems expertise

§ Thinking

§ Reflection

Expansion of a 4-Level Framework

§ By 1997, MI-AIMH designed a 4-level framework for an interdisciplinary professional development system to recognize competency:

§ Infant Family Associate

§ Infant Family Specialist

§ Infant Mental Health Specialist

§ Infant Mental Health Mentor (later expanded to specify clinical, policy or faculty/research)

An Organized System

§ By 1998, MI-AIMH Endorsement Committee produced two documents:

- § Impact maps to describe IMH service goals and key responsibilities at each level of competency
- § Competency details describing eight areas of expertise required for best practice at each of four levels

Completion of Competencies and Plan

§ In 2000, MI-AIMH received a grant from the W.K.Kellogg Foundation to hire an Executive Director and Administrative Assistant to support and complete the work of the Endorsement Committee

§ Final phase: Construction of a 3-hour exam by experts in the field for level 3 & 4 candidates, field test the exam and revise the exam

A Systematic Plan for Endorsement

§ By 2000, MI-AIMH called the plan an endorsement:

§ *The MI-AIMH Endorsement for Culturally Sensitive, Relationship-Focused Practice Promoting Infant Mental Health™*

Framework for Endorsement: Component Parts

- § By 2002, experts identified the following endorsement criteria to assure best practice outcomes for infants, young children & families:
- § specific educational experiences
 - § work experiences with infant, young children & families
 - § competency-based, in-service training experiences
 - § reflective supervision/consultation experiences

Additional Criteria for Endorsement

- § Infant Mental Health Code of Ethics
- § Reference ratings from 3 professionals
- § Successful completion of a 3-hour written exam for level 3 & 4 candidates
- § Membership in an IMH professional organization

Reflecting Competency

§ Steps to Endorsement

§ Inquiry

§ Applications

§ Portfolio preparation

§ Documentation

§ Endorsement

Portfolio Review

§ Professionals seeking endorsement are asked to create a portfolio that describes their work with or on behalf of infants, toddlers, young children and families; competency-based training and educational experiences; and reflective supervision or consultation experiences.

§ There are specific guidelines for each level.

§ An IMH advisor is assigned to each candidate to assist with the completion of the portfolio.

§ Each portfolio is carefully reviewed by committee.

Documentation of Competency

§ Level 1 & 2 candidates submit portfolios to document competency indicating completion of all requirements for endorsement.

§ Level 3 & 4 candidates submit portfolios and, in addition, take a 3-hour exam made up of 60 multiple choice questions and a qualitative assessment of the candidate's reflective practice capacities (clinical), teaching/research capacities (faculty/research) or policy capacities (policy).

MI-AIMH Endorsement Exam

§ University faculty and experienced IMH practitioners designed, field-tested and revised the two-part exam.

§ Two reviewers read and score each written exam.

§ A third reviewer is asked to independently read and score an exam if the two cannot reach agreement.

MI-AIMH Central Registry

§ MI-AIMH Central Office houses the MI-AIMH Central Registry

§ MI-AIMH Endorsed candidates identify themselves as having earned the endorsement as an Infant Family Associate, Infant Family Specialist, Infant Mental Health Specialist or Infant Mental Health Mentor.

§ John Doe, MSW, Infant Family Specialist, IMH-E™

§ Jane Do, Ph.D., Infant Mental Health Mentor, IMH-E™

§ MI-AIMH Endorsed candidates document 15 hours of continuing training (minimum) annually and membership in an IMH association

Gains in the First Years

§ Job announcements specify a preference for professionals who have earned the MI-AIMH Endorsement.

§ Endorsement competencies have effected systems changes in at state and local levels.

§ Endorsement competencies have shaped the revision of course work for university graduate and certificate programs as well as training and reflective supervision requirements for the infant and early childhood work force

Beyond the Borders of Michigan

§ To date, 6 other state affiliates have purchased a 3-year, renewable license from MI-AIMH to use the MI-AIMH competencies and endorsement process to build capacity in their states.

§ MI-AIMH retains ownership of the copyright, but permits each state group to use the materials under its own name.

§ This partnership spirit has encouraged a new collaboration on behalf of workforce development and competency promoting infant mental health and best practice in the infant and early childhood field.