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Irving B. Harris

# Infant Mental Health Certificate Program



If you are an experienced infant/family specialist or mental health professional who wants to **prepare yourself to support the emotional health and development** of infants, toddlers, and families in a range of settings, Erikson's 18-credit certificate program in infant mental health was designed for you.

You will be trained to identify, intervene in, and/or collaborate with others to intervene in troubled parent/child relationships and to work with children with social/emotional behavioral concerns. Further, you will be prepared to help programs move toward a relationship-based approach to practice and to mentor others in the infant/family field.

**This program is designed for**

- *Licensed mental health clinicians* with three years of experience working with young children and/or families (e.g., clinical social workers, clinical psychologists, school psychologists, marriage and family therapists, clinical professional counselors, psychiatric nurses).
- *Child development specialists and family support specialists* with a master's degree and three years experience with infants, toddlers, and families.
- *Credentialed early intervention (EI)* providers with three years of experience (e.g., developmental therapists with a master's degree, occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, physical therapists, and nurses).
- *Health professionals* with three years experience with infants, toddlers, and families (e.g., nurse practitioners, child life specialists, pediatricians).

Taken over two years, the program includes course work offered primarily in the evenings, an internship, and two years of clinical supervision.

# Prerequisite courses

*(Waived for students who have taken these or similar courses in the past five years.)*

## **1390 Infant/Toddler Growth and Development: Typical and Atypical**

(3 credit hours)

This course is designed to introduce students to in-depth knowledge of infant development, including developmental patterns of infants at risk. The knowledge includes an understanding of the basic developmental processes in the domains of cognition, social/emotional development, communication, and sensory and motor development. Throughout the course, consideration will be given to the interaction of infant development with social, cultural, and interpersonal environments. Special focus will be placed on the influences of developmental challenges on the child's emerging capacities for engagement in relationships and in learning.

## **1392 Infant/Toddler Screening and Assessment**

(3 credit hours)

*Prerequisite: 30 hours of hands-on, direct experience with infants and toddlers.*

This course takes a relationship-based developmental approach to observation, screening, and assessment of children from birth through age three. Assessment is viewed as an integral part of the intervention process and as a collaboration between parents and providers. Students are trained to focus on underlying developmental processes as well as the appearance of individual milestones in cognitive, social/emotional, communication, and sensory and motor development. Students are guided in partnering with parents to assess the child's strengths and challenges to development, and to identify the family's priorities for services. Selected screening tools, standardized tests, and criterion referenced instruments are reviewed. Students receive introductory training in one screening and one assessment tool, including administration, interpretation, referral, and recommendations for developmental intervention. The rationale and practices for screening, referral, and assessment in various infant/toddler settings (e.g., child care, Early Head Start, early intervention) are examined.

It is the policy of Erikson Institute not to discriminate against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age, disability, or veteran status in matters of admissions, employment, or services or in the educational programs or activities it operates, in accordance with civil rights legislation and institutional commitment. Any alleged violations of this policy should be directed to the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty.

Erikson Institute reserves the right to change without notice any statement in this publication concerning, but not limited to, rules, policies, tuition, fees, curricula, and courses.

## Required courses

### **I370 Foundations of Infant Mental Health**

(3 credit hours)

This course will provide a historical, theoretical, and empirical overview of the field of infant mental health. The different definitions and parameters of infant mental health will be explored, from promotion to prevention, intervention, and treatment. Classic literature will be revisited, including the evolution of the concept from early infant psychiatry to the pioneering work of Selma Fraiberg to modern conceptions that focus on the promotion of social emotional well being in the early years. The empirical basis to practice will also be examined, focusing on how important theories of social development (e.g., attachment, temperament) are applied to infant mental health work. Emphasis is placed on how infant mental health principles provide a foundation for work with infants, toddlers, and families across all settings and disciplines.

### **I371 Infant Observation**

(1 credit hour, yearlong course)

Observing infants and toddlers over time in the context of their families and homes is the foundation for understanding parent/child relationships and for assessment and intervention. This course guides participants through a process of observation, which includes visits to a family every two weeks, recording descriptive notes, and discussing the observations in a monthly seminar. The intent of this process is to be able to describe as completely as possible what one sees,

to understand the complexities of “seeing” through the lens of one’s personal experience, and to witness the narrative of a baby evolve over time.

### **I372 Infant Mental Health Practice:**

#### **Developmental Intervention**

(3 credit hours)

As a foundation for infant mental health practice across settings, this course reviews a range of approaches to developmental intervention with young children with social/emotional, behavioral, and developmental concerns and their families and addresses how the child’s and family’s strengths and vulnerabilities inform the intervention process. Emphasis is placed on the Developmentally informed, Individual differences-based, Relationship-focused Intervention (DIR) paradigm and floor time strategies as a comprehensive approach covering developmental capacities of the child; children’s individual differences in sensory, motor, and reactivity; and the relationships that support development. Participants will learn to observe functional emotional developmental levels, understand individual sensory profiles, and implement floor time strategies in different settings. Participants will also learn to integrate behavioral strategies as needed to assist parents with their child’s development and with common behavior problems and regulatory issues such as sleeping, feeding, toileting, discipline, and coping with stress. The course is accompanied by a clinical seminar and can be credited toward a DIR certificate.

### **I373 Clinical Seminar in Infant**

#### **Mental Health**

(2 credit hours)

The clinical seminar is taken in conjunction with Infant Mental Health Practice: Developmental Intervention. In this seminar, participants will have the opportunity to apply concepts from the course into their work with two families, at least one of which will be from their own work setting.

### **I374 Developmental Assessment Institute**

(2 credit hours)

Intensive training will be offered in social/emotional screening and assessment. All students will be trained in a range of screening tools and then will select one assessment tool for intensive practice.

### **I375 Infant Mental Health Practice:**

#### **Parent/Child Relationships**

(4 credit hours, yearlong course)

This course focuses on developing relationships with families and on how these relationships can support growth and change in both child and parent. Emphasis is placed on sensitive listening, understanding and holding difficult emotional states, and providing emotional support, concrete assistance, and developmental guidance specific to the individual child. Participants will learn about the early identification of risk, screening for social/emotional/behavioral problems, and how to assess the parent/child relationship, including the parents' and the child's capacities for relatedness.

Major emphasis is placed on the practice of parent/infant psychotherapy, including understanding and responding to the parents' history, allowing relationship conflicts to be expressed and explored, and supporting parents in observing, nurturing, and engaging with their child. Participants will have the opportunity to learn about different approaches to parent/infant psychotherapy and to receive training in interaction guidance, a method that uses a videotape intervention approach. Students will develop in-depth intervention skills as well as learn to recognize the limits of their practice, based on their disciplinary training, and how to collaborate with other care systems including adult mental health services.

Topics covered will include parental psychiatric illness, chemical dependency, child maltreatment and trauma, failure to thrive, domestic violence, and infants and toddlers in foster care.

### **I376 Infant Mental Health Internship**

(3 credit hours, yearlong course)

This internship in an infant mental health setting is taken in conjunction with Infant Mental Health Practice: Parent/Child Relationships. Individual clinical supervision will be provided throughout the internship year and will offer a uniquely supportive learning relationship in which to integrate theory and practice. Further, students will undertake an integrative project, which will build their capacity to bring a relationship-based approach to their own and to other settings.

# Admission

All applicants must have a bachelor's degree and a minimum of three years of experience. Mental health clinicians need to be licensed to practice in Illinois. Developmental specialists and family support specialists must have a master's degree. Applicants must submit an admission application and application fee, transcripts of all college and university academic work, and three letters of recommendation. Applicants will be interviewed and selected on the basis of their academic performance, work history, and commitment to the field. *The priority application deadline is March 15. We will continue to accept applications after the deadline if space is available.*

## Scholarship and loan assistance

A limited number of partial scholarships are available for students in the infant mental health certificate program. No separate application is required. Certificate students may also apply for low-interest federal student loans. To be considered for loan assistance, you must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

**To download an application for admission, visit our web site at**

*[www.erikson.edu/applications](http://www.erikson.edu/applications)*

**For more information about the Irving B. Harris Infant Mental Health Certificate Program, contact**

Office of Admission

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## Other Erikson programs with a focus on infant studies

### **Infant Specialist Certificate Program**

This post-baccalaureate, 18-credit hour program prepares professionals to work with children from birth through age three and their families in a variety of settings. You can also take individual courses online for academic or professional development credit.

### **Master of science in child development with infancy specialization**

Students can pursue a master's degree and specialize in infancy, focusing on either prevention and early intervention or child care. Those who specialize in early intervention are eligible to seek the Illinois early intervention specialist credential.

### **Year-round professional development programs**

Erikson offers numerous short courses, trainings, and workshops for experienced practitioners, including Advanced Practice in Infancy—seminars led by nationally recognized experts that focus on cutting-edge issues in infant/family practice, and the Developing Child: Brain and Behavior, a symposium series cosponsored by the University of Chicago. Visit our web site for current programs at [www.erikson.edu/professionaldevelopment](http://www.erikson.edu/professionaldevelopment).

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