



Australian Association
for Infant Mental Health
West Australian Branch

AAIMH

Competency Guidelines[®]
and
Endorsement[®] Requirements

INFANT FAMILY WORKER

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INFANT FAMILY WORKER

Competency Detail

Area of Expertise	As Demonstrated by
<p style="text-align: center;">Theoretical Foundations <u>Knowledge Areas</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>pregnancy & early parenthood</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>infant/very young child development & behaviour</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>infant/very young child & family-centred practice</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>relationship-focused practice</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>family relationships & dynamics</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>attachment, separation, trauma, grief, & loss</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>cultural competence</i></p>	<p><i>For infants, very young children (conception to 36 months), and families referred and enrolled for services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informally (and in some cases, formally) observes and assesses the infant or very young child, parent, and their relationship to identify landmarks of typical child development; behaviour; 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/very young child interactions • Demonstrates awareness of conditions that optimise early infant brain development • Recognises conditions that require the assistance of other service providers and refers these situations to the supervisor • Shares with families an understanding of infants/very young children 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 family’s culture • Applies understanding of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island¹ cultures to communicate effectively, establish positive relationships with families, and demonstrate respect
<p style="text-align: center;">Law, Regulation & Agency Policy <u>Knowledge Areas</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>ethical practice</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>government, law, & regulation</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>agency policy</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchanges complete and unbiased information in a supportive manner with families and other team members • Practises 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., child protection services, duty of care, and mandatory reporting) • 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 child protection services after discussion with supervisor • Accurately and clearly explains the provisions and requirements of Commonwealth, State or Territory, and local laws affecting infants/young children and families (e.g., child protection, child care licensing rules and regulations) to families • Collaborates with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities in order to respond ethically and respectfully • Is knowledgeable about the rights of refugee and migrant children under Australian law • Personally works within the requirements of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Commonwealth and State or Territory laws ○ Agency policies and practices ○ Agency code of conduct ○ Professional code of conduct and ethics

¹ Terminology for Australian and Torres Strait Island peoples may differ across the nation

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Area of Expertise

As Demonstrated by

<p>Systems Expertise</p> <p><u>Knowledge Areas</u></p> <p><i>service delivery systems</i></p> <p><i>community resources</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists families to anticipate and obtain the basic requirements of living and other needed services from government and nongovernment 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, neighbours, and friends 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 • Collaborates and consults with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities and elders to ensure that appropriate resources are accessed and/or are accessible
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<p>Direct Service Skills</p> <p><u>Knowledge Areas</u></p> <p><i>observation & listening</i></p> <p><i>screening & assessment</i></p> <p><i>responding with empathy</i></p> <p><i>advocacy</i></p> <p><i>life skills</i></p> <p><i>safety</i></p>	<p><i>For infants, very young children (conception to 36 months), and families referred and enrolled for services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes trusting relationship that supports the parent(s) and infant/very young child in their relationship with each other and that facilitates needed change • Collaborates and communicates with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples to establish meaningful and trusting relationships for families in their communities • Uses example, encouragement, and, when appropriate, own life experience to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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 infant, very 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 (physical, social, 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understand their role in the social and emotional development of infants/very 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/very young children • Promotes parental competence in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facing challenges ○ Resolving crises and reducing the likelihood of future crises ○ Solving problems of basic needs and familial conflict • Advocates for services needed by infants, child(ren) and families with the work supervisor, agencies, and programs • Recognises environmental and caregiving risks to the health and safety of the infant/young child and parents and takes appropriate action
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INFANT FAMILY WORKER
Competency Detail

Area of Expertise	As Demonstrated by
<p style="text-align: center;">Working with Others</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Skill Areas</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>building & maintaining relationships</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>supporting others</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>collaborating</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>resolving conflict</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>empathy & compassion</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds and maintains effective interpersonal relationships with families and professional colleagues by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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 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 promote awareness of relationship-focused 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) • Works in collaboration with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities and collaborate with elders to maintain respectful and supportive relationships.
<p style="text-align: center;">Communicating</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Skill Areas</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>listening</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>speaking</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>writing</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively listens to others; asks questions for clarification • Uses appropriate non-verbal behaviour and correctly interprets others' non-verbal behaviour • Communicates honestly, sensitively, and empathically with families, using non-technical language • Obtains interpreter services as necessary to ensure effective communication with families who may experience a communication barrier • Communicates and collaborates with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities in order to better understand each other and work effectively together • Writes clearly, concisely, and with the appropriate style (business, conversational, etc.) in creating notes, reports, and correspondence
<p style="text-align: center;">Thinking</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Skill Areas</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>analysing information</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>solving problems</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>exercising sound judgment</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>maintaining perspective</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>planning & organising</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees and can explain the "big picture" including cultural awareness when analysing situations • Sees and can explain the interactions of multiple factors & perspectives • Assigns priorities to needs, goals, and actions • Considers difficult situations carefully • Evaluates alternatives prior to making decisions • Integrates all available information, including culturally specific information, and consults with others when making important decisions • Generates new insights and workable solutions to issues related to effective relationship-focused, family-centred care • Defines, creates a sequence for, and prioritises 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

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Area of Expertise	As Demonstrated by
<p style="text-align: center;">Reflection</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Skill Areas</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>contemplation</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>self-awareness</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>curiosity</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>professional/personal development</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>emotional response</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly examines own thoughts, feelings, strengths, and growth areas • Seeks the ongoing support and guidance of the work supervisor or reflective practice supervisor to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure that family progress and issues are communicated and addressed ○ Determine actions to take ○ Help maintain appropriate boundaries between self and families ○ Maintain sensitivity to culture • 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, behaviour, 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 • Recognises areas for professional and/or personal development • Consistently maintains and demonstrates awareness of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island cultures



Photo courtesy of Goodstart Early Learning

INFANT FAMILY WORKER Endorsement[®] Requirements

Requirements

Education and/or Work Experience	Official transcripts from any academic coursework including Diploma, Bachelor, Masters, and/or Doctorate degrees OR Official transcript from a certificate or diploma course from an accredited provider in related area (e.g., childcare or health services) OR Two years infant-related (conception to 36-months) paid work experience ²
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants will include as many hours of training and/or continuing education as necessary to document that competencies (as specified in <i>Competency Guidelines</i>[®]) have been met • For those whose degree is in a field that is unrelated to infant and early childhood, 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 IFW applications include 40 or more hours of specialised training unless the applicant has completed coursework specific to the <i>Competency Guidelines</i>[®]
Professional References	Total of three references: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One must come from a current teacher, instructor, or work supervisor, and 2. At least one must come from an individual who is IMH endorsed, or meets Endorsement[®] requirements, or is familiar with the <i>Competency Guidelines</i>[®] and vetted by AAIMH WA³ and 3. One can come from a colleague, or a parent/recipient of services.
Code of Ethics & Endorsement [®] Agreement	Signed
Documentation of Competencies	Application will document that competencies have been adequately met through course work, in-service training, or paid work/volunteer experiences. Reflective supervision/consultation, although not required, is recommended and will support documentation of competencies. Written examination not required for applicants seeking Infant Family Worker Endorsement [®]
Professional Membership	Membership in AAIMH WA

Continuing Endorsement[®] Requirements

Education & 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 (e.g., 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 AAIMH WA.

Continuing Endorsement[®] Recommendations

Reflective Supervision	All Endorsed [®] professionals are encouraged to seek reflective supervision or consultation.
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² Volunteer experience may meet this criterion if it was a) supervised experience with infants/toddlers (pregnancy, conception to 36 months) and families AND b) included specialised training. Please contact your AAIMH WA Endorsement[®] coordinator to see if your volunteer experience fits.

³ The review of a referee who is not Endorsed consists of a phone call with the proposed referee so AAIMH WA staff can determine if proposed referee 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 reviewed referee will be documented by the Endorsement[®] Coordinator in the References section of the applicant's EASy application.