

## **Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Competencies**

*To ensure qualified personnel have expertise for providing services to young children and their families*

## **O V E R V I E W**

### **Acknowledgements**

The New Hampshire Association for Infant Mental Health (NHAIMH) is pleased to endorse the Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Competencies, self-assessment tool and professional development plan presented in this document.

This body of work is the result of commitment and efforts of the Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Competency Workgroup, collaboration with the Vermont Early Childhood Mental Health Practice Group and support from New Hampshire Early Supports and Services.

The dedicated individuals participating in the workgroup represent the fields of Early Childhood, Higher Education, Mental Health, Allied Health, and several state agencies. We would like to acknowledge and thank these individuals for their commitment to this project, for without their efforts, this project could not have come to completion:

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## **Introduction**

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The New Hampshire Association for Infant Mental Health is pleased to provide the following professional competencies related to early childhood and family mental health. These professional competencies are intended to guide the preparation and ongoing professional development of service providers in various fields who have a role in supporting families with young children. The skills and knowledge necessary for promoting the social and emotional development of children and for recognizing and addressing mental health issues are the purview of multiple disciplines. For instance, educators, therapists, childcare providers, pediatricians, home health care providers, early interventionists, social workers, and child welfare workers all need to be mindful of these competencies and demonstrate the level of knowledge and skills commensurate with their roles.

## **Field of Early Childhood and Family Mental Health**

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The field of early childhood and family mental health continues to evolve. It recognizes that the first years of a child's life provide the social and emotional foundation for growing up happy, healthy and productive, ready to succeed in school and to nurture his/her own future children. This field actively promotes the social and emotional well being of young children and their families, emphasizing the importance of secure relationships between children and their parents and other caregivers. The central and fundamental role of family and relationships is codified in the "14 Guiding Principles of Practice" presented below, developed by the NHAIMH in 2004, and available on the NHAIMH website, [www.nhaimh.org](http://www.nhaimh.org)

## **Guiding Principles**

1. Children from birth are fully contributing family members who share in the emotional development and health of families.
2. All families with young children, birth through six years, experience unique stresses and need information and support.
3. All families have strengths that provide the basis for continuing care and nurturing.
4. Families are essential partners in the design and evaluation of services.
5. Research shows that it has been proven most effective to intervene early when families identify needs for services that support social emotional and developmental health.
6. The stress related to accessing services is compounded each time application, intake meetings, and documentation verification must precede service delivery.
7. Services originating from multiple agencies should be well coordinated, easily accessible, and working relationships between agencies should facilitate application processes for families.
8. Families report greater satisfaction from services when they are well coordinated in regards to schedule, treatment plan, paperwork and supports.
9. Providers evaluating and treating infant mental health issues and or providing supervision for these issues require training in mental health disorders and treatment of young children, family systems, social systems, infant/child and emotional/ relational development.
10. All people, programs and agencies working with families impact and therefore have a role in promoting family development and infant mental health.
11. People providing a wide variety of services and supports to young children and their families need training and support to identify issues and concerns. Ongoing consultation with a qualified professional should be accessible when community programs and agencies con-

tinue providing services to young children and their families.

12. Treating infant mental health issues is relational and inclusive of social issues. Addressing case management needs is essential to treatment.
13. Infant mental health is multidisciplinary. No one individual can possess the expertise to evaluate and treat all the possible mental health, relational and developmental issues that can affect a young child. Therefore, the availability of consulting relationships between professionals and agencies is essential.
14. Infant Mental Health is multicultural. Different cultures value and attend to different facets of child development. Different styles and methods of parenting are supported differently dependent of cultural expectations of parents and children.

### **Process for Developing the Competencies**

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The New Hampshire Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Competency system borrows heavily from the Vermont Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Competency system. The Vermont Early Childhood and Family Mental Health competencies were developed through an inclusive process over a four-year period of time during which various constituency groups reviewed and provided input into their design and content. The intention was to embed skills and knowledge throughout the system of service delivery to all children (age birth to age eight) and their families, and to provide a precise focus on early childhood and family mental health.

The Vermont Early Childhood Mental Health Practice Group worked closely with the Northern Lights Career Development Center as it developed Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals. Many of those competencies are aligned with the Foundation and Intermediate Levels of these Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Competencies. They also worked closely with the Higher Education Collaborative on Early Childhood Educator and Early Child-

hood Special Educator endorsements and related college coursework to align with these competencies.

The New Hampshire Workgroup, which represented input from all the previously mentioned professional domains, met for 15 months, first reflecting on the Infant Mental Health 14 Guiding Principles, then clarifying the purpose and potential uses of the competencies. The group carefully evaluated the relative strengths and weaknesses of the 5 most widely accepted competency standards:

- Michigan
- Connecticut
- California
- Wisconsin
- Vermont

After much discussion, and a presentation from the Vermont Early Childhood Mental Health Practice Group it was decided that the competency system developed by Vermont most closely aligned with our needs. The factors which led us to choose the Vermont system were:

- Levels are not tied to a field or degree
- Translates well between fields
- Flexible
- Addresses all relevant fields
- Equal attention to child and family competencies
- Addresses professionalism/ethics
- Emphasizes reflective practice
- Recognizes and respects cultural differences
- Has a systems perspective
- Presents an ecological perspective
- Well organized
- Can easily be adapted for multiple uses.

Additionally, Vermont welcomed our use and adaptation of their system and presented a desire for future collaboration and development. Within the body of this document, you will find further detail regarding the organization and use of these competencies, and a tool for guiding professional development.

## **Organization of the Competencies**

The competencies are made up of several descending parts:

1. Core Knowledge Areas or Domains (i.e.: Family Systems, Child Development...)
2. Levels: (from entry or Foundation to Specialist...)
3. Subheadings or sub-domains: (i.e.: Ethics and Confidentiality, Effective Transitions...)
4. Core competencies: statements that describe specific behavior or knowledge (recognizes..., demonstrates..., develops... etc.).

The six domains may appear to be discrete areas of knowledge, but when put to use, they are highly interrelated:

- Philosophy and Professional Orientation
- Family Systems
- Child Development
- Screening and Assessment
- Addressing Challenges
- System Resources.

Qualified personnel have different levels of autonomy, breadth of impact, and depth of knowledge across these six domains. The competencies reflect four levels of expertise:

- Foundation
- Intermediate
- Advanced
- Specialist.

The levels are hierarchical in nature, building upon each other. The first level is foundational, reflecting the knowledge and practices we believe all direct service providers and their supervisors should have for interacting with young children and families who may be at risk for or experiencing mental health challenges and in need of finding help. The second level of

competencies describes intermediate skills necessary for working with children and families who exhibit challenges; the third level presents advanced competencies for overseeing, planning, and/or providing services and consultation to others regarding challenges that impact the mental health of young children and their families; while the fourth level consists of specialized skills required for working with the most complex situations and for providing leadership to the field.

There may be some correspondence to the degree levels awarded by the institutions of higher education, but individuals with doctoral degrees may lack certain Foundation skills while individuals with an Associate's degree may demonstrate particular Specialist skills. The more important correspondence is with the expertise required by a wide range of service providers to improve the mental health of young children and their families.

## **Use of the Competencies**

While all of these competencies may be used in various settings along the service continuum, it is very unlikely that any one person has - or that any one position makes use of - all the competencies in either a domain or a level. The full array of competencies will likely be evident only when looking at a whole program or a community team. On a continuum, hiring agencies and job supervisors should determine which competency domains and levels they require for particular positions.

Core competency documents can be used for a variety of purposes. They can be used to assess learning needs of students, employees, whole programs or teams. They can be used to develop and evaluate professional development curricula, or as a tool for supervision and mentoring support.

### **Levels may be used:**

1. To delineate intended participants in a professional development opportunity
2. To delineate breadth, depth, or impact of required knowledge and skills

3. As a means of comparing different groups or professional development opportunities.

**Core Knowledge Areas or Domains may be used:**

1. To inform essential objectives used in courses
2. As a means to sort and identify learning opportunities from a professional development list or calendar
3. To identify equivalency areas for credentials

**Subheadings or sub-domains may be used:**

1. To document completion of professional development credential, plan annual training hours
2. To describe sections of a portfolio or of an Individual Professional Development Plan
3. To inform essential objectives used in courses, credential, plan annual training hours
4. To identify equivalency areas for credentials or for coursework equivalency
5. As a framework for a pre- and post-test of student's knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

**Core Competencies may be used:**

1. To select goals or activities for an Individual Professional Development Plan
2. As a self-assessment tool in a performance review or mentoring process
3. To select specific work-related knowledge, skills or dispositions in a job description
4. By instructors to identify specific skills, knowledge or dispositions to address in a course or workshop
5. As a springboard for discussion of key concepts with parents or collaborators.

Our plan is for these competencies to become embedded in the coursework required by current personnel preparation and licensing systems. We anticipate that endorsements or certificates will be created for those competencies that are

beyond current licensing and certification systems and/or reflect more specialized knowledge and skills, so providers with these skills in early childhood and family mental health can be identified.

We believe that if these competencies are used throughout the service delivery system, children and their families will receive the social and emotional support and services they need to effectively cope in our communities before the crisis point.

It is our sincere hope that by embedding these competencies within various and multiple personnel preparation programs and ongoing in-service opportunities, children and families will have their needs for early childhood and family mental health recognized and addressed wherever they go by thoroughly trained and informed caregivers.

## ***COMPETENCIES BY DOMAIN***

### **Philosophy & Professional Orientation**

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Professionals demonstrate knowledge of and the disposition toward using a family-centered, strengths- and outcomes-based collaborative approach for supporting the social and emotional development of children and their families. Individuals working with young children and their families possess self-knowledge of their own biases, values, strengths and vulnerabilities; conduct honest self-assessments of their current knowledge, skills and dispositions; and use the results to design individualized professional development plans. Effective communication skills that incorporate knowledge of adult learning styles are used in order to build positive relationships with families and colleagues as well as to supervise staff. Professionals understand and demonstrate the principles of teamwork and collaboration while behaving ethically, maintaining confidentiality, and training and consulting with child care and other service providers to support the mental health of young children and families.

## **Foundation Level Competencies**

### **A. Family-Centered, Strengths- and Outcomes-Based Philosophy**

1. Recognizes and appreciates the role relationships play in the context of overall child development.
2. Accepts families' knowledge about what is needed and what works best for them.
3. Follows a plan that is developed by the family to meet their own family goals.
4. Acknowledges family strengths and competencies especially in parenting.
5. Uses natural environments and everyday routines in a variety of settings to reinforce child's strengths.
6. Adheres to intervention strategies that are based on a comprehensive family-driven assessment process used to produce outcomes.

### **B. Self Knowledge, Self-Assessment, and Professional Development**

1. Examines own values, biases, strengths, feelings, and thoughts in working with families and children.
2. Recognizes that personal reactions may occur when working with young children and their families.
3. Demonstrates familiarity with the Early Childhood and Family Mental Health competencies.
4. Informally assesses own practices using Foundation Level Competencies and identifies areas of strength and needs.
5. Develops an individualized professional development plan and seeks appropriate professional development activities.
6. Seeks ongoing supervision, consultation and mentoring opportunities.

### **C. Ethics and Confidentiality**

1. Respects the dignity and individuality of children and families.
2. Provides caring and compassionate services to children and families with integrity and a humane attitude.
3. Explains why maintaining confidentiality is important, along with the importance of informed consent, parent rights, and complaint procedures.

4. Maintains confidentiality to work with families and agencies.
5. Understands and follows mandatory reporting laws.

### **D. Effective Communication Skills**

1. Demonstrates active listening skills.
2. Recognizes and accommodates different styles among adults of processing information, of communicating, and of interacting.
3. Utilizes honest, complete information with families and other service providers.
4. Communicates with appropriate non-verbal behavior and recognizes and interprets others' non-verbal behavior accurately.
5. Acknowledges any personal and professional boundaries with families and children being served.

### **E. Teamwork and Collaboration**

6. Develops collaborative relationships with families and service providers, including those with different philosophies and styles.
7. Contributes to ideas generated by the team.
8. Seeks assistance when facing conflicts related to teamwork.

## **Intermediate Level Competencies**

### **A. Family-Centered, Strengths- and Outcomes-Based Philosophy**

1. Promotes healthy parent-child relationships while respecting individual and cultural differences.
2. Applies families' knowledge about what is needed and what works best for them.
3. Supports and assists families in articulating and pursuing their own family goals.
4. Identifies and supports family's strengths and competencies in meeting family needs, especially in parenting.
5. Identifies and uses natural environments and everyday routines to reinforce child's strengths.

6. With supervision, identifies and utilizes strength-based frameworks, models, and strategies.
7. Describes and uses intervention strategies that are based on a family-driven comprehensive assessment process used to produce outcomes.

**B. Self Knowledge, Self-Assessment, and Professional Development**

1. Models and applies reflection to understand own relational responses to working with families and children.
2. Examines own practice as it relates to information about best practices and culturally sensitive practice.
3. Demonstrates familiarity with Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Competencies.
4. Informally assesses own practices using Intermediate Level competencies and identifies areas of strength and needs.
5. Develops objectives for an individualized professional development plan and seeks appropriate professional development activities, monitoring own progress.
6. Seeks ongoing supervision, consultation and mentoring opportunities.

**C. Ethics and Confidentiality**

1. Understands and demonstrates knowledge about various laws affecting service delivery and liability: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA); Family Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA); Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA); Act 504, etc.
2. Explains to families and others own responsibilities regarding adherence to mandatory reporting laws and procedures.

**D. Effective Communication Skills**

1. Demonstrates cultural competence in communicating and establishing effective relationships with families from various cultures.
2. Listens to and demonstrates valuing of family stories.

3. Offers information in engaging and natural ways while maintaining awareness of professional boundaries.
4. Evaluates a variety of communication techniques, and selects appropriate methods for the situation.

**E. Teamwork and Collaboration**

1. Coordinates service and support activities with others.
2. Demonstrates collaborative teaming techniques.
3. Uses conflict resolution and negotiation strategies.
4. Ensures family is included in collaborative relationships and present for teamwork.

**Advanced Level Competencies**

**A. Family-Centered, Strengths- and Outcomes-Based Philosophy**

1. Develops new ideas and solutions to meet challenges in providing effective family-centered services.
2. Designs assessments, interventions, individual child and family outcomes, and programs that build on family and child strengths.
3. Employs an outcomes-based approach to planning and applying interventions.
4. Assesses and uses findings to develop and refine outcomes and interventions, and to evaluate the quality of interventions.

**B. Self Knowledge, Self-Assessment, and Professional Development**

1. Supports staff to reflect on their own values, biases, and strengths through appropriate supervision practices.
2. Ensures consultation delivered by staff (and self) is culturally sensitive.
3. Reviews assessment tools and practices to ensure they have no or minimal cultural bias.
4. Demonstrates familiarity with these Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Competencies.

5. Informally assesses own practices using Advanced Level competencies and identifies areas of strength and needs.
6. Develops objectives for an individualized professional development plan and seeks appropriate professional development activities, monitoring own progress.
7. Models self-assessment and how to create individualized professional development plans.
8. Seeks and provides ongoing supervision, consultation and mentoring opportunities, especially for Intermediate Level staff.
9. Invites families to provide reflective feedback on professional practice.

**C. Ethics and Confidentiality**

1. Models how to provide caring, compassionate, and humane services to children and families.
2. Researches and assures staff and own compliance with laws and policies that govern ethical practice.
3. Provides consultation regarding child and family rights, confidentiality, mandatory reporting, and other appropriate laws.

**D. Effective Communication Skills**

1. Establishes and practices effective communication and reflection among professionals and colleagues as well as with families.
2. Practices open, honest, sensitive communication skills using jargon-free language.
3. Designs learning opportunities that reflect principles of child and adult learning and that are meaningful to children and adults.

**E. Teamwork and Collaboration**

1. Demonstrates group facilitation skills.
2. Demonstrates problem solving, negotiation, conflict resolution and mediation strategies.
3. Solicits, accepts, and provides consultation and feedback to teams and others

around meeting needs of children and families.

4. When consulting with child care and other service providers, uses a variety of approaches to help them reflect upon and discover their own ways to effectively support the mental health of young children and families.
5. Plans, implements, and monitors collaborative work across disciplines.

**Specialist Level Competencies**

**A. Family-Centered, Strengths- and Outcomes-Based Philosophy**

1. Establishes the climate for family/professional collaboration.
2. Assures staff have the knowledge, skills and resources to use a family-centered, strengths-based process for identifying desired outcomes and planning interventions.
3. Researches, teaches, and provides supervision about the use of family-centered, strengths-based, and outcomes-based approaches for assessment and intervention.
4. Designs programs that yield family satisfaction with cost-effective outcomes.

**B. Self Knowledge, Self-Assessment, Professional Development**

1. Uses influence and leadership to establish a culture of reflective practice with staff and teams.
2. Facilitates opportunities for staff to engage in reflective practices with others.
3. Promotes professional development opportunities for staff to understand various cultures and to develop cultural competence.
4. Establishes a system and provides support for staff to engage in self-assessment and professional development activities.
5. Demonstrates familiarity with these Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Competencies.
6. Informally assesses own practices using Specialist Level competencies and identifies areas of strength and needs.

7. Develops objectives for an individualized professional development plan, seeks appropriate professional development activities, and monitors own progress.
8. Seeks and provides ongoing supervision, consultation and mentoring opportunities, especially for Advanced Level staff.

**C. Ethics and Confidentiality**

1. Teaches staff about the importance of confidentiality and includes expectations related to confidentiality in supervision and evaluation of staff.
2. Provides training around mandatory reporting.
3. Provides opportunities for staff to examine their own ethics and to learn how to handle ethical dilemmas.

**D. Effective Communication Skills**

1. Promotes and facilitates opportunities for communication and reflective practices.
2. Provides training in communication and reflective practices.
3. Understands and uses systems to assure continuous quality improvement at the child, family and program levels.
4. Supervises personnel who work with and provide training to adults, and ensures that they use knowledge of adult learning styles in their communication and practices.

**E. Teamwork and Collaboration**

1. Teaches collaborative team processes, conflict resolution, negotiation, problem-solving and mediation skills.
2. Designs and sustains systems that support comprehensive cross-disciplinary collaboration.
3. Promotes collaboration among community resources.
4. Designs and analyzes evaluation of team processes.
5. Develops interagency contractual agreements, and participates on local and state interagency teams.

6. Provides administrative support and resources for collaborative work across disciplines.
7. Assist staff and others in learning team process skills.

**Family Systems**

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Professionals demonstrate knowledge of family characteristics, factors impacting family functions, and strategies for supporting families. In their work with families, professionals honor diversity within and among families. Professionals understand that changes in a family’s situation can affect a child’s emotional or social health and overall development. There is an understanding that parents’ childhood experiences can influence their child-rearing practices, also that mental health challenges of parents can influence their children’s development. Professionals recognize the value of working in partnership with families and others on child and family teams. They engage with families to maximize the use of informal and natural supports while being aware of cultural differences and demonstrating cultural sensitivity. Professionals understand and promote family leadership and self-advocacy.

**Foundation Level Competencies**

**A. Family Characteristics**

1. Recognizes parents and families as the experts with their children and in their own culture, that they are the child’s primary teacher.
2. Actively learns from the parents and family of the child.
3. Demonstrates knowledge of different family configurations.
4. Recognizes and identifies strength and risk factors that impact family functioning.
5. Reflects upon and assesses personal life experiences and how these impact interaction with families (own and others).
6. Demonstrates an awareness of how families grow and change over time.

7. Demonstrates ability to be non-judgmental with the variations in family characteristics.
8. Recognizes strengths in individuals and in the family unit, and employs strategies that build on them.

**B. Factors Impacting Family Function**

1. Demonstrates an awareness that parents' own childhood experiences may affect how they interact with their children.
2. Recognizes risk factors (e.g., depression, anxiety, substance abuse, violence, dissociation, etc.) in parents or caregivers that may adversely affect infant and child development.
3. Recognizes physical, developmental, environmental, and situational factors that affect families.

**C. Supporting Families**

1. Provides a respectful environment that encourages dialogue among family members and others involved in the care of their children.
2. Takes responsibility for own participation as a team member.
3. Helps families and caregivers find appropriate assistance through informal or natural supports and formal services when help is needed.
4. Demonstrates knowledge of utilizing on-going family routines for learning.
5. Elicits and uses family concerns, priorities and resources.
6. Identifies and builds upon the skills and knowledge of individual family members, extended family, and significant others.
7. Demonstrates an understanding of the impact of a family's culture, environment and community on the child.
8. Demonstrates acceptance, tolerance and an anti-bias perspective.
9. Demonstrates sensitivity to diversity issues with all interactions.
10. Informs families about, and helps them connect with, family support organizations.
11. Supports families to make their own referrals and requests for services.

12. Observes confidentiality protocols when working with families
13. Supports families to be involved as decision makers in their child's services

**Intermediate Level Competencies**

**A. Family Characteristics**

1. Explores with families, openly and non-judgmentally, cultural standards, observances and expectations that influence beliefs and child-rearing practices.
2. Obtains general knowledge of, and approaches to, family systems.

**B. Factors Impacting Family Function**

1. Refers parents to training opportunities to learn new skills.
2. Observes conditions that may require mental health intervention or assistance from other service providers, and makes a referral as appropriate.
3. Observes, assesses and provides services to the family as appropriate.

**C. Supporting Families**

1. Facilitates nurturing relationships between the child and significant service providers (e.g. child care providers) while maintaining and supporting the child's primary relationship with family.
2. Encourages family members to spend as much time as possible in their child's learning environment, and to contribute to planning and carrying out program activities.
3. Assists families in designing appropriate home-play environments for their children, and helps them locate low-cost materials.
4. Helps families identify – and encourages them to use – community resources and other natural supports for their children's learning, play, and physical activity.
5. Helps families connect with other families for informal support.
6. In collaboration with family members, supports and includes culturally relevant experiences in early childhood programs.

7. Demonstrates cultural competence in communicating with and establishing effective relationships with families from various cultures.
8. Secures translation services when needed.
9. Constructs classroom environment that reflects the culture of the children and families in and around it.
10. Identifies and supports family priorities in all levels of planning outcomes and strategies.
11. Models advocacy skills for families.
12. Employs service provider team-building strategies to coordinate services for children and families.

### **Advanced Level Competencies**

#### **A. Family Characteristics**

1. Provides opportunities for families and providers to explore and celebrate the diversity and customs reflected by families in the community.
2. Describes and implements policies that foster respect and inclusion of all children and families.
3. Uses genograms, family mapping and other family system tools with families to understand them.
4. Establishes broad understanding of theoretical frameworks for family interaction.

#### **B. Factors Impacting Family Function**

1. Assists parents to become aware of how their own childhood experiences affect their interaction with their children.
2. Designs training to help parents learn about child development and deal with the influence of their own child-rearing practices.
3. Refers and/or provides skill development training to parents.
4. Provides consultation to child care providers and other service agencies regarding family functioning.

#### **C. Supporting Families**

1. Provides consultation to teams using an evidence-based approach to working with families on anticipated outcomes.
2. Trains others to assist families.
3. Enhances young children's home-, center- or school-based programs by finding and using programs offered within the community.
4. Engages with families in a meaningful way to learn about family priorities to plan assessment, outcomes and interventions.
5. Develops and provides materials and trainings related to diversity issues for staff and community in order to promote cultural competence.
6. Ensures facilities and programs are culturally appropriate/relevant.
7. Provides opportunities for family members to fill positions of leadership within the community.
8. Demonstrates the ability to oversee staffs' work with families.
9. Identifies and shares with families information about the broader child development resources and systems (including schools) that may be of help.
10. Consults with families on how to negotiate and advocate for own services.

### **Specialist Level Competencies**

#### **A. Family Characteristics**

1. Designs and implements policies to honor family diversity.
2. Designs policies and training to promote the acceptance and inclusion of various family structures.
3. Applies resiliency research in developing assessment as well as assets-based planning.
4. Conducts independent research on family configuration and function.
5. Publishes and presents original body of knowledge regarding family characteristics.
6. Integrates research about family characteristics into practices, program and policy development.

7. Establishes and teaches from an extensive knowledge base of family characteristics.

#### **B. Factors Impacting Family Functions**

1. Identifies training needs for staff and other collaborators, including families.
2. Provides resources, training and supervision that recognize that parents' mental health affects the parent-child relationship and other connections.
3. Provides training on making referrals through a family-centered approach.
4. Designs training to provide opportunities for parents to learn new skills.

#### **C. Supporting Families**

1. Conducts and synthesizes research on effective home learning environments.
2. Evaluates family/provider team functioning.
3. Designs teams, including identifying team roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority, whether for programs, regions, or the state.
4. Collaboratively participates in evaluation and design of family support policies.
5. Works with the community to develop culturally responsive trainings and policies.
6. Promotes policy that supports cultural competence across all levels of service.
7. Designs and delivers leadership development activities for families.

### **Child Development**

Adult/child relationships are essential to the healthy growth and development of young children. Relationships play a primary role in the social and emotional development of young children. In this area, professionals demonstrate knowledge of child development and the factors affecting development, with a special focus on knowledge of young children's social and emotional development. This includes having knowledge of major theories of child development, including the scope and sequence of develop-

ment, and applying this knowledge in their practice. Professionals have an understanding about brain development and sensory processing, including the effects of sensory processing on cognitive, social and emotional development. They know how children develop language and other modes of communication, and understand the relationship of communication to children's cognitive, emotional and social development. Professionals understand differences in temperament and their impact on children's development, relationships and behaviors. They understand the impact of bonding and attachment on the development of nurturing relationships. Professionals nurture the development of children's interpersonal relationships. They value play and see play as an essential way young children engage and communicate with others, explore symbolically, and express themselves. Through working closely with young children and their families, professionals recognize the potential impact of specific environmental conditions on children's development, behavior and well-being.

#### **Foundation Level Competencies**

##### **A. Knowledge of Child Development**

1. Describes principles of growth and development.
2. Describes the holistic nature of early development including the role and importance of family interactions (including play).
3. Describes the sequence of development in various domains, and identifies developmental milestones.
4. Observes and uses knowledge of typical developmental progression, regression, and expectations to identify child's abilities and needs.
5. Recognizes atypical development and seeks the help of others to understand and address child's needs.
6. Summarizes the basic findings from brain development research.
7. Defines sensory processing, and recognizes the crucial role sensory exploration, and play have on children's development.

8. Describes the sequence of language development.
9. Observes children's language and recognizes possible language delays.
10. Demonstrates an awareness of own communication style.
11. Models the use of language and non-verbal communication to express feelings, establish interpersonal relations, and resolve problems.
12. Understands the importance of a language-rich and print-rich environment, and the need for families and teachers to read to young children.
13. Defines "temperament" and describes characteristics associated with various temperaments.
14. Identifies child's temperament based on observations of child's behavior.
15. Recognizes the important role imitation plays in young children's learning.

#### **B. Impact of Relationships**

1. Describes the bonding process and attachment.
2. Defines the components of a parent-child nurturing relationship.
3. Describes the potential impact of the loss of a primary caregiver on the child.
4. Recognizes the stress that transitions/loss of caregivers can cause children and that stress may affect behavior.
5. Responds appropriately to a child affected by stress.

#### **C. Social and Emotional Development**

1. Models warm, positive and nurturing interactions with children and families.
2. Uses positive guidance strategies.
3. Assists children to develop and use problem-solving and conflict resolution skills in order to resolve interpersonal conflicts.
4. Encourages and facilitates age-appropriate play and communication.
5. Discusses why play is important to children's development.
6. Includes opportunities for children to engage in pretend and symbolic play.

7. Appropriately engages in children's play.

#### **D. Impact of Environmental Factors**

1. Describes societal influences on child development (e.g., poverty, bullying, racism, homelessness, violence, etc.) and their possible impact on a child's development.
2. Analyzes the role of the media with children's development and behavior.
3. Demonstrates awareness of the child's family/group/class and cultural environments.
4. Recognizes the impact of own behaviors and emotions on children and families.

### **Intermediate Level Competencies**

#### **A. Knowledge of Child Development**

1. Describes the interaction and interdependence of the various developmental domains.
2. Identifies the characteristics and signs of atypical development, and makes appropriate referrals.
3. Employs a variety of methods to systematically observe, record, monitor, and document children's behaviors including completing and interpreting screening tools.
4. Identifies prevention strategies that influence healthy child development.
5. Uses knowledge of brain research to enhance children's development and to design learning environments.
6. Demonstrates familiarity with various intervention programs designed to correct sensory processing problems.
7. Describes the processes, principles, and dimensions of language and literacy development.
8. Describes the relationship between oral language and literacy development.
9. Plans activities that engage children in conversations with peers and adults, and that promote oral language development and early literacy.
10. Models using language to think through problems and to validate oneself.

11. Supports children to resolve conflicts with peers and express their emotions through language or other means of communication.
12. Recognizes the effect of culture on language (e.g., poverty, English as a second language).
13. Uses knowledge of the child's temperament to understand his/her approach to learning, behavior, and social interactions to plan appropriate activities.
14. Discusses child-parent temperament "match" with parents.
15. Recognizes that development is not even across domains.

#### **B. Impact of Relationships**

1. Demonstrates knowledge of the role relationships play in social/emotional development and specific positive and negative factors that influence attachment and bonding, and their effects.
2. Recognizes when an attachment or bonding problem exists.
3. Describes how an infant's characteristics (e.g., gender, health, appearance) contribute to and influence the bonding process.
4. Develops and implements plans that prepare children for transitions and /or loss of caregiver.
5. Interprets children's behaviors in the context of change and their need for stability and predictability.
6. Ensures that children who are experiencing loss and stress have access to appropriate therapy and supports.

#### **C. Social and Emotional Development**

1. Discusses children's social emotional development with parents and families.
2. Offers consultation to families/service providers about designing the learning environment and curriculum in ways that promote positive peer interactions and cooperative interactions.
3. Teaches children conflict resolution and problem solving strategies.
4. Demonstrates knowledge of age-appropriate levels of children's self-

awareness, problem-solving skills and reciprocal interactions.

5. Implements some of the social skills curricula that are available.
6. Identifies situations when referral for specific and intensive intervention strategies is needed and demonstrates awareness of where to make those referrals.
7. Plans a physical and social environment that supports children's play.
8. Uses appropriate strategies to engage and build upon children's play.
9. Shares strategies for facilitating play between parents and their children.

#### **D. Impact of Environmental Factors**

1. Describes influences of societal and environmental factors on stages of children's development from pre-natal through middle childhood, and on future parenting.
2. Distinguishes aspects of the child's ecological system (family, school, etc.) and their potential impact on development.
3. Makes referrals for assistance to appropriate agencies.

### **Advanced Level Competencies**

#### **A. Knowledge of Child Development**

1. Uses knowledge of typical and atypical child development and the individual child's and family assessment data to plan outcomes using developmentally appropriate strategies, interventions or environmental adaptations or modifications and accommodations.
2. Supervises staff to ensure their use of developmentally appropriate practices and intervention strategies to support and address child development outcomes.
3. Teaches staff, families and others about child development theories and the developmental scope and sequence of various domains within a holistic/intertwined nature of early development.
4. Uses screening tools and administers initial and ongoing strength-based as-

assessments to evaluate children's development in all developmental areas using strengths and priorities of family members.

5. Analyzes results of individual evaluations and relates to overall assessments.
6. Implements programs designed to enhance children's sensory processing, conferring with specialists as needed.
7. Supervises staff to ensure that opportunities for child-child and adult-child conversation are provided.
8. Uses and models intervention strategies related to communication and language difficulties and delays, conferring with specialists as needed.
9. Teaches families and staff strategies for promoting children's language development, and for increasing the child's use of language and other modes of communication when dealing with interpersonal and intra-personal issues.
10. Assists staff to analyze their own communication styles.
11. Discusses child temperament and attachment in the broader context of family dynamics and systems.
12. Summarizes the research on the impact of temperament on children's attachment and general social and emotional development.
13. Provides training and consultation on temperament and attachment.

#### **B. Impact of Relationships**

1. Demonstrates knowledge of the impact that parental relationships, expectations, fears and hopes as well as the environment have on the bonding process and on the child's subsequent motivation to engage with others in learning.
2. Demonstrates awareness of risk factors for attachment issues.
3. Develops and implements strategies to enhance attachment.
4. Provides in-depth caregiver consultation regarding issues of loss and transition.
5. Uses therapeutic approaches and demonstrates skills in working individually with children experiencing loss.

6. Uses current research on separation and loss in practice.

#### **C. Social and Emotional Development**

1. Uses, trains others to use, and evaluates various social skills curricula and intervention models or approaches.
2. Coaches parents and providers on ways to nurture young children's social and emotional development.
3. Uses knowledge of how to support children's development of positive interpersonal relationships when working with individual children, groups of children, or when providing consultation.
4. Assesses children's levels of play and parent-child play interactions through observation and other assessment methods.
5. Uses therapeutic play-based and other expressive therapies, conferring with specialists as needed.

#### **D. Impact of Environmental Factors**

1. Knows and uses tools and procedures for assessing environmental conditions and their impacts on children and families.
2. Teaches home visitors, providers, registered nurses, and others how to assess environmental conditions and their impact.
3. Generates specific interventions to correct adverse environmental factors and strengthen positive ones.

### **Specialist Level Competencies**

#### **A. Knowledge of Child Development**

1. Teaches the use and interpretation of assessments that evaluate children's development.
2. Designs specialized programs based on children's needs (e.g., for sensory processing help, etc.) and trains others to implement them.
3. Designs, provides, and/or supports professional development opportunities aligned with competencies for staff on all aspects of children's social and emo-

tional development, behaviors and well-being (e.g., temperament, resiliency, attachment).

#### **B. Impact of Relationships**

1. Supervises, evaluates, and designs interventions related to attachment, social support, self-control, and sense of competence.
2. Develops and teaches therapeutic approaches for helping children who are experiencing loss.

#### **C. Social and Emotional Development**

1. Develops social skills curricula.
2. Teaches and supervises staff and consults with others on the use of natural environments and daily routines as appropriate strategies for finding what interests the child and using these interests as interventions that nurture young children's development of positive interpersonal relationships.
3. Provides supervision related to play therapy and other expressive therapies.
4. Teaches theories of therapeutic play-based and other expressive strategies.

#### **D. Impact of Environmental Factors**

1. Teaches and supervises staff to recognize the impact of specific environmental conditions on children's development, behavior, and well-being.

### **Screening & Assessment**

Professionals understand that assessment is an ongoing process that explores both the unique needs and the strengths of children in a way that is family-directed and designed to determine the resources, priorities and concerns of the family related to enhancing the development of the child. The information gathered from assessment is used to plan outcomes and to determine appropriate early intervention strategies that are meaningful to the child and family. Families and professionals work together to gather individualized child and family assessment information through formal and informal methods that informs diagnosis, intervention, and consultation. Professionals can articulate the purposes

and methods of formal and informal assessment, conduct assessments appropriate to their work setting and level of skill, and implement, evaluate and share results. They describe the process, benefits, limitations of assessments for children and families. Professionals implement assessments that are culturally relevant and appropriate to the child, family and setting.

### **Foundation Level Competencies**

#### **A. General Knowledge of Screening & Assessment**

1. Understands that the intention of an ongoing process of assessment is to best determine both the unique needs and the strengths of children across all developmental areas.
2. Familiar with and understands the use of assessment tools that are most commonly used to assess young children.
3. Knowledgeable about child development and how very young children grow and learn.
4. Recognizes that behavior is a form of communication.
5. Understands that assessment for early childhood and family mental health focuses on the child in relationship to others, with an emphasis on the child's interactions with parents and other trusted caregivers, siblings and/or other key people in the child's life.
6. Understands the value of conducting initial and ongoing assessment in the context of the child's natural environment, including within the child's day-to-day family routines and in his/her early care and education setting.
7. Recognizes family values and cultural diversity and how this may affect the assessment process.
8. Understands that the general process of assessment includes gathering and using information from a variety of people and methods.
9. Recognizes the bias inherent in – and the impact of one's own role on - an assessment process.
10. Requests supervision or consultation regarding the need for assessment.

**B. Implementation of Screening & Assessment**

1. Listens to family members regarding their perspectives on observed behaviors of their child and desired outcomes.
2. Recognizes the primary importance of attachment and the parent-child relationship and is attuned to parent-child relationship dynamics which indicate strengths or concerns.
3. Accurately describes observed behaviors as an informal assessment measure.
4. Relates findings from observations and other assessment methods to knowledge of child development.
5. Requests supervision to reflect on assessment results and to improve own interactions with child and family.

**Intermediate Level Competencies****A. General Knowledge of Screening & Assessment**

1. Recognizes that behavior is a response or reaction to many factors such as environmental, biological, social, emotional, etc.
2. Understands assessment as an ongoing, dynamic process of discovering the issues and what works well for the child and family.
3. Recognizes that assessment is a collaborative process between the person conducting the assessment and the child, family, and others most familiar with the child.
4. Understands the benefits and limitations of formal and informal assessment for children and families.
5. Demonstrates basic knowledge of ethical guidelines and legal requirements related to the assessment process.
6. Recognizes the types of formal and informal assessment relevant for different settings and purposes.
7. Describes the potential impact of the assessment environment on the results.

**B. Implementation of Screening & Assessment**

1. Seeks supervision to determine when a child's atypical behavior may warrant a formal assessment.

2. Conducts formal and informal assessments (e.g., observation, checklists) in family and in early care and education settings.
3. Is able to identify and articulate strengths and concerns in the parent-child relationship and recommend further evaluation.
4. Integrates information from family and professionals into assessment process.
5. Communicates strengths and concerns from assessments with family, supervisor and team.
6. With supervision, applies assessment results in determining child outcomes, early interventions and strategies to best meet the child's needs.

**Advanced Level Competencies****A. General Knowledge of Screening & Assessment**

1. Ensures that assessments are family-directed and designed to determine the resources, priorities and concerns of the family related to enhancing the development of the child.
2. Recognizes typical early childhood developmental accomplishments and assets as well as behavioral and other concerns such as attachment, social support, self-control, initiative and mastery.
3. Researches and/or has a comprehensive understanding of specific assessment types, tools, and procedures for children and families.
4. Supervises staff (particularly Intermediate Level) in determining which screening and assessment tools to consider.
5. Provides information to families, professionals and teams on the purposes, benefits and limitations of formal and informal assessment.
6. Provides information to families, professionals and teams on legal and ethical guidelines and regulatory processes related to formal assessment.

## **B. Implementation of Screening & Assessment**

1. Facilitates decisions with families, professionals and teams regarding assessment.
2. Develops an assessment plan (including methods and tools of data collection to be used) based on referral issues.
3. Conducts formal and informal assessments using interviews; checklists; health, nutrition, and medical information; and other measurement tools and observations that can also be interventions for the family.
4. Identifies need for specialized assessment and further evaluation in specialized areas.
5. Is able to specifically assess the parent-child relationship and attachment using formal and informal techniques such as observation, and interview. Uses the DC 0-3 Parent Infant Relationship Global Assessment Scale (PIRGAS) in the assessment and diagnostic process. May use specific formal protocols such as The Crowell, The Marschak and/or the Emotional Availability Scale, with specific training and supervision.
6. Supervises staff (especially Intermediate Level staff) doing assessments.
7. Interprets assessment results for the purpose of diagnosis and making recommendations about treatments or interventions.
8. Develops summary report, with recommendations, for family and team.
9. Consults with families, other professionals and team, to review assessment results and recommend outcomes and a plan to achieve the outcomes in accordance with best practices.
10. Monitors ongoing implementation of assessment recommendations in programs and services.
11. As part of ongoing assessment process, reflects on current implementation to determine if progress is being made and, if it is not, adjusts practices accordingly.

## **Specialist Level Competencies**

### **A. General Knowledge of Screening & Assessment**

1. Researches and disseminates information on best practices in assessment.
2. Develops and/or trains others to use specialized assessment instruments.
3. Develops policies and training to encourage the use and interpretation of data and assessment in programs and services on an ongoing basis.

### **B. Implementation of Screening & Assessment**

1. Administers specialized assessments and evaluations in diverse settings.
2. Specifically assesses attachment using formal and informal techniques such as observation, and interview. Utilizes all axis of the DC 0-3, including the PIRGAS in assessment and diagnosis, as well as protocols for which they have been trained including but not limited to The Crowell, The Marschak and/or the Emotional Availability Scale.
3. Conducts program and system evaluations and assessments.

## **Addressing Challenges**

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Professionals demonstrate knowledge of risk and resiliency factors, the use of strategies for working with vulnerable and identified populations, and ways for promoting effective transitions. They recognize the impact of stress in general and know how and when to explore risk and resiliency factors in children and families. Professionals use multidisciplinary therapeutic approaches when working with children and families experiencing significant challenges. These challenges may include – but are not limited to – such situations as families in transition, developmental differences and delays, child behaviors, teen parenting, parent substance abuse, parent illness or disability, families in crisis or extreme stress, refugee and immigrant families, trauma, child abuse (including sexual abuse), child neglect, and domestic violence. Professionals provide guidance to optimize transitions across developmental stages as well as transitions across settings and/or providers.

## **Foundation Level Competencies**

### **A. Risk and Resilience Factors in Children and Families**

1. Describes the characteristics of a resilient child.
2. Knows about resiliency and risk factors of children and families.
3. Employs practices that build children's resiliency.
4. Recognizes families and/or children who may be at risk and contributes to decisions around referral to appropriate services/supports.

### **B. Specialized Knowledge for Working with Vulnerable and Identified Populations**

1. Provides quality direct care and services to children and families living with challenges.
2. Uses strengths-based and family-centered non-judgmental language and approach (with supervision).
3. Supports families and children by using empathic listening skills.
4. Demonstrates competence in engaging with family in discussion about issues regarding the child's development.
5. Supports families' willingness to address issues and to learn new strategies.
6. Recognizes own learning needs and participates actively in supervision and training about these needs.
7. With support from supervisor, brainstorms adaptations in the child's setting in order to best support the child's development and growth.
8. Develops materials (with supervision) for the classroom or other environments to best support the child.
9. Follows child and family intervention plans after they are written and modeled by a supervisor.
10. Reviews assessment results with supervisor, discerns which aspects are attributable to "typical" and "atypical" development, and discusses possible interventions.
11. Develops interventions with specific guidance from supervisor and input from the family ( e.g., child requires

visual aids, so staff member could brainstorm appropriate visual aids with supervisor before making them).

12. Demonstrates knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of varied participants on a child/family team.
13. Provides input to child and family team about child and family issues.
14. Provides feedback, qualitative information, and objective data regarding child progress toward outcomes, planning and strategies used when system for feedback is provided.

### **C. Effective Transitions**

1. Demonstrates knowledge about normative transitions for children and families.
2. Helps families recognize and address new behaviors associated with normative development and growth.
3. Supports families to promote effective transitions across settings and situations.

## **Intermediate Level Competencies**

### **A. Risk and Resilience Factors in Children and Families**

1. Knows about resiliency and risk factors of families and children and how to assess such factors.
2. Recognizes families and/or children who may be at risk and assesses them for it.
3. With supervision, uses findings from assessments to plan outcomes and interventions that build resiliency.

### **B. Specialized Knowledge for Working with Vulnerable and Identified Populations**

1. For other staff, models quality direct care and services for children and families.
2. Demonstrates general knowledge and beginning application of broad approaches for working with children with specific disorders. (Approaches might use visual supports, applied behavioral analysis, and/or therapeutic play in the classroom environment.)
3. Seeks further supervision and consultation regarding therapeutic approaches.

4. With supervision, implements various therapeutic approaches for children and families, as appropriate.
5. Seeks resources for additional therapeutic interventions, as needed.
6. Provides input to child and family team to develop interventions that support children and families.
7. With supervision, develops and implements child and family plans.
8. Develops materials needed to carry out child and family plans.
9. With supervision, and based upon assessment results, develops adaptations to environment that facilitate positive child/family outcomes.
10. With supervision, collects ongoing assessment data (qualitative, quantitative) that reflects progress toward goals.
11. With supervision, reports results of data collection to family and child/family team, for use in further intervention planning.

#### **C. Effective Transitions**

1. Provides information to staff (especially Foundation Level staff) about normative developmental transitions.
2. Constructs environments supportive of normative developmental transitions.
3. Collects and reports on relevant information for receiving teams in advance of transition.
4. With supervision, provides follow up with family and receiving team after transition to support any post-transition issues.

### **Advanced Level Competencies**

#### **A. Risk and Resilience Factors in Children and Families**

1. Designs interventions and programs that build assets and reduce risk factors.
2. Provides training and consultation to own staff, other service providers and families about issues related to risk and resiliency and when to assess them in children and families.

3. Demonstrates knowledge of community resources designed to address risk and resiliency factors.

#### **B. Specialized Knowledge for Working with Vulnerable and Identified Populations**

1. Provides intensive individualized interventions for families and children.
2. Demonstrates ability to utilize multidisciplinary therapeutic approaches.
3. Facilitates child and family team meetings and team process.
4. Recommends intervention strategies to child/family team participants.
5. Develops child and family plan for child/family team appropriate to settings, i.e., childcare classroom, medical home, etc.
6. Creates and/or uses a system for ongoing assessment and tracking of progress toward the desired child and family outcomes.
7. Provides feedback to child/family teams regarding progress and helps them access further evaluation if needed.
8. Supervises staff (especially Intermediate Level staff) to, in partnership with the family, evaluate effectiveness of interventions and approaches.
9. Provides training (preferably with a family partner) on multidisciplinary process and approaches (including the materials needed) to serving families and children and their teams.
10. Provides supervision and support to Foundation Level and Intermediate Level and other on-line staff (like interns) working with families and children in various settings.
11. Provides training to staff about the challenges faced by children and families.
12. Seeks consultation with appropriate specialist to obtain specific direction and guidance when the concern is outside area of expertise.

#### **C. Effective Transitions**

1. Provides trainings in normative developmental transitions.

2. Provides supervision to staff (especially Intermediate Level staff) about normative transitions.
3. Educates families about normative transitions and possible responses to them.
4. Educates child/family team about transitions and their impacts upon families and children.
5. Provides consultation to staff and child/family team in identifying transition needs and resources.
6. Develops protocols for transition planning across settings.

### **Specialist Level Competencies**

#### **A. Risk and Resilience Factors in Children and Families**

1. Teaches, trains, consults and guides policy and practice regarding risk, resiliency and family support approaches.

#### **B. Specialized Knowledge for Working with Vulnerable and Identified Populations**

1. Provides specialized therapeutic services to children and families.
2. Educates and consults with child/family team about best practices for intervention with various kinds of child and family challenges.
3. Provides trainings (preferably with a family partner) and consultation about the needs of families living with challenges.
4. Provides supervision, consultation and training for clinicians (especially of Advanced Level) about effective interventions with various kinds of child and family challenges.

#### **C. Effective Transitions**

1. Promotes best practices and policies that support child development and transitions.
2. Provides advanced trainings and supervision to staff (especially of Advanced Level) about transitions.

## **Systems Resources**

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Professionals demonstrate knowledge of resources, systems, laws, policies and procedures. They identify and access family, parenting, child development and community resources. They take an active advocacy role to change systems on behalf of children and families. Professionals understand and effectively work within and across service systems, including within the laws, policies and procedures of those systems. Professionals engage in program design, implementation and evaluation to assure effective child and family services.

### **Foundation Level Competencies**

#### **A. Resources and Systems**

1. Understands own responsibilities in connection with others in a family-centered system of care and seeks out the knowledge and expertise of family members as well as professionals across disciplines.
2. Seeks supervision or technical assistance about family, parenting and community resources and their impact on children and families, professionals and colleagues.
3. Identifies resources available within own workplace/agency/community.
4. Seeks assistance to identify and access entitlement programs and other services that may be helpful for families.

#### **B. Laws, Policies and Procedures**

1. Understands and follows policies and procedures that relate to job responsibilities, including how to maintain safety while on the job.
2. Demonstrates awareness of laws and policies that govern practice beyond the scope of the agency or organization (e.g. see Ethics and Confidentiality under Philosophy and Professional Orientation).

#### **C. Program Planning and Evaluation**

1. Engages in strategic planning with program staff.
2. Provides input on program development.

3. Participates in outcome-based evaluation and program needs assessments.
4. Assists in publicizing programs to children and families and communities.
5. Maintains records for program budget, if applicable.

### **Intermediate Level Competencies**

#### **A. Resources and Systems**

1. Understands roles of various family members, professionals and resources within the system.
2. Recognizes how the unique contributions of different services within a system can impact the emotional, social and cognitive development of children.
3. Seeks assistance from colleagues/agencies/supervisors regarding resource availability.
4. Provides referrals for services.
5. Identifies legal and advocacy resources and information and shares information about resources with family members, staff and/or community partners.
6. Provides case management/service coordination to actively support families in a coordinated search for services and supports that they feel will help their child/family.
7. If necessary, helps families obtain and complete applications for services to which they may be entitled (e.g., Social Security, Vocational Rehabilitation, social services: like food stamps, housing subsidy programs, Medicaid, education and special education programs).

#### **B. Laws, Policies and Procedures**

1. Explains responsibilities regarding policies and procedures of the workplace, including safety on the job.
2. Interprets and applies laws pertaining to service delivery and liability (e.g., see Ethics and Confidentiality under Philosophy and Professional Orientation)

#### **C. Program Planning and Evaluation**

1. Recognizes the importance of and participates in strategic planning for programs.
2. Assists in designing community needs assessment and outcome-based program evaluation.
3. Assists in communicating program changes and their rationale to families and stakeholders.
4. Assists in developing program budget and operates within that budget, if applicable.
5. Develops and disseminates materials for marketing programs to children and families and communities.
6. Assists in development of program policies and tools (e.g., handbooks, contracts, forms), if applicable.

### **Advanced Level Competencies**

#### **A. Resources and Systems**

1. Provides supervision or technical assistance to staff who are seeking and brokering services and/or providing case management services.
2. Engages in creative problem-solving to meet needs when existing policies or resources do not match the specific needs of families and young children.
3. Participates in or leads agency, regional or state level systems planning teams.
4. Provides technical assistance to assure that information about new and existing resources and entitlement programs are known by staff and community partners.
5. Seeks needed resources by working with community and state partners to identify funding opportunities and new entitlement programs.
6. Participates in advocacy activities and supports staff in advocating for families.
7. Identifies persistent challenges such as gaps in services or general support families that may require systems change.
8. Practices service integration to meet the individualized needs of families.
9. Develops interagency agreements to support families.

### **B. Laws, Policies and Procedures**

1. Navigates laws, rules and policies that may have an impact on coordination of services and on safety of staff while on the job.
2. Addresses legal issues applicable to provider's setting.
3. Participates in policy development for own agency or organization.

### **C. Program Planning and Evaluation**

1. Uses outcome-based evaluation and community needs assessments in strategic planning.
2. Facilitates strategic planning for program design and evaluation.
3. Identifies and provides training about use of program best practices in supporting children and families.
4. Develops and oversees program budgets and operates within budget, if applicable.
5. Writes grants and seeks additional resources for program development.
6. Develops policies and procedures.

## **Specialist Level Competencies**

### **A. Resources and Systems**

1. Builds effective working relationships and linkages with leaders who represent a wide range of community, state and national resources.
2. Provides leadership in interagency policy development, influencing the change or creation of new policies to make resources available to meet individualized needs of families.
3. Teaches, mentors and provides consultation regarding systems issues and best practices.
4. Provides leadership, including expert testimony, in advocating for systems change and resources.
5. Evaluates impact of new resources on desired community outcomes.
6. Integrates community resources and entitlement programs into service planning and delivery.

### **B. Laws, Policies and Procedures**

1. Articulates and provides expertise about application of laws.
2. Provides leadership and participates in setting state and national policy.

### **C. Program Planning and Evaluation**

1. Designs and initiates outcome-based planning processes and evaluations, including family and community needs assessments to plan for resource development and/or research projects to determine whether programs and practices show evidence of effectiveness.
2. Provides consultation on strategic planning processes.
3. Designs process and content evaluation tools.
4. Provides written reports on effectiveness of continuous improvement strategies regarding child, family and program outcomes.
5. Writes and implements grant projects to test and improve services for children and families.
6. Integrates research on best practices, community needs assessments and program evaluations to inform program development.
7. Develops and monitors program budgets, if applicable.

## **COMPETENCIES BY LEVEL**

### **Foundation Level**

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Qualified personnel interact with young children and their families, knowing (with supervision) when to seek and implement feedback about mental health issues. They are likely to be direct service providers (including paraprofessionals) in child care, education, health, or professionals from related fields.

## **Philosophy & Professional Orientation**

### **A. Family-Centered, Strengths- and Outcomes-Based Philosophy**

1. Recognizes and appreciates the role relationships play in the context of overall child development.
2. Accepts families' knowledge about what is needed and what will work best for them.
3. Follows a plan that is developed by the family to meet their own family goals.
4. Acknowledges family strengths and competencies especially in parenting.
5. Uses natural environments and everyday routines in a variety of settings to reinforce child's strengths.
6. Adheres to intervention strategies that are based on a comprehensive family-driven assessment process used to produce outcomes.

### **B. Self Knowledge, Self-Assessment, and Professional Development**

1. Examines own values, biases, strengths, feelings, and thoughts in working with families and children.
2. Recognizes that personal reactions may occur when working with young children and their families.
3. Demonstrates familiarity with these Early Childhood and Family Mental Health competencies.
4. Informally assesses own practices using Foundation Level competencies and identifies areas of strength and needs.
5. Develops an individualized professional development plan and seeks appropriate professional development activities.
6. Seeks ongoing supervision, consultation and mentoring opportunities.

### **C. Ethics and Confidentiality**

1. Respects the dignity and individuality of children and families.
2. Provides caring and compassionate services to children and families with integrity and a humane attitude.
3. Explains why maintaining confidentiality is important, along with the impor-

tance of informed consent, parent rights, and complaint procedures.

4. Maintains confidentiality to work with families and agencies.
5. Understands and follows mandatory reporting laws.

### **D. Effective Communication Skills**

1. Demonstrates active listening skills.
2. Recognizes, accommodates and models different styles among adults of processing information, of communicating, and of interacting.
3. Utilizes honest, complete information with families and other service providers.
4. Communicates with appropriate non-verbal behavior and recognizes and interprets others' non-verbal behavior accurately.
5. Acknowledges any personal and professional boundaries with families and children being served.

### **E. Teamwork and Collaboration**

1. Develops collaborative relationships with families and service providers, including those with different philosophies and styles.
2. Contributes to ideas generated by the team.
3. Seeks assistance when facing conflicts related to teamwork.

## **Family Systems**

### **A. Family Characteristics**

1. Recognizes parents and families as the experts with their children and in their own culture, that they are the child's primary teacher.
2. Actively learns from the parents and family of the child.
3. Demonstrates knowledge of different family configurations.
4. Recognizes and identifies strength and risk factors that impact functioning families (own and others).
5. Reflects upon and assesses personal life experiences and how these impact interaction with families (own and others).

6. Demonstrates an awareness of how families grow and change over time.
7. Demonstrates ability to be non-judgmental with the variations in family characteristics.
8. Recognizes strengths in individuals and in the family unit, and employs strategies that build on them.

#### **B. Factors Impacting Family Function**

1. Demonstrates awareness that parents own childhood experiences may affect how they interact with their children.
2. Recognizes risk factors (e.g., depression, anxiety, substance abuse, violence, dissociation, etc.) in parents or caregivers that may adversely affect infant and child development.
3. Recognizes physical, developmental, environmental, and situational factors that affect families.

#### **C. Supporting Families**

1. Provides a respectful environment that encourages dialogue among family members and others involved in the care of their children.
2. Takes responsibility for own participation as a team member.
3. Helps families and caregivers find appropriate assistance through informal or natural supports and formal services when help is needed.
4. Demonstrates knowledge of utilizing on-going family routines for learning.
5. Elicits and uses family concerns, priorities and resources.
6. Identifies and builds upon the skills and knowledge of individual family members, extended family, and significant others.
7. Demonstrates an understanding of the impact of a family's culture, environment and community on the child.
8. Demonstrates acceptance, tolerance and an anti-bias perspective.
9. Demonstrates sensitivity to diversity issues with all interactions.
10. Informs families about, and helps them connect with, family support organizations.

11. Supports families to make their own referrals and requests for services.
12. Observes confidentiality protocols when working with families
13. Supports families to be involved as decision makers in their child's services.

### **Child Development**

#### **A. Knowledge of Child Development**

1. Describes principles of growth and development.
2. Describes the holistic nature of early development including the role and importance of family interactions (including play).
3. Describes the sequence of development in various domains, and identifies developmental milestones.
4. Observes and uses knowledge of typical developmental progression, regression, and expectations to identify child's abilities and needs.
5. Recognizes atypical development and seeks the help of others to understand and address child's needs.
6. Summarizes the basic findings from brain development research.
7. Defines sensory processing, and recognizes the crucial role sensory exploration, and play have on children's development.
8. Describes the sequence of language development.
9. Observes children's language and recognizes possible language delays.
10. Demonstrates an awareness of own communication style.
11. Models the use of language and non-verbal communication to express feelings, establish interpersonal relations, and resolve problems.
12. Understands the importance of a language-rich and print-rich environment, and the need for families and teachers to read to young children.
13. Defines "temperament" and describes characteristics associated with various temperaments.
14. Identifies child's temperament based on observations of child's behavior.

15. Recognizes the important role imitation plays in young children's learning.

**B. Impact of Relationships**

1. Describes the bonding process and attachment.
2. Defines the components of a parent-child nurturing relationship.
3. Describes the potential impact of the loss of a primary caregiver on the child.
4. Recognizes the stress that transitions/loss of caregivers can cause children and that stress may affect behavior.
5. Responds appropriately to a child affected by stress.

**C. Social and Emotional Development**

1. Models warm, positive and nurturing interactions with children and families.
2. Uses positive guidance strategies.
3. Assists children to develop and use problem-solving and conflict resolution skills in order to resolve interpersonal conflicts.
4. Encourages and facilitates age-appropriate play and communication.
5. Discusses why play is important to children's development.
6. Includes opportunities for children to engage in pretend and symbolic play.
7. Appropriately engages in children's play.

**D. Impact of Environmental Factors**

1. Describes societal influences on child development (e.g., poverty, bullying, racism, homelessness, violence etc.) and their possible impact on a child's development.
2. Analyzes the role of the media with children's development and behavior.
3. Demonstrates awareness of the child's family/group/class and cultural environments.
4. Recognizes the impact of own behaviors and emotions on children and families.

**Screening & Assessment**

**A. General Knowledge of Screening & Assessment**

1. Understands that the intention of an ongoing process of assessment is to best determine both the unique needs and the strengths of children across all developmental areas.
2. Familiar with and understands the use of assessment tools that are most commonly used to assess young children.
3. Knowledgeable about child development and how very young children grow and learn.
4. Recognizes that behavior is a form of communication.
5. Understands that assessment for early childhood and family mental health focuses on the child in relationship to others, with an emphasis on the child's interactions with parents and other trusted caregivers, siblings and/or other key people in the child's life.
6. Understands the value of conducting initial and ongoing assessment in the context of the child's natural environment, including within the child's day-to-day family routines and in his/her early care and education setting.
7. Recognizes family values and cultural diversity and how this may affect the assessment process.
8. Understands that the general process of assessment includes gathering and using information from a variety of people and methods.
9. Recognizes the bias inherent in – and the impact of one's own role on – the assessment process.
10. Requests supervision or consultation regarding the need for assessment.

**B. Implementation of Screening & Assessment**

1. Listens to family members regarding their perspectives on observed behaviors of their child and desired outcomes.
2. Recognizes the primary importance of attachment and the parent-child relationship and is attuned to parent-child relationship dynamics which indicate strengths or concerns.

3. Accurately describes observed behaviors as an informal assessment measure.
4. Relates findings from observations and other assessment methods to knowledge of child development.
5. Requests supervision to reflect on assessment results and to improve own interactions with child and family.

## **Addressing Challenges**

### **A. Risk and Resilience Factors in Children and Families**

1. Describes the characteristics of a resilient child.
2. Knows about resiliency and risk factors in children and families.
3. Employs practices that build children's resiliency.
4. Recognizes families and/or children who may be at risk and contributes to decisions around referral to appropriate services/supports.

### **B. Specialized Knowledge for Working with Vulnerable and Identified Populations**

1. Provides quality direct care and services to children and families living with challenges.
2. Uses strengths-based and family-centered non-judgmental language and approach (with supervision).
3. Supports families and children by using empathic listening skills.
4. Demonstrates competence in engaging with family in discussion about issues regarding the child's development.
5. Supports families' willingness to address issues and to learn new strategies.
6. Recognizes own learning needs and participates actively in supervision and training about these needs.
7. With support from supervisor, brainstorms adaptations in the child's setting in order to best support the child's development and growth.
8. Develops materials (with supervision) for the classroom or other environments to best support the child.

9. Follows child and family intervention plans after they are written and modeled by a supervisor.
10. Reviews assessment results with supervisor, discerns which aspects are attributable to "typical" and "atypical" development, and discusses possible interventions.
11. Develops interventions with specific guidance from supervisor and input from the family ( e.g., child requires visual aids, so staff member could brainstorm appropriate visual aids with supervisor before making them).
12. Demonstrates knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of varied participants on a child/family team.
13. Provides input to child and family team about child and family issues.
14. Provides feedback, qualitative information, and objective data regarding child progress toward outcomes, planning and strategies used when system for feedback is provided.

### **C. Effective Transitions**

1. Demonstrates knowledge about normative transitions for children and families.
2. Helps families recognize and address new behaviors associated with normative development and growth.
3. Supports families to promote effective transitions across settings and situations.

## **Systems Resources**

### **A. Resources and Systems**

1. Understands own responsibilities in connection with others in a family centered system of care and seeks out the knowledge and expertise of family members as well as professionals across disciplines.
2. Seeks supervision or technical assistance about family, parenting and community resources and their impact on children and families, professionals and colleagues.
3. Identifies resources available within own workplace/agency/community.

4. Seeks assistance to identify and access entitlement programs and other services that may be helpful for families.

#### **B. Laws, Policies and Procedures**

1. Understands and follows policies and procedures that relate to job responsibilities, including how to maintain safety while on the job.
2. Demonstrates awareness of laws and policies that govern practice beyond the scope of the agency or organization (e.g. see Ethics and Confidentiality under Philosophy and Professional Orientation).

#### **C. Program Planning and Evaluation**

1. Engages in strategic planning with program staff.
2. Provides input on program development.
3. Participates in outcome-based evaluation and program needs assessments.
4. Assists in publicizing programs to children and families and communities.
5. Maintains records for program budget, if applicable.

### **INTERMEDIATE LEVEL**

Qualified personnel provide ongoing services and supports to particular children and families, addressing their mental health needs in a more self-directed way than personnel at the Foundation Level. They generally act independently and review their decisions and actions with a supervisor. These personnel are likely to be direct service providers in child care, education, health, special education, or mental health (paraprofessionals), or professionals from related fields.

#### **Philosophy & Professional Orientation**

##### **A. Family-Centered, Strengths- and Outcomes-Based Philosophy**

1. Promotes healthy parent-child relationships while respecting individual and cultural differences.

2. Applies families' knowledge about what is needed and what works best for them.
3. Supports and assists families in articulating and pursuing their own family goals.
4. Identifies and supports family's strengths and competencies in meeting family needs, especially parenting.
5. Identifies and uses natural environments and everyday routines to reinforce child's strengths.
6. With supervision, identifies and utilizes strength-based frameworks, models, and strategies.
7. Adheres to intervention strategies that are based on a family-driven comprehensive assessment process used to produce outcomes.

##### **B. Self Knowledge, Self-Assessment, and Professional Development**

1. Models and applies reflection to understand own relational responses to working with families and children.
2. Examines own practice as it relates to information about best practices and culturally sensitive practice.
3. Demonstrates familiarity with these Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Competencies.
4. Informally assesses own practices using Intermediate Level competencies and identifies areas of strength and needs.
5. Develops objectives for an individualized professional development plan and seeks appropriate professional development activities, monitoring own progress.
6. Seeks ongoing supervision, consultation and mentoring opportunities.

##### **C. Ethics and Confidentiality**

1. Understands and demonstrates knowledge about various laws affecting service delivery and liability: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA); Family Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA); Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA); Act 504, etc.

2. Explains to families and others own responsibilities regarding adherence to mandatory reporting laws and procedures.

#### **D. Effective Communication Skills**

1. Demonstrates cultural competence in communicating and establishing effective relationships with families from various cultures.
2. Listens to and demonstrates valuing of family stories.
3. Offers information in engaging and natural ways while maintaining awareness of professional boundaries.
4. Evaluates a variety of communication techniques, and selects appropriate methods for the situation.

#### **E. Teamwork and Collaboration**

1. Coordinates service and support activities with others.
2. Demonstrates collaborative teaming techniques.
3. Uses conflict resolution and negotiation strategies.
4. Ensures family is included in collaborative relationships and present for teamwork.

### **Family Systems**

#### **A. Family Characteristics**

1. Explores with families, openly and non-judgmentally, cultural standards, observances and expectations that influence beliefs and child-rearing practices.
2. Obtains general knowledge of, and approaches to, family systems.

#### **B. Factors Impacting Family Function**

1. Refers parents to training opportunities to learn new skills.
2. Observes conditions that may require mental health intervention or assistance from other service providers, and makes a referral, as appropriate.
3. Observes, assesses and provides services to the family as appropriate.

#### **C. Supporting Families**

1. Facilitates nurturing relationships between the child and significant service providers (e.g. child care providers) while maintaining and supporting the child's primary relationship with family.
2. Encourages family members to spend as much time as possible in their child's learning environment, and to contribute to planning and carrying out program activities.
3. Assists families in designing appropriate home-play environments for their children, and helps them locate low-cost materials.
4. Helps families identify - and encourages them to use - community resources and other natural supports for their children's learning, play, and physical activity.
5. Helps families connect with other families for informal support.
6. In collaboration with family members, supports and includes culturally relevant experiences in early childhood programs.
7. Demonstrates cultural competence in communicating with and establishing effective relationships with families from various cultures.
8. Secures translation services when needed.
9. Constructs classroom environment that reflects the culture of the children and families in and around it.
10. Identifies and supports family priorities in all levels of planning outcomes and strategies.
11. Models advocacy skills for families.
12. Employs service provider team-building strategies to coordinate services for children and families.

### **Child Development**

#### **A. Knowledge of Child Development**

1. Describes the interaction and interdependence of the various developmental domains.

2. Identifies the characteristics and signs of atypical development, and makes appropriate referrals.
3. Employs a variety of methods to systematically observe, record, monitor, and document children's behaviors including completing and interpreting screening tools.
4. Identifies prevention strategies that influence healthy child development.
5. Uses knowledge of brain research to enhance children's development and to design learning environments.
6. Demonstrates familiarity with various intervention programs designed to correct sensory processing problems.
7. Describes the processes, principles, and dimensions of language and literacy development.
8. Describes the relationship between oral language and literacy development.
9. Plans activities that engage children in conversations with peers and adults, and that promote oral language development and early literacy.
10. Models using language to think through problems and to validate oneself.
11. Supports children to resolve conflicts with peers and express their emotions through language or other means of communication.
12. Recognizes the effect of culture on language (e.g., poverty, English as a second language).
13. Uses knowledge of the child's temperament to understand his/her approach to learning, behavior, and social interactions to plan appropriate activities.
14. Discusses child-parent temperament "match" with parents.
15. Recognizes that development is not even across domains.

#### **B. Impact of Relationships**

1. Demonstrates knowledge of the role relationships play in social/emotional development and specific positive and negative factors that influence attachment and bonding, and their effects.
2. Recognizes when an attachment or bonding problem exists.

3. Describes how an infant's characteristics (e.g., gender, health, appearance) contribute to and influence the bonding process.
4. Develops and implements plans that prepare children for transitions and /or loss of caregiver.
5. Interprets children's behaviors in the context of change and their need for stability and predictability.
6. Ensures that children who are experiencing loss and stress have access to appropriate therapy and supports.

#### **C. Social and Emotional Development**

1. Discusses children's social emotional development with parents and families.
2. Offers consultation to families/service providers about designing the learning environment and curriculum in ways that promote positive peer interactions and cooperative interactions.
3. Teaches children conflict resolution and problem solving strategies.
4. Demonstrates knowledge of age-appropriate levels of children's self-awareness, problem-solving skills and reciprocal interactions.
5. Implements some of the social skills curricula that are available.
6. Identifies situations when referral for specific and intensive intervention strategies is needed and demonstrates awareness of where to make those referrals.
7. Plans a physical and social environment that supports children's play.
8. Uses appropriate strategies to engage and build upon children's play.
9. Shares strategies for facilitating play between parents and children.

#### **D. Impact of Environmental Factors**

1. Describes influences of societal and environmental factors on stages of children's development from pre-natal through middle childhood, and on future parenting.
2. Distinguishes aspects of the child's ecological system (family, school, etc.) and their potential impact on development.

3. Makes referrals for assistance to appropriate agencies.

## **Screening & Assessment**

### **A. General Knowledge of Screening & Assessment**

1. Recognizes that behavior is a response or reaction to many factors such as environmental, biological, social, emotional, etc.
2. Understands assessment as an ongoing, dynamic process of discovering the issues and what works well for the child and family.
3. Recognizes that assessment is a collaborative process between the person conducting the assessment and the child, family, and others most familiar with the child.
4. Understands the benefits and limitations of formal and informal assessment for children and families.
5. Demonstrates basic knowledge of ethical guidelines and legal requirements related to the assessment process.
6. Recognizes the types of formal and informal assessment relevant for different settings and purposes.
7. Describes the potential impact of the assessment environment on the results.

### **B. Implementation of Screening & Assessment**

1. Seeks supervision to determine when a child's atypical behavior may warrant a formal assessment.
2. Conducts formal and informal assessments (e.g., observation, checklists) in family and in early care and education settings.
3. Is able to identify and articulate strengths and concerns in the parent-child relationship and recommend further evaluation.
4. Integrates information from family and professionals into assessment process.
5. Communicates strengths and concerns from assessments with family, supervisor and team.
6. With supervision, applies assessment results in determining child outcomes, ear-

ly interventions and strategies to best meet the child's needs.

## **Addressing Challenges**

### **A. Risk and Resilience Factors in Children and Families**

1. Knows about resiliency and risk factors in families.
2. Recognizes families and/or children who may be at risk and assesses them for this risk.
3. With supervision, uses findings from assessments to plan outcomes and interventions that build resiliency.

### **B. Specialized Knowledge for Working with Vulnerable and Identified Populations**

1. For other staff, models quality direct care and services for children and families.
2. Demonstrates general knowledge and beginning application of broad approaches for working with children with specific disorders. (Approaches might use visual supports, applied behavioral analysis, and/or therapeutic play in the classroom environment).
3. Seeks further supervision and consultation regarding therapeutic approaches.
4. With supervision, implements various therapeutic approaches for children and families, as appropriate.
5. Seeks resources for additional therapeutic interventions, as needed.
6. Provides input to child and family team to develop interventions that support children and families.
7. With supervision, develops and implements child and family plans.
8. Develops materials needed to carry out child and family plans.
9. With supervision, and based upon assessment results, develops adaptations to environment that facilitate positive child/family outcomes.
10. With supervision, collects ongoing assessment data (qualitative, quantitative) that reflects progress toward goals.
11. With supervision, reports results of data collection to family and child/family

team, for use in further intervention planning.

### **C. Effective Transitions**

1. Provides information to staff (especially Foundation Level staff) about normative developmental transitions.
2. Constructs environments supportive of normative developmental transitions.
3. Collects and reports on relevant information for receiving teams in advance of transition.
4. With supervision, provides follow up with family and receiving team after transition to support any post-transition issues.

## **Systems Resources**

### **A. Resources and Systems**

1. Understands roles of various family members, professionals and resources within the system.
2. Recognizes how the unique contributions of different services within a system can impact the emotional, social and cognitive development of children.
3. Seeks assistance from colleagues/agencies/supervisors regarding resource availability.
4. Provides referrals for services
5. Identifies legal and advocacy resources and information and shares information about resources with family members, staff and/or community partners.
6. Provides case management/service coordination to actively support families in a coordinated search for services and supports that they feel will help their child/family.
7. If necessary, helps families obtain and complete applications for services to which they may be entitled (e.g., Social Security, Vocational Rehabilitation, social services like food stamps, housing subsidy programs, Medicaid, education and special education programs).

### **B. Laws, Policies and Procedures**

1. Explains responsibilities regarding policies and procedures of the workplace, including safety on the job.
2. Interprets and applies laws pertaining to service delivery and liability (e.g., see Ethics and Confidentiality under Philosophy and Professional Orientation)

### **C. Program Planning and Evaluation**

1. Recognizes the importance of and participates in strategic planning for programs.
2. Assists in designing community needs assessment and outcome-based program evaluation.
3. Assists in communicating program changes and their rationale to families and stakeholders.
4. Assists in developing program budget and operates within that budget, if applicable.
5. Develops and disseminates materials for marketing programs to children and families and communities.
6. Assists in development of program policies and tools (e.g., handbooks, contracts, forms), if applicable.

## **ADVANCED LEVEL**

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Qualified personnel provide supervision, consultation, and training about mental health issues, and may or may not directly provide services and supports to particular children and families. They may create policies, programs, and/or resources for mental health. These personnel are likely to be health, special education, or mental health professionals working as clinicians, administrators, consultants, and/or instructors.

## **Philosophy & Professional Orientation**

### **A. Family-Centered, Strengths- and Outcomes-Based Philosophy**

1. Develops new ideas and solutions to meet challenges in providing effective family-centered services.
2. Designs assessments, interventions, individual child and family outcomes, and

programs that build on family and child strengths.

3. Employs an outcomes-based approach to planning and applying interventions.
4. Assesses and uses findings to develop and refine outcomes and interventions, and to evaluate the quality of interventions.

#### **B. Self Knowledge, Self-Assessment, and Professional Development**

1. Supports staff to reflect on their own values, biases, and strengths through appropriate supervision practices.
2. Ensures consultation delivered by staff (and self) is culturally sensitive.
3. Reviews assessment tools and practices to ensure they have no or minimal cultural bias.
4. Demonstrates familiarity with these Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Competencies.
5. Informally assesses own practices using Advanced Level competencies and identifies areas of strength and needs.
6. Develops objectives for an individualized professional development plan and seeks appropriate professional development activities, monitoring own progress.
7. Models self-assessment and how to create individualized professional development plans.
8. 8. Seeks and provides ongoing supervision, consultation and mentoring opportunities, especially for Intermediate Level staff.
9. 9. Invites families to provide reflective feedback on professional practice.

#### **C. Ethics and Confidentiality**

1. Models how to provide caring, compassionate, and humane services to children and families.
2. Researches and assures staff and own compliance with laws and policies that govern ethical practice.
3. Provides consultation regarding child and family rights, confidentiality, mandatory reporting, and other appropriate laws.

#### **D. Effective Communication Skills**

1. Establishes and practices effective communication and reflection among professionals and colleagues as well as with families.
2. Practices open, honest, sensitive communication skills using jargon-free language.
3. Designs learning opportunities that reflect principles of child and adult learning and that are meaningful to children and adults.

#### **E. Teamwork and Collaboration**

1. Demonstrates group facilitation skills.
2. Demonstrates problem solving, negotiation, and conflict resolution and mediation strategies.
3. Solicits, accepts, and provides consultation and feedback to teams and others around meeting needs of children and families.
4. When consulting with child care and other service providers, uses a variety of approaches to help them reflect upon and discover their own ways to effectively support the mental health of young children and families.
5. Plans, implements, and monitors collaborative work across disciplines.

### **Family Systems**

#### **A. Family Characteristics**

1. Provides opportunities for families and providers to explore and celebrate the diversity and customs reflected by families in the community.
2. Describes and implements policies that foster respect and inclusion of all children and families.
3. Uses genograms, family mapping and other family system tools with families to understand them.
4. Establishes broad understanding of theoretical frameworks for family interaction.

## **B. Factors Impacting Family Function**

1. Assists parents to become aware of how their own childhood experiences affect their interaction with their children.
2. Designs training to help parents learn about child development and deal with the influence of their own child-rearing practices.
3. Refers and/or provides skill development training to parents.
4. Provides consultation to child care providers and other service agencies regarding family functioning.

## **C. Supporting Families**

1. Provides consultation to teams using an evidence-based approach to working with families on anticipated outcomes.
2. Trains others to assist families.
3. Enhances young children's home-, center- or school-based programs by finding and using programs offered within the community.
4. Engages with families in a meaningful way to learn about family priorities to plan assessment, outcomes and interventions.
5. Develops and provides materials and trainings related to diversity issues for staff and community in order to promote cultural competence.
6. Ensures facilities and programs are culturally appropriate/relevant.
7. Provides opportunities for family members to fill positions of leadership within the community.
8. Demonstrates the ability to oversee staffs' work with families.
9. Identifies and shares with families information about the broader child development resources and systems (including schools) that may be of help to them.
10. Consults with families on how to negotiate and advocate for own services.

## **Child Development**

### **A Knowledge of Child Development**

1. Uses knowledge of typical and atypical child development and the individual child's and family assessment data to

plan outcomes using developmentally appropriate strategies, interventions or environmental adaptations or modifications and accommodations.

2. Supervises staff to ensure their use of developmentally appropriate practices and intervention strategies to support and address child development outcomes.
3. Teaches staff, families and others about child development theories and the developmental scope and sequence of various domains within a holistic/intertwined nature of early development.
4. Uses screening tools and administers initial and ongoing strength-based assessments to evaluate children's development in all developmental areas using strengths and priorities of family members.
5. Analyzes results of individual evaluations and relates to overall assessments.
6. Implements programs designed to enhance children's sensory processing, conferring with specialists as needed.
7. Supervises staff to ensure that opportunities for child-child and adult-child conversation are provided.
8. Uses and models intervention strategies related to communication and language difficulties and delays, conferring with specialists as needed.
9. Teaches families and staff strategies for promoting children's language development, and for increasing the child's use of language and other modes of communication when dealing with interpersonal and intra-personal issues.
10. Assists staff to analyze their own communication styles.
11. Discusses child temperament and attachment in the broader context of family dynamics and systems.
12. Summarizes the research on the impact of temperament on children's attachment and general social and emotional development.
13. Provides training and consultation on temperament and attachment.

## **B. Impact of Relationships**

1. Demonstrates knowledge of the impact that parental relationships, expectations, fears and hopes as well as the environment have on the bonding process and on the child's subsequent motivation to engage with others in learning.
2. Demonstrates awareness of risk factors for attachment issues.
3. Develops and implements strategies to enhance attachment.
4. Provides in-depth caregiver consultation regarding issues of loss and transition.
5. Uses therapeutic approaches and demonstrates skills in working individually with children experiencing loss.
6. Uses current research on separation and loss in practice.

## **C. Social and Emotional Development**

1. Uses, trains others to use, and evaluates various social skills curricula and intervention models or approaches.
2. Coaches parents and providers on ways to nurture young children's social and emotional development.
3. Uses knowledge of how to support children's development of positive interpersonal relationships when working with individual children, groups of children, or when providing consultation.
4. Assesses children's levels of play and parent-child play interactions through observation and other assessment methods.
5. Uses therapeutic play-based and other expressive therapies, conferring with specialists as needed.

## **D. Impact of Environmental Factors**

1. Knows and uses tools and procedures for assessing environmental conditions and their impacts on children and families.
2. Teaches home visitors, providers, registered nurses, and others how to assess environmental conditions and their impact.

3. Generates specific interventions to correct adverse environmental factors and strengthen positive ones.

## **Screening & Assessment**

### **A. General Knowledge of Screening & Assessment**

1. Ensures that assessments are family-directed and designed to determine the resources, priorities and concerns of the family related to enhancing the development of the child.
2. Recognizes typical early childhood developmental accomplishments and assets as well as behavioral and other concerns such as attachment, social support, self-control, initiative and mastery.
3. Researches and/or has a comprehensive understanding of specific assessment types, tools, and procedures for children and families.
4. Supervises staff (particularly Intermediate Level) in determining which screening and assessment tools to consider.
5. Provides information to families, professionals and teams on the purposes, benefits and limitations of formal and informal assessment.
6. Provides information to families, professionals and team on legal and ethical guidelines and regulatory processes related to formal assessment.

### **B. Implementation of Screening & Assessment**

1. Facilitates decisions with families, professionals and teams regarding assessment.
2. Develops an assessment plan (including methods and tools of data collection to be used) based on referral issues.
3. Conducts formal and informal assessments using interviews; checklists; health, nutrition, and medical information; and other measurement tools and observations that can also be interventions for the family.
4. Identifies need for specialized assessment and further evaluation in specialized areas.

5. Is able to specifically assess the parent-child relationship and attachment using and informal techniques such as observation, and interview. Uses the DC 0-3 Parent Infant Relationship Global Assessment Scale (PIRGAS) in the assessment and diagnostic process. May use specific formal protocols such as The Crowell, The Marschak and/or the Emotional Availability Scale, with specific training and supervision.
6. Supervises staff (especially Intermediate Level staff) doing assessments.
7. Interprets assessment results for the purpose of diagnosis and making recommendations about treatments or interventions.
8. Develops summary report, with recommendations, for family and team.
9. Consults with families, other professionals and team, to review assessment results and recommend outcomes and a plan to achieve the outcomes in accordance with best practices.
10. Monitors ongoing implementation of assessment recommendations in programs and services.
11. As part of ongoing assessment process, reflects on current implementation to determine if progress is being made and, if it is not, adjusts practices accordingly.

## **Addressing Challenges**

### **A. Risk and Resilience Factors in Children and Families**

1. Designs interventions and programs that build assets and reduce risk factors.
2. Provides training and consultation to own staff, other service providers and families about issues related to risk and resiliency and when to assess them in children and families.
3. Demonstrates knowledge of community resources designed to address risk and resiliency factors.

### **B. Specialized Knowledge for Working with Vulnerable and Identified Populations**

1. Provides intensive individualized interventions for families and children.
2. Demonstrates ability to utilize multidisciplinary therapeutic approaches.
3. Facilitates child and family team meetings and team process.
4. Recommends intervention strategies to child/family team participants.
5. Develops child and family plan for child/family team appropriate to settings, i.e., childcare classroom, medical home, etc.
6. Creates and/or uses a system for ongoing assessment and tracking of progress toward the desired child and family outcomes.
7. Provides feedback to child/family teams regarding progress and helps them access further evaluation if needed.
8. Supervises staff (especially Intermediate Level staff) to, in partnership with the family, evaluate effectiveness of interventions and approaches.
9. Provides training (preferably with a family partner) on multidisciplinary process and approaches (including the materials needed) to serving families and children and their teams.
10. Provides supervision and support to Foundation Level and Intermediate Level and other on-line staff (like interns) working with families and children in various settings.
11. Provides training to staff about the challenges faced by children and families.
12. Seeks consultation with appropriate specialist to obtain specific direction and guidance when the concern is outside area of expertise.

### **C. Effective Transitions**

1. Provides trainings in normative developmental transitions.
2. Provides supervision to staff (especially Intermediate Level staff) about normative transitions.
3. Educates families about transitions and possible responses to them.

4. Educates child/family team about transitions and their impacts upon families and children.
5. Provides consultation to staff and child/family team in identifying transition needs and resources.
6. Develops protocols for transition planning across settings.

## **Systems Resources**

### **A. Resources and Systems**

1. Provides supervision or technical assistance to staff who are seeking and brokering services and/or providing case management services.
2. Engages in creative problem-solving to meet needs when existing policies or resources do not match the specific needs of families and young children.
3. Participates in or leads agency, regional or state level systems planning teams.
4. Provides technical assistance to assure that information about new and existing resources and entitlement programs are known by staff and community partners.
5. Seeks needed resources by working with community and state partners to identify funding opportunities and new entitlement programs.
6. Participates in advocacy activities and supports staff in advocating for families.
7. Identifies persistent challenges such as gaps in services or general support to families that may require systems change.
8. Practices service integration to meet the individualized needs of families.
9. Develops interagency agreements to support families.

### **B. Laws, Policies and Procedures**

1. Navigates laws, rules and policies that may have an impact on coordination of services and on safety of staff while on the job.
2. Addresses legal issues applicable to provider's setting.
3. Participates in policy development for own agency or organization.

### **C. Program Planning and Evaluation**

1. Uses outcome-based evaluation and community needs assessments in strategic planning.
2. Facilitates strategic planning for program design and evaluation.
3. Identifies and provides training about use of program best practices in supporting children and families.
4. Develops and oversees program budgets and operates within budget, if applicable.
5. Writes grants and seeks additional resources for program development.
6. Develops policies and procedures.

## **SPECIALIST LEVEL**

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Qualified personnel lead the mental health field: establishing effective practices, providing in-depth expertise in specialty areas, and/or acting as a resource or director for others. These personnel are likely to be experienced health, special education, or mental health professionals working as clinicians, administrators, consultants, instructors, and/or researchers.

### **Philosophy & Professional Orientation**

#### **A. Family-Centered, Strengths- and Outcomes-Based Philosophy**

1. Establishes the climate for family/professional collaboration.
2. Assures staff have the knowledge, skills and resources to use a family-centered, strengths-based process for identifying desired outcomes and planning interventions.
3. Researches, teaches, and provides supervision about the use of family-centered, strengths-based, and outcomes-based approaches for assessment and intervention.
4. Designs programs that yield family satisfaction with cost-effective outcomes.

**B. Self Knowledge, Self-Assessment, and Professional Development**

1. Uses influence and leadership to establish a culture of reflective practice with staff and teams.
2. Facilitates opportunities for staff to engage in reflective practices with others.
3. Promotes professional development opportunities for staff to understand various cultures and to develop cultural competence.
4. Establishes a system and provides support for staff to engage in self-assessment and professional development activities.
5. Demonstrates familiarity with these Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Competencies.
6. Informally assesses own practices using Expert Level competencies and identifies areas of strength and needs.
7. Develops objectives for an individualized professional development plan, seeks appropriate professional development activities, and monitors own progress.
8. Seeks and provides ongoing supervision, consultation and mentoring opportunities, especially for Advanced Level staff.

**C. Ethics and Confidentiality**

1. Teaches staff about the importance of confidentiality and includes expectations related to confidentiality in supervision and evaluation of staff.
2. Provides training around mandatory reporting.
3. Provides opportunities for staff to examine their own ethics and to learn how to handle ethical dilemmas.

**D. Effective Communication Skills**

1. Promotes and facilitates opportunities for communication and reflective practices.
2. Provides training in communication and reflective practices.
3. Understands and uses systems to assure continuous quality improvement at the child, family and program levels.

4. Supervises personnel who work with and provide training to adults, and ensures that they use knowledge of adult learning styles in their communication and practices.

**E. Teamwork and Collaboration**

1. Teaches collaborative team processes, conflict resolution, negotiation, problem-solving and mediation skills.
2. Designs and sustains systems that support comprehensive cross-disciplinary collaboration.
3. Promotes collaboration among community resources.
4. Designs and analyzes evaluation of team processes.
5. Develops interagency contractual agreements, and participates on local and state interagency teams.
6. Provides administrative support and resources for collaborative work across disciplines.
7. Assists staff and others in learning team process skills.

**Family Systems****A. Family Characteristics**

1. Designs and implements policies to honor family diversity.
2. Designs policies and training to promote the acceptance and inclusion of various family structures.
3. Applies resiliency research in developing assessment as well as assets-based planning.
4. Conducts independent research on family configuration and function.
5. Publishes and presents original body of knowledge regarding family characteristics.
6. Integrates research about family characteristics into practices, program and policy development.
7. Establishes and teaches from an extensive knowledge base of family characteristics.

## **B. Factors Impacting Family Functions**

1. Identifies training needs for staff and other collaborators, including families.
2. Provides resources, training and supervision that recognize that parents' mental health affects the parent-child relationship and other connections.
3. Provides training on making referrals through a family-centered approach.
4. Designs training to provide opportunities for parents to learn new skills.

## **C. Supporting Families**

1. Conducts and synthesizes research on effective home learning environments
2. Evaluates family/ provider team functioning.
3. Designs teams, including identifying team roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority, whether for programs, regions, or the state.
4. Collaboratively participates in evaluation and design of family support policies.
5. Works with the community to develop culturally responsive trainings and policies.
6. Promotes policy that supports cultural competence across all levels of service.
7. Designs and delivers leadership development activities for families.

## **Child Development**

### **A. Knowledge of Child Development**

1. Teaches the use and interpretation of assessments that evaluate children's development.
2. Designs specialized programs based on children's needs (e.g., for sensory processing help, etc.) and trains others to implement them.
3. Designs, provides, and/or supports professional development opportunities aligned with competencies for staff on all aspects of children's social and emotional development, behaviors and well-being (e.g., temperament, resiliency, attachment).

## **B. Impact of Relationships**

1. Supervises, evaluates, and designs interventions related to attachment, social support, self-control, and sense of competence.
2. Develops and teaches therapeutic approaches for helping children who are experiencing loss.

## **C. Social and Emotional Development**

1. Develops social skills curricula.
2. Teaches and supervises staff and consults with others on the use of natural environments and daily routines as appropriate strategies for finding what interests the child and use these interests as interventions that nurture young children's development of positive interpersonal relationships.
3. Provides supervision related to play therapy and other expressive therapies.
4. Teaches theories of therapeutic play-based and other expressive strategies.

## **D. Impact of Environmental Factors**

1. Teaches and supervises staff to recognize and address the impact of specific environmental conditions on children's development, behavior, and well-being.

## **Screening & Assessment**

### **A. General Knowledge of Assessment**

1. Researches and disseminates information on best practices in assessment.
2. Develops and/or trains others to use specialized assessment instruments.
3. Develops policies and training to encourage the use and interpretation of data and assessment in programs and services on an ongoing basis.

### **B. Implementation of Screening & Assessment**

1. Administers specialized assessments and evaluations in diverse settings.
2. Specifically assesses attachment using formal and informal techniques such as observation, and interview. Utilizes all axis of the DC 0-3, including the PIRGAS in assessment and diagnosis, as

well as protocols for which they have been trained including but not limited to The Crowell, The Marschak and/or the Emotional Availability Scale.

3. Conducts program and system evaluations and assessments.

## **Addressing Challenges**

### **A. Risk and Resilience Factors in Children and Families**

1. Teaches, trains, consults and guides policy and practice regarding risk, resiliency and family support approaches.

### **B. Specialized Knowledge for Working with Vulnerable and Identified Populations**

1. Provides specialized therapeutic services to children and families.
2. Educates and consults with child/family team about best practices for intervention with various kinds of child and family challenges.
3. Provides trainings (preferably with a family partner) and consultation about the needs of families living with challenges.
4. Provides supervision, consultation and training for clinicians (especially of Advanced Level) about effective interventions with various kinds of child and family challenges.

### **C. Effective Transitions**

1. Promotes best practices and policies that support child development and transitions.
2. Provides advanced trainings and supervision to staff (especially of Advanced Level) about normative transitions.

## **Systems Resources**

### **A. Resources and Systems**

1. Builds effective working relationships and linkages with leaders who represent a wide range of community, state and national resources.
2. Provides leadership in interagency policy development, influencing the change or creation of new policies to make re-

sources available to meet individualized needs of families.

3. Teaches, mentors and provides consultation regarding systems issues and best practices.
4. Provides leadership, including expert testimony, in advocating for systems change and resources.
5. Evaluates impact of new resources on desired community outcomes.
6. Integrates community resources and entitlement programs into service planning and delivery.

### **B. Laws, Policies and Procedures**

1. Articulates and provides expertise about application of laws.
2. Provides leadership and participates in setting state and national policy.

### **C. Program Planning and Evaluation**

1. Designs and initiates outcome-based planning processes and evaluations, including family and community needs assessments to plan for resource development and/or research projects to determine whether programs and practices show evidence of effectiveness.
2. Provides consultation on strategic planning processes.
3. Designs process and content evaluation tools.
4. Provides written reports on effectiveness of continuous improvement strategies regarding child, family and program outcomes.
5. Writes and implements grant projects to test and improve services for children and families.
6. Integrates research on best practices, community needs assessments and program evaluations to inform program development.
7. Develops and monitors program budgets, if applicable.