



VAIMH Endorsement® Infant and Early Childhood Family Specialist (I/ECFS)

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 IECMH.

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

- Served a minimum of 10 families where the target of services is infants/toddlers (0-36 months) or young children (3-6 years) **and**
- A primary focus of the services provided is the social-emotional needs of the infant/toddler/young child and their families/caregivers **and**
- Services focus on the promotion of the relationships surrounding the infant/toddler/young child.

Leadership

N/A

Trainings

Minimum 30 clock hours of relationship-based training/continuing education that meet competencies as specified in the Competency Guidelines: <https://www.vaimh.org/competency-guidelines>

Training content will encompass the promotion of social-emotional development and the relationship-based principles and practices of I/ECMH. In addition to the 30 clock hours of relationship-based training/continuing education, the following is also required:

- A minimum of 3 hours addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in infant/early childhood mental health.

Typically, successful FS 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 (**FS-ERS, MHS-ERS, or MHM-C**) with a focus on relationship-based IECMH principles individually or in a group.

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.

Family Specialist applicants will receive RSC that is focused on any of the following:

1. Their direct service work with infants, toddlers, or young children (birth to 36 months or 3-6 years), and their caregivers/families, **and/or**
2. Their direct service mental health consultation work (birth to 36 months or 3-6 years), through a relational lens with a focus on social-emotional development, **and/or**
3. Providing supervision to staff who are providing services to infants, toddlers, or young children (birth to 36 months or 3-6 years), 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.

Leadership

N/A

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

No

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Annual Renewal

Applicants (*those in process of attaining Endorsement*): <https://www.vaimh.org/vaimh-membership>

1. Renew VAIMH Membership annually by December 31.

Endorsees (*those already Endorsed*):

Endorsees commit to the ongoing process dedicated to annual professional development as it relates to IECMH principles through:

1. **VAIMH Membership Renewal:** <https://www.vaimh.org/vaimh-membership>
 - annually by December 31
2. **Training/Professional Development:** <https://www.vaimh.org/endorsement-renewal>
 - minimum of 12 training hours received per year of relationship-based education and training pertaining to the promotion of social-emotional development and/or the practice of IECMH.
 - minimum of 3 hours of training related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in IECMH.
 - For Endorsed Reflective Supervisors (FS-ERS), a minimum of 3 hours of training received should be on the [provision](#) of RS.
3. **Reflective Supervision/Consultation (RS/C):**
 - minimum of 12 hours of RS/C (group or individual) from someone endorsed as an FS-ERS, MHS-ERS, or MHM-C.
 - For Endorsed Reflective Supervisors (FS-ERS), the RS/C you [receive](#) should also focus on the RSC you [provide](#) to others.

Endorsements are renewed every three years (beginning in 2024). In 2027 endorsees will attest to having received 45(+) hours of training and 36 (+) hours of RS/C between January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2027. These hours will be prorated for applicants who earn Endorsement in the “in-between” years. FS-ERS endorsees will [renew their Family Specialist Endorsement](#).