

Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsement®  
Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsement (ECMH-E®)?

The ECMH-E® is meant to provide a path to Endorsement® for professionals who are promoting and implementing infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH) principles in their work with or on behalf of children ages 3 up to 6 years old and their families. ECMH-E® is built upon the existing Infant Mental Health Endorsement® (IMH-E®) structure, e.g. Early Childhood Family Associate, Early Childhood Family Specialist, Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist and Early Childhood Mental Health Mentor, using the existing IMH-E® criteria as a template.

2. How was the ECMH-E® criteria created?

A workgroup of IMH-E® endorsed professionals with experience across diverse early childhood practice settings including early intervention, early childhood education, Head Start, early childhood mental health consultation, and early childhood mental health practice convened over a course of several months to come to agreement for the new criteria. Workgroup participants came from Alaska, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Washington. Later, other national experts weighed in on the final draft.

3. Are the qualifications for reflective supervision/consultation (RS/C) providers different from IMH-E® requirements?

No. RS/C requirements for ECMH-E® are consistent with requirements for IMH-E®. It has been a core component of the IMH-E® standards that RS/C come from a professional who has expertise in infant/young child development, mental health (infant/young child and adult), and reflective supervision. Masters-prepared professionals who provide services in promotion and prevention programs inevitably serve families with much higher levels of risk. For example, we consistently hear from home visitors across states who feel unprepared to manage the needs of families who have experienced trauma and/or are affected by mental health problems. In order to best support the practitioners and the families, the provider of RS/C should have training and experience in how trauma and mental illness affect the infant/young child's caregiving relationships so that those issues can be identified and appropriately responded to. Professionals who have earned Infant Mental Health Specialist (IMHS), Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist (ECMHS), Infant Mental Health Mentor – Clinical (IMHM-C), and Early Childhood Mental Health Mentor - Clinical (ECMHM-C) have passed an application review and a written exam to document their competence in these areas.

See <https://www.allianceaimh.org/endorsement-requirements-guidelines/> for more about RS/C requirements for IMH-E® and ECMH-E®.

4. Were the competencies revised?

No. The competencies remain the same for both IMH-E® and ECMH-E® as the competencies have always covered a range of knowledge and skill areas that drive best practice with or on behalf of pregnant moms, children ages 0 up to 6 years old, and their caregivers.

5. How can we use this process as an opportunity to include more professionals from early care and education?

The ECMH-E® offers recognition for those whose work is: a) with 3 up to 6-year olds and b) IMH and ECMH-informed. We have long heard from Head Start staff, therapists who work 3-6, ECMH consultants, etc. that they have pursued IMH training and RS/C but were very disappointed that they could not receive the IMH-E® recognition because their paid work experiences were not with 0-36 months. Said another way, the ECMH-E® now offers a path for those whose work is primarily with or on behalf of 3-6 year olds and caregivers and is informed by IECMH principles.

6. Will professionals who hold the IMH-E® have the opportunity to be “grandfathered” into the ECMH-E® if they qualify?

No. Professionals who have already demonstrated that they have the breadth and depth of competence necessary for the IMH-E® will still need to demonstrate the knowledge and skill (acquired through education, specialized in-service training, RSC, work experience and references) required as it relates to children ages 3 up to 6 years old and their families. They may be able to use some of the training and experiences that were part of their IMH-E® application. It is important to note that in the beginning stages of rolling out the ECMH-E®, when building capacity will be a priority, professionals who are endorsed providers of RS/C (in categories IMHS and IMHM-C) for IMH-E® applicants will also be approved providers of RS/C for ECMH-E® applicants.

7. When and how can I apply for ECMH-E®?

An initial leadership cohort for Iowa has been selected and are currently in process. Iowa anticipates opening ECMH-E® beginning in June 2022.

Individuals are not required to have an IMH-E® in order to earn an ECMH-E®.