

Specialized Work Experience

Q. Is there a difference between the specialized work experiences that meet criteria for Infant Family Specialists (Category II) versus Infant Mental Health Specialists (Category III)?

A. Yes. In general, **Category II** work experience is more preventative and encompasses many of the ways that candidates might work with the families of infants and toddlers, including case management, Part C service coordination, parent-child play groups, parent education, and family support.

Category III work experiences are often, but not always, home-based and include the following interventions: advocacy, developmental guidance, emotional support, concrete assistance, and parent-infant psychotherapy.

Competence as an Infant Mental Health Specialist (**Category III**) builds with supervised work experience over time with services delivered to the families of infants and toddlers that are in relationship-focused and culturally sensitive, with an emphasis on examining the role of relationships in reflective supervision.

Q. How many infants or toddlers do I need to work with to meet the specialized work criteria?

A. Endorsement applicants should have enough experience with infants/toddlers so that the persons who complete the reference rating forms can confidently answer questions about the applicant's knowledge and skills related to the promotion/practice of infant mental health. *For practitioners whose work experience has been primarily with preschool aged children, VAIMH expects service delivery to a minimum of 10 families where the infant/toddler* is the target of the intervention over a period of time that is at least six months.* If the practitioner's experience has not yet included infants/toddlers or preschoolers, VAIMH expects service delivery to a minimum of 10 families where infant/toddler is the target of the intervention over a period of time that is at least two years. (*infant/toddler = birth to 36 months)

Q. I have my Master's degree, so shouldn't I start at Category III?

A. Overall, Endorsement is seen as a professional development ladder. It is most common for people to start at Category II. Over time, once practitioners have had an opportunity to serve many infant mental health cases while receiving Reflective Supervision/Consultation from someone who is endorsed, and after participating in many specialized in-service training opportunities, they may have developed a degree of expertise that qualifies them for Category III.

It is important to be sure that a candidate has achieved that expertise so that there is greater assurance of successfully completing the written exam. Also, once a practitioner has earned Category III, they can be considered as potential providers of Reflective Supervision/Consultation to other candidates who are seeking endorsement.

Q. What happens after I submit my professional application?

A. All applications are carefully reviewed by a member who has earned endorsement and/or are members of the Endorsement Committee. Reviews are conducted using a checklist that includes all of the knowledge and skill areas, including reflective supervision or consultation experiences, under the broader competency categories.

After examining your official transcripts, the reference rating forms, and your lists of specialized work, in-service training, and Reflective Supervision/Consultation experiences, reviewers will make recommendations about whether to endorse at Categories I or II, or to approve you to sit for the exam (Category III and IV). They may also suggest that you pursue further training and/or reflective supervision and then be re-reviewed after a period of time.