



Vermont's Early Childhood & Family Mental Health Competencies & Credential

A story of Integration & Collaboration



The Field of Early Childhood and Family Mental Health

ages birth to 8

- A solid social/emotional foundation in early childhood.
- Supporting secure relationships between children, parents and caregivers.
- Addressing mental health issues of young children in the context where they live and play.
- Knowledge and skills embedded in many disciplines.



If....

We embed these competencies within multiple systems of professional development, trained and informed caregivers will have the capacity to recognize and address the mental health needs of young children and families.



Then...

...children and families will not have to reach the point of near-crisis to receive the social and emotional support and services they need.



Partners in the work

- National Shared Agenda Task Force and Workgroup
- VT state-wide Early Childhood Career Development Center (Northern Lights)
- VT State Departments of Education and Mental Health,
- State and local Mental Health Agencies
- VT Department for Children and Families
- Policy makers – Federal and state levels



More Partners...

- **Parents and advocates**
- **Early childhood special educators & interventionists**
- **Head Start**
- **Early care and education providers**
- **Specialists in related fields**
- **Mental health clinicians**
- **Higher Education Institutions**



Background

1997-2003 SAMSHA Children's
Upstream Services (CUPS) 6 year
grant

- ❏ Regional Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants
- ❏ CUPS Learning Team
 - Identified knowledge and practices that promote young children's social and emotional development
 - Provided extensive in-service learning opportunities in early childhood and family mental health.



More Background

2002-2007

- Regional Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants supported with state funding
- Shared Agenda work developed Early Childhood Mental Health Competencies

2007-2009

- ECFMH Competencies distributed
- Presentations on uses of Competencies
- Integrate Competencies into Professional Development system



Use of the Competencies

- To assess the learning needs of adult students, employees, or teams;
- To evaluate and develop curricula;
- To identify equivalency areas for credentials;
- To support self- assessment & create an individual professional development plan
- To support supervision and mentoring
- To launch discussion



And WHO would use them?

- Educators including special educators
- Therapists
- Childcare Providers
- Health Care Providers
- Early Interventionists
- Social Workers
- Child Welfare Workers
- Home Visitors
- Supervisors
- Paraprofessionals
- ...and others



ECFMH Competencies: STRUCTURE

Six Domains

**Child
Development**

**Addressing
Challenges**

**Family
Systems**

Assessment

**Philosophy &
Professional
Development**

System Resources



AREA: Philosophy & Professional Orientation

- A. Family centered strengths and outcomes- based philosophy
- B. Self- knowledge, self- assessment and professional development
- C. Ethics and confidentiality
- D. Effective communication
- E. Team work and collaboration



Examples: Philosophy & Professional Orientation

Demonstrates cultural competence in communication and establishing effective relationships with families from various cultures.

Develops new ideas and solutions to meet challenges in providing effective family-centered services.



AREA: Family Systems

- A. Family characteristics
- B. Factors impacting family function
- C. Supporting families



Examples: Family Systems

- Establishes broad understanding of theoretical frameworks for family interaction.
- Assists families in designing appropriate home-play environments for their children, and helps them locate low-cost materials.
- Trains others to assist families.



AREA: Child Development

- A. Knowledge of child development
- B. Impact of relationships
- C. Social and emotional development
- D. Impact of environmental factors



Examples: Child Development

- Describes the interaction and interdependence of the various developmental domains.
- Responds appropriately to a child affected by stress.
- Makes referrals for assistance to appropriate agencies.
- Recognizes when an attachment or bonding problem exists.



AREA: Assessment

- A. General knowledge of assessment
- B. Implementation of assessment



Examples: Assessment

- Requests supervision of consultation regarding the need for assessment
- Describes the potential impact of the assessment environment on the results
- Conducts formal and informal assessment in family and in early care and education settings
- Researches and disseminates information on best practices in assessment



AREA: Addressing Challenges

- A. Risk and resilience factors in children and families
- B. Specialized knowledge for working with vulnerable and identified populations
- C. Effective transitions



Examples: Addressing Challenges

- Employs practices that build children's resiliency.
- Provides intensive and individualized interventions for families and children.
- Promotes best practices and policies that support child development and transitions.



AREA: Systems Resources

- A. Resources and systems
- B. Laws, policies and procedures
- C. Program planning and evaluation



Examples: Systems Resources

- Identifies resources available within own workplace/agency /community.
- Articulates and provides expertise about application of laws.
- Facilitates strategic planning for program design and evaluation.



Four Levels

Specialist
Advanced
Intermediate
Foundation



Levels 1 and 2: WHO

Foundation

Works under supervision, directly with children.

Intermediate

Work directly with children and families, review their action and decisions with a supervisor.



Levels 3 and 4: WHO

Advanced

Provide supervision, consultation and training. May create policies and direct programs.

Specialist

Lead the field by establishing practices, and providing in-depth expertise.



Now... 2009-2010

- **Alignment of ECFMH Competencies** with research-based curricula used in Vermont
 - Second Step
 - Touch Points
 - PCAN (Zero to Three)
 - State-wide Foster Care training
 - DECA
 - CSEFEL
 - Higher Education Coursework



Integration of VT's early childhood professional development system & the *Competencies* -

- **Into Level I EC Curricula** required of licensed child care staff in Vermont
- **Into LEVEL II EC Curricula** through a CSEFEL curricula module
- already integrated into **DOE Early Childhood Special Education professional standards**



An ECFMH CREDENTIAL?

- **Survey results:** Highly desirable by staff and supervisors in early childhood and home visiting programs;
- **Clear need** for more consistent, accessible quality professional development;
- **Professionals with mid-level skills** and experience were most interested in gaining the competencies.



4 Levels:

Specialist & Advanced
not interested in additional
credential , would like more
early childhood information



Intermediate

Foundation: covered in early childhood
curricula Level I and II



Benefits of a Credential-

- Increasing support for communities, families and providers to address children's social and emotional health.
- Increase consistency in mental health knowledge and skills for those working with young children and families;



And further benefits...

- Meeting the need for more training in this field;
- Providing more qualified personnel across disciplines;
- Providing a means for organizations and supervisors to identify applicants' early childhood and family mental health knowledge base;



And finally -

- Increasing access to job opportunities and career advancement;
- Recognizing professionals who have these competencies.



Draft of Credential Elements

Formal Education

Completed in related field or with related credits

Relevant Training

in each of the 6 Core Knowledge Areas

Experience

Supervised and/or paid with children ages birth to 8

Reflective Practice Consultation

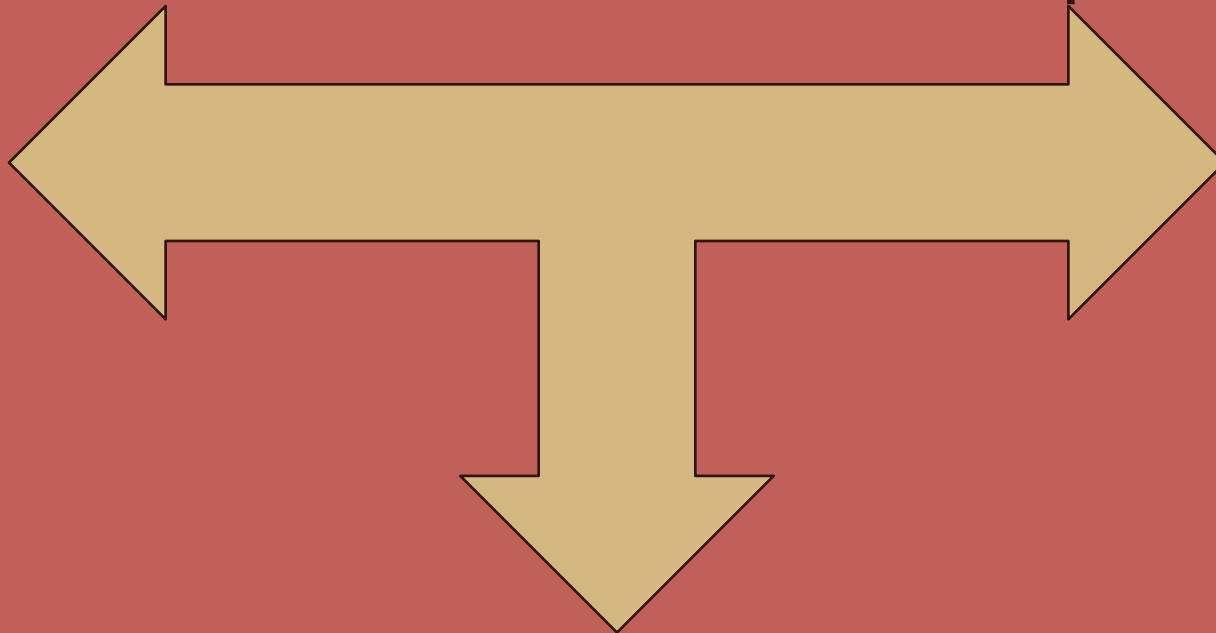
24 hours



The BALANCE of the 3 elements

Formal Education

Experience



Relevant Training



NEXT....



- **Continue to ID and address the gaps** in available curricula related to the ECFMH competencies and credential
- **Pilot** the credential
- **Evaluate** the results!
- **Share with our partners and Communities of Practice!**

