



VAIMH Endorsement® Infant Family Specialist (IFS)

Prevention/Early Intervention

This category of Endorsement can be most appropriate for those whose work has a primary focus on prevention/early intervention. Prevention/early intervention programs reach families that are experiencing levels of stress that may increase their infant or young children’s risk of developing social-emotional, relational, or mental health problems. For the purposes of Endorsement, these services focus on the promotion of the primary relationships surrounding the infant or young child. Additionally, a primary focus of the services provided are the social-emotional needs of the infant or young child (**e.g., Part C, Early Head Start, 0-3 Home Visiting programs such as HFA, PAT, NFP, and Mental Health Consultation**).

“Family Specialists work in prevention/early intervention. They work with the infant/young child and caregiver together using their IECMH expertise to assess social emotional needs, provide preventative support, and connect families to additional services.” – The Alliance

Education

No degree required.

Work Experience

Minimum 2-years paid professional work experience providing prevention and/or early intervention services that promote IMH.

Work experience meets this criterion as long as the applicant has:

- Served a minimum of 10 families where the target of services is infants and toddlers (0-36 months) **and**
- A primary focus of the services provided is the social-emotional needs of the infant/toddler and their families/caregivers **and**
- Services focus on the promotion of the relationships surrounding the infant/toddler.

Leadership

N/A

Trainings

Minimum 30 clock hours of relationship-based training and/or continuing education that meets competencies as specified in the [Competency Guidelines](#):

- If an applicant holds a degree in a field that is unrelated to IMH, more specialized in-service training may be required to meet the breadth and depth of the competencies.
- Training content will include the promotion of social-emotional development and the relationship-based principles of IMH.
- Typically, successful IFS applications include an **average of 50 or more** hours of specialized training unless the applicant has completed coursework specific to the Competency Guidelines.

Reflective Supervision

Minimum of 24 clock hours must be received from a qualified RSC Provider with a focus on relationship-based IMH principles individually or in a group while:

- Providing services to infants, young children (birth-36 months), and families **and/or**

- Providing mental health consultation services (birth -36 months) through a relational lens with a focus on social emotional development **and/or**
- Providing supervision to staff who are providing services to infants, young children (birth – 36 months) and families **and/or**
- Providing supervision to staff who are providing mental health consultation services (birth – 36 months) through a relational lens with a focus on social emotional development.

Your provider of RSC must meet Endorsement requirements as an **FRS or MHM-C**.

As in relationship-focused practice with families, RSC is most effective when it occurs in the context of a relationship that has an opportunity to develop by meeting regularly with the same supervisor/consultant over a period of time. Therefore, applicants will have received the majority of their hours from just one source with the balance coming from no more than one other source.

Peer supervision (defined as colleagues meeting together without an identified supervisor/consultant to guide the reflective process), while valuable for many experienced practitioners, does not meet the RSC criteria for Endorsement as specified in the Competency Guidelines.

IFS applicants will receive RSC that is focused on one of the following:

1. Their direct service work with infants, young children (birth to 36 months), and their caregivers/families **and/or**
2. Their direct service mental health consultation work (birth to 36 months), through a relational lens with a focus on social-emotional development **and/or**
3. Providing supervision to staff who are providing services to infants, young children (birth to 36 months), and their caregivers/families **and/or**
4. Providing supervision to staff who are providing mental health consultation services (birth to 36 months), through a relational lens with a focus on social-emotional development.

RSC received must have occurred while you are/were gaining the work experiences required for your category.

References (*this is the last step in the Endorsement Application process*)

Total of three professional reference ratings from:

1. (1) from a current program supervisor
2. (1) from a person providing RS/C to you
3. (1) from another supervisor, teacher, trainer, consultant, or colleague

Exam
N/A

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Annual Endorsement® Renewal

IFS Endorsement® is a commitment to the **ongoing** process dedicated to annual professional development as it relates to IMH principles through:

1. Documentation of a minimum of 15 training hours per year of relationship-based education and training pertaining to the promotion of social-emotional development and/or the practice of IMH.
 - a. *A minimum of 1 of the 15 hours must be related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in IMH.*
2. The maintenance of membership in the [Virginia Association for Infant Mental Health \(VAIMH\)](#).
3. Documentation of the receipt of 12 hours of Reflective Supervision (group or individual) for the December 2024 annual renewal and ongoing. Your provider of RSC must be endorsed as an FRS or MHM-C.