VAIMH ENDORSEMENT® INTRODUCTION

The Virginia Association for Infant Mental Health (VAIMH) is an interdisciplinary, professional organization established to nurture and promote the optimal development of infants, toddlers, and families through relationship-based training and advocacy efforts.

The intent of the VAIMH Endorsement is to recognize the professional development of infant and family service providers within the diverse and rapidly expanding infant and family field. Endorsement by the VAIMH will verify that an applicant has attained a specified level of functioning and understanding based on a set of competencies that have been identified and agreed upon by hundreds of professionals, service providers, faculty members and policy makers in the infant and family field.

The VAIMH Endorsement will offer individuals in the infant and family field a professional development plan that focuses on knowledge, best practice skills, and supervised work experiences that lead to increased confidence and credibility within the infant and family field. Of additional importance, the VAIMH Endorsement will inform prospective employers, agencies and peers about culturally sensitive, relationship-based practice promoting infant mental health. Those who earn the VAIMH Endorsement will be recognized for their education, training, leadership roles and work experiences within a rapidly growing field.

A Brief Overview

There are four levels of competency within the VAIMH Endorsement:

1. **Infant Family Associate** (CDA or Associates degree or 2 years paid work experience in infant & early childhood);
2. **Infant Family Specialist** (Bachelor’s or Master’s w/ a minimum of 2 years paid professional work experience promoting infant mental health);
3. **Infant Mental Health Specialist** (Master’s or post-graduate degree w/a minimum of 2 years supervised work experience providing relationship-focused infant mental health services);
4. **Infant Mental Health Mentor** (Master’s or post-graduate degree w/a minimum of 3 years specialized work experience in at least one of three categories:
   1. **Clinical**-Post graduate experience as practice leader in infant mental health (e.g. infant mental health supervisor, trainer or consultant);
   2. **Policy**-Post graduate experience as a leader in policy and/or program administration related to the infant/family field;
   3. **Research/Faculty**-Post graduate experience as a leader in university-level teaching and/or published research related to the infant/family field.

Each level recognizes the educational experiences, in-service training experiences, and work experiences appropriate for best service outcomes for infants, toddlers, and families which is documented in the portfolio.

The portfolio consists of a list of all educational experience accompanied by official transcripts for all college courses, degrees and/or certificates; a list of all in-service training experiences (relevant to culturally sensitive, relationship-based practice promoting infant mental health); a list of all paid work experiences with/related to infants, toddlers (birth to 3), caregivers and families; reflective supervision experiences (as appropriate); three professional reference ratings; and a signed Code of Ethics.

For levels III & IV only, a written exam is also required. It is a 3-hour exam offered twice a year and is based on the identified competencies at Levels 3 & 4. Following completion of the written exam, a panel will review the exam and professional portfolio. The panel then makes recommendations to the Committee regarding Endorsement.

VAIMH encourages continuing professional growth and development for all members. The Association requires providers who have successfully completed the VAIMH Endorsement at all levels to continue membership in VAIMH and to participate annually in 15 hours of culturally sensitive, relationship-based training experiences that promote infant mental health practice and a minimum of 12 hours in ongoing Reflective Supervision.

**Prerequisite Requirements**

(1) Membership in VAIMH ($25 per year);
(2) Training/Education as specified and related to infants, toddlers, parents, other caregivers and families; and,
(3) Experience working with infants, toddlers (birth to 3), and their parents, or other caregivers and families.

**How To Begin**

1. Review Endorsement information at [www.ecmhva.org](https://www.ecmhva.org)
2. Register online at [https://easy.mi-aimh.org/vaimh](https://easy.mi-aimh.org/vaimh)