The Endorsement Process

Q. What is involved in applying for and earning Endorsement?

A. Achieving Endorsement involves six steps:

1. **Inquire** by downloading endorsement information from [the early childhood mental health VA website](#) (Endorsement Overview, Introduction, VAIMH Competencies, Getting Started Form) and/or Contact Endorsement Coordinator with any questions at bgrifa@vcu.edu
2. **Register** online at VAIMH Endorsement Application System and pay registration fee
3. **Prepare and submit the completed professional portfolio** along with the endorsement fee by the portfolio deadline
4. **A two-person review of the professional portfolio** AND, for Levels III & IV only, **successful completion of written exam**
5. **Endorsement** - Some notable features of the VAIMH Endorsement (IMH-E®) process include:
   o Assignment of an endorsement Advisor to assist with the process
   o Review of professional portfolio materials by the endorsement Advisor prior to submission for official review
   o Submission of completed professional portfolio to the Endorsement Coordinator who will forward for a two-person review by assigned endorsement committee members
   o Review of completed professional portfolio by assigned endorsement committee members to qualify for Endorsement at Levels I & II
   o Review of completed professional portfolio by assigned endorsement committee members to qualify for endorsement exam at Levels III & IV
   o Administration of three-hour, written endorsement exam, offered twice per year each March and September, for Level III & IV candidates; exam includes multiple choice questions and vignettes to assess knowledge, skills and competencies.
   o Review of exam by 2 assigned endorsement test review committee members
   o Endorsement approved (or not); candidates notified by phone and e-mail.
   o Endorsement certificate signed and mailed along with feedback regarding professional portfolio (Levels I & II) or responses to vignettes in the qualitative portion of the exam (Levels III & IV).
   o Annual renewal of endorsement requires continued membership in VAIMH and annual documentation of 15 hours (minimum) of training experiences which promote infant mental health practice; and 12 hours of reflective supervision/consultation for endorsed members at Levels II, III & IV (Clinical).
Q. How much does the endorsement cost?

A. Fees vary according to the level of endorsement being applied for. There is an initial application fee of $15.00 for Levels I & II, and $25.00 for Levels III & IV that is paid at the time of registration. In addition, membership in VAIMH is required at the time of initial application so that candidates can be notified of relevant training opportunities and receive discounts to register for trainings.

The endorsement processing fee must be sent in when you submit your professional portfolio to the VAIMH Endorsement Coordinator for final review. The endorsement fee is $25.00 for Level I, $100.00 for Level II, $200.00 for Level III and $300.00 for Level IV.

The costs for Level III & IV are in line with credentialing fees that have been established by other professional organizations, e.g. CDA (Child Development Associate) and ACSW (Accreditation for Certified Social Workers). The credentialing fees support the overhead costs of the VAIMH Endorsement (IMH-E®) and allow us to have portfolios and tests carefully reviewed.

There is funding to support applicants at levels I and II. Download the Application Form for Financial Support for Endorsement at level I or II at early childhood mental health VA website Applications must be received no later than 1/15/14 for consideration.

Q. What is the value of a Competency-Based System of endorsement?

A. Endorsement is valuable in three ways:

1. Endorsement provides a set of competencies for professional development in the infant and family field.
2. Endorsement assures that persons providing culturally sensitive, relationship-focused services promoting infant mental health meet standards that are approved by a highly recognized professional organization for the discipline of infant mental health.
3. Endorsement recognizes the importance of continuing education and training for professionals in the infant and family field. Those who earn the endorsement demonstrate their commitment to this principle as they provide services that promote infant mental health with a high level of quality and integrity.

Q. Why should I apply for endorsement?

A. Consider the following:

- To enhance your professional profile as a specialist in the infant and family field
- To affirm the specialized knowledge and skills you have acquired through formal education experience and in-service training
- To validate the work that you have done under the guidance and supervision of experienced mentors in the infant and family field
- To link your professional growth and development to competency standards that reflect best practice
- To be identified as a competent professional in a system that reflects commitment to best practice and quality care for all infants, toddlers and families