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.
because...

...professionals who work with children and families will –

- share a common language, knowledge and skills across the EC and MH fields &
- *Increase our capacity* to support young children and their families.
Partners in the work

- National Shared Agenda Task Force and Workgroup
- VT Northern Lights Career Development Center for early childhood & after school professionals
- VT State Departments of Education and Mental Health
- VT Department for Children and Families
- Community Child Care Support Agencies
- Regional Mental Health Agencies
- Policy makers – Federal and State
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 created:

- 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
- Worked to 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

System Resources

Philosophy & Professional Development
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/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**
Works directly with children and families, reviews their action and decisions with a supervisor.
Levels 3 and 4: WHO

- **Advanced**
  Provides supervision, consultation and training. May create policies and direct programs.

- **Specialist**
  Leads the field by establishing practices, and providing in-depth expertise.
Now... 2009-2011

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 the Competencies into VT’s early childhood professional development system and career ladder

- Level I Career ladder: EC consistent Curricula offered statewide
- Level II Career Ladder: EC Curricula available statewide
- Level IV and V Career Ladder: DOE Early Childhood 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:

Foundation: covered in early childhood curricula Level I and II

Intermediate

Specialist & Advanced
not interested in additional credential, would like more early child development information
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…

- Increase 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.
Credential Elements *Draft*

- **Formal Education**
  completed in related field or with related credits

- **Relevant Training**
  in each of the Core Knowledge Areas

- **Experience**
  Supervised and/or paid with children ages birth to 8

- **Reflective Practice Consultation**
  24 hours in past year

- **Portfolio**
  with documentation & evidence of competency at the Intermediate level
The BALANCE of 3 elements

Formal Education  Experience

 Relevant Training
Pilot the credential – Fall 2011
Evaluate the results
Continue to ID and address the gaps in available curricula
Continue to recognize the credential’s value across systems and disciplines
Share with our partners, stakeholders & communities of practice!