

# A COLLABORATION TO STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND THE IECMH WORKFORCE IN MASSACHUSETTS

MSPCC & MassAIMH

Collaboration to Strengthen and Expand the IECMH Workforce in Massachusetts

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

Exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can interrupt healthy child development, leading to both short- and long-term negative impacts on a child's physical and mental health throughout their life. Not only is exposure to ACEs disproportionately higher for children of color, they have less access to supportive and consistent caregiving systems and mental health supports and services that would help to mitigate the negative impacts of this prolonged stress response.

A robust, diverse, well-trained, and interdisciplinary workforce, dedicated to striving for social justice, is central to ensuring that all children in the Commonwealth have equitable access to **infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH)** supports and services that can help to mitigate these negative impacts. The current IECMH workforce must be expanded and supported in order to meet this need.

Young children receive services in multiple systems from professionals with varied backgrounds. The work of the collaboration will target these professionals in order to benefit the statewide population of infants and children from birth through five and their caregivers, including expecting families, with an emphasis on the youngest and most vulnerable children.



In addition, there is a need to increase awareness and eliminate stigma associated with IECMH among key stakeholders and decision-makers, who often don't understand the very real significance and impact, both short and long term, of early trauma, ACEs, and other experiences.

MSPCC and the Massachusetts Association for Infant Mental Health (MassAIMH) are working together to establish, strengthen, and expand this workforce, including early education and care providers, behavioral health clinicians, pediatricians, and family support and peer professionals, to ensure that all children in the Commonwealth have equitable access to IECMH supports and services.

The creation of a strong, well-resourced, and engaging IECMH professional association is also key to these workforce development goals. Not only will MassAIMH connect professionals in the field with training, helping them to build the skills necessary to support the healthy emotional functioning of children and their families, the organization will be a strong voice influencing and improving state and practice-level policy.

*A Boston Children's  
Collaboration for  
Community Health  
Partner*



# WHAT'S HAPPENING

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## **FOCUS ON ADDRESSING DISPARITIES**

The collaboration is committed to addressing the barriers that perpetuate low rates of behavioral healthcare access among low income individuals, immigrants, and families of color and the resulting health and educational disparities, including disproportionately high rates of suspension and expulsion of children of color. Utilizing the Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children, and Families framework from the Irving Harris Foundation, we will maintain and deeply embody in all processes our joint commitment to justice, equity, and inclusion. We will strongly promote diversity within the workforce and support the use of culturally-responsive practices by professionals.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPETENCY AND ENDORSEMENT SYSTEMS**

MassAIMH is licensed with Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health (MI-AIMH) Competency Guidelines®, which are internationally-recognized, evidence-based skills standards for multi-disciplinary professionals who work with young children and their families. These Competency Guidelines® form a systematic framework from which individual providers seek professional development training and mentorship to build their demonstrated competence in knowledge, skills, and reflective practice of infant and early childhood mental health expertise.

The Competency Guidelines® are the criteria from which professional disciplines are defined and sorted into categories of expertise, represented in a formal professional credentialing process available as an Endorsement® system. When implemented, providers can seek professional credentialing in four categories of practice: Infant Family Associate; Infant Family Specialist; Infant Mental Health Specialist; and Infant Mental Health Mentor.

## **TRAINING, CONSULTATION AND SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Informed by our assessment of trends in training needs, the collaboration will make an array of supports available to prepare candidates across disciplines for Endorsement®. We will also act as a training linkage hub and create collaborative learning opportunities to support professional development. Individuals pursuing Endorsement® will have access to Endorsed® Category III and IV IECMH Mentors and Reflective Supervisors and Consultants.

## **CREATION OF SUSTAINABILITY PLAN FOR MASSAIMH**

Creating a sustainability plan for MassAIMH is vital to the ongoing success of this project. The collaboration will develop a strategy to ensure supportive, sustainable funding for MassAIMH; determine membership criteria, including dues and membership benefits for Endorsed® and non-Endorsed® professionals; and cultivate a community of members including both Endorsed® IECMH professionals and others.

