

Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health

Overview of Graduate Certificate in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

The 15 graduate credit Graduate Certificate in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health prepares educators, early childhood staff, mental health practitioners, counselors, clergy, pediatricians, nurses, early intervention professionals, maternal-child home visitors, child protective staff, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech and language pathologists and allied professionals in the field of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health, an interdisciplinary field concerned with the optimal physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of the infant and young child (birth through 8 years old) within the context of his/her family.

The certificate program curriculum encourages candidates to apply their learning in working relationships and roles with children and families **within the scope of their specific professional title, licensure, credential and/or practice** in three critical domains:

- The integration of principles and practices of infant and early childhood mental health into all educational, service, policy and advocacy programs
- The implications and applications of relationship-based intervention
- The critical importance of reflective practices in all educational and service programs. Reflective practice can be defined as the regular practice of stepping back from professional work and being helped to think about actions and interactions in order to become aware of how students/clinician's reactions to the infants, children and families, and their behaviors, emotions and personal histories might affect the work with others. Reflective practice also requires professionals to consider the world "through the eyes" of each infant, child and family member they encounter.

The Certificate requirements are:

- 3 core courses (9 credits): ICMH 501, ICMH 502 and ICMH 603
- A supervised practicum (3 credits) – ICMH 604
- A Family Systems Course (3 credits) – FCST 542
- An "integrated" final project.

The certificate is offered through the *Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health* (CAECMH) in the College of Education and Human Services. Graduate credits may be applied toward an advanced degree. Consultation with the appropriate department is recommended.

Course descriptions are provided below:

Course Numbers: ICMH 501 (3 Credits)

Course title: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives in Infant and Child Mental Health

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the main issues in the field of Infant Mental Health - an interdisciplinary field concerned with the optimal development of the infant and young child within the context of his/her primary relationships. Students survey the theoretical origins of the field as well as contributions made by various allied disciplines to our understanding of human development. They review historical and contemporary perspectives on the developmental progress of infants, toddlers and young children, and methods by which assessment and intervention occur. Students examine the remarkable competencies of the newborn and infant, the field of interpersonal neurobiology, the nature of human attachment, the psychological dimensions of pregnancy and parenting, including the critical ways in which the infant's arrival alters the family system, and the interpersonal nature of human development. They also understand disruptions and disorders of attachment and the impact on relational development over the lifespan.

Course Numbers: ICMH 502 (3 Credits)

Course title: Wonder, Hypothesis, and Meaning in Assessment and Research in Infant and Child Mental Health

Course Description:

Students in this course examine methods of observation, assessment and research in the field of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health. Students observe infant-parent interactions through visual, verbal, kinesthetic, and tactile cues in order to deepen their observation and "wondering" capacity. They also learn and practice informal methods of assessment as well as discipline-appropriate formal screening and assessment measures that address multiple aspects of development within the context of family, community and socio-cultural systems. Students analyze classification and diagnostic systems such as the DSM-IV, the DC:0-3R (Diagnostic Classifications of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood), and the ICDL DCIM (Diagnostic Manual for Infancy and Early Childhood). Students pay special attention to the assessment of selected clinical concerns in early childhood development, including Autism Spectrum Disorders, childhood anxiety, regulatory difficulties, disrupted parent-child relationships and challenging behaviors.

Co-requisite: ICMH 501 - Historical and Theoretical Perspectives in Infant and Child Mental Health

Course Numbers: ICMH 603 (3 Credits)
Course title: Risk and Resiliency in Special Populations in Infant and Child Mental Health

Course Description:

This course introduces students to special topics in the field of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health. Students survey current trends and influences in the field, including the changing dynamics of the family structure, physical, emotional or environmental stressors on the infant/child or on the caregiver, and external or communal stressors on the functioning of the family system. Special topics related to the developmental and emotional health of families include prematurity, failure to thrive, adolescent parenthood, maternal depression, parents with developmental disabilities, mental illness or substance abuse, violence and its impact on families (parental sexual abuse, parental abandonment/neglect), grief and loss, foster care, contemporary families, assisted reproduction, etc. Students examine the impact of these topics on the relationship of the infant-parent dyad or family. Students also analyze their own personal thoughts, reactions and interventions when working with families with these experiences.

Pre- requisites: ICMH 501: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives
ICMH 502: Wonder, Hypothesis and Meaning in Assessment and Research
(Can be taken as an elective by non-certificate students)

Course Numbers: ICMH 604 (3 Credits)
Course title: Practicum: Implications and Applications in Infant, Child and Family Interventions

Course Description:

In this culminating course for the **Graduate Certificate in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health**, students explore methods of intervention and support of infants, young children and families, including developmental interventions, dyadic psychotherapy and family support models. Students specifically investigate predominant therapeutic models in the field, including Child-Parent Psychotherapy, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, the DIR/Floortime approach, and various play and family therapy techniques, as they relate to specific disorders of infancy and early childhood or to disruptions in family functioning. Through the component of a field work practicum placement, students apply observation, assessment and intervention skills in practice. They address field work in class through **reflective practice** models of supervision, use of videotaped sessions and case discussion, including discussing the dimensions of the clinical relationship, the self of the worker, transference, counter transference, and socio-cultural factors of working with others.

Pre- requisites: ICMH 501, ICMH 502, ICMH 603

Course Numbers: FCST 542 (3 Credits)
Course title: Dynamics of Family Interaction

Course Description:

This course, offered through the Family and Child Studies Department. Students engage in a critical review of current concepts and theories, both psychological and sociological, and how they are used in understanding patterns and problems of family relationships.

Note: Students in the **Graduate Certificate in Infant and Early Childhood** program, are expected to integrate their knowledge of infant-parent mental health and the relational/interpersonal context of human development, into the literature and research examined in this course

Pre-requisites: none

Integrated Final Project

All Certificate students must complete a final project in consultation with their advisor. Students who are licensed in a clinical mental health field will be required to complete an integrated case report based upon a child/family case from their practicum. Non-clinical candidates will develop a final project that involves a comprehensive program in which an infant-child mental health perspective is integrated into a professional development, service or policy program.

*In our professional development programs,
we honor the traditions established by the
late Selma Fraiberg, Thea Bry and Stanley Greenspan.*