

Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Competencies Knowledge Areas and Subheadings

1. Philosophy & Professional Orientation

Professionals demonstrate knowledge of and the disposition toward using a family-centered, strengths- and outcomes-based collaborative approach for supporting the social and emotional development of children and their families. Individuals working with young children and their families possess self-knowledge of their own biases, values, strengths and vulnerabilities; conduct honest self assessments of their current knowledge, skills and dispositions; and use the results to design individualized professional development plans. Effective communication skills that incorporate knowledge of adult learning styles are used in order to build positive relationships with families and colleagues as well as to supervise staff. Professionals understand and demonstrate the principles of teamwork and collaboration while behaving ethically, maintaining confidentiality, and training and consulting with child care and other service providers to support the mental health of young children and their families.

Philosophy & Professional Orientation Subheadings

- A. Family-Centered, Strengths- and Outcomes-Based Philosophy
- B. Self Knowledge, Self-Assessment, and Professional Development
- C. Ethics and Confidentiality
- D. Effective Communication Skills
- E. Teamwork and Collaboration

2. Family Systems

Professionals demonstrate knowledge of family characteristics, factors impacting family functions, and strategies for supporting families. In their work with families, professionals honor diversity within and among families. Professionals understand that changes in a family's situation can affect a child's emotional or social health and overall development. There is an understanding that parents' childhood experiences can influence their child-rearing practices, also that mental health challenges of parents can influence their children's development. Professionals recognize the value of working in partnership with families and others on child and family teams. They engage with families to maximize the use of informal and natural supports while being aware of cultural differences and demonstrating cultural sensitivity. Professionals understand and promote family leadership and self-advocacy.

Family Systems Subheadings

- A. Family Characteristics
- B. Factors Impacting Family Function
- C. Supporting Families

3. Child Development

Adult/child relationships are essential to the healthy growth and development of young children. Relationships play a primary role in the social and emotional development of young children. In this area, professionals demonstrate knowledge of child development and the factors affecting development, with a special focus on knowledge of young children's social and emotional development. This includes having knowledge of major theories of child development, including the scope and sequence of development, and applying this knowledge in their practice. Professionals have an understanding about brain development and sensory processing, including the effects of

sensory processing on cognitive, social and emotional development. They know how children develop language and other modes of communication, and understand the relationship of communication to children's cognitive, emotional and social development. Professionals understand differences in temperament and their impact on children's development, relationships and behaviors. They understand the impact of bonding and attachment on the development of nurturing relationships. Professionals nurture the development of children's interpersonal relationships. They value play and see play as an essential way young children engage and communicate with others, explore symbolically, and express themselves. Through working closely with young children and their families, professionals recognize the potential impact of specific environmental conditions on children's development, behavior and well-being.

Child Development Subheadings

- A.** Knowledge of Child Development
- B.** Impact of Relationships
- C.** Social and Emotional Development
- D.** Impact of Environmental Factors

4. Assessment

Professionals understand that assessment is an ongoing process that explores both the unique needs and the strengths of children in a way that is family-directed and designed to determine the resources, priorities and concerns of the family related to enhancing the development of the child. The information gathered from assessment is used to plan outcomes and to determine appropriate early intervention strategies that are meaningful to the child and family. Families and professionals work together to gather individualized child and family assessment information through formal and informal methods that inform diagnosis, intervention, and consultation. Professionals can articulate the purposes and methods of formal and informal assessment, conduct assessments appropriate to their work setting and level of skill, and implement, evaluate and share results. They describe the process, benefits, limitations of assessments for children and families. Professionals implement assessments that are culturally relevant and appropriate to the child, family and setting.

Assessment Subheadings

- A.** General Knowledge of Assessment
- B.** Implementation of Assessment

5. Addressing Challenges

Professionals demonstrate knowledge of risk and resiliency factors, the use of strategies for working with vulnerable and identified populations, and ways for promoting effective transitions. They recognize the impact of stress in general and know how and when to explore risk and resiliency factors in children and families. Professionals use multidisciplinary therapeutic approaches when working with children and families experiencing significant challenges. Professionals provide guidance to optimize transitions across developmental stages as well as transitions across settings and/or providers.

Addressing Challenges Subheadings

- A.** Risk and Resilience Factors in Children and Families
- B.** Specialized Knowledge for Working with Vulnerable and Identified Populations
- C.** Effective Transitions

6. Systems Resources

Professionals demonstrate knowledge of resources, systems, laws, policies and procedures. They identify and access family, parenting, and child development and community resources. They take an active advocacy role to change systems on behalf of children and families. Professionals understand and effectively work within and across service systems, including within the laws, policies and procedures of those systems. Professionals engage in program design, implementation and evaluation to assure effective child and family services.

Systems Resources Subheadings

- A.** Resources and Systems
- B.** Laws, Policies and Procedures
- C.** Program Planning and Evaluation