

**Infant Mental Health: Theory to Practice**  
**Multi-Disciplinary Training**  
*The Society for the Protection and Care of Children*

**Training Description**

A ten-week, multidisciplinary training on the theory and practice of Infant Mental Health. Focus on attachment and psychodynamic theoretical foundations, reflective capacity, trauma, separations and loss, assessment, intervention and the social/emotional/attachment development from ages 0-3 years. Training is both didactic and reflectively experiential.

**Course Objectives**

- Gain a clear and deep understanding of fundamental theories of Infant Mental Health, Attachment Theory, and Social/Emotional/Attachment Development for children 0-3 years old.
- Gain exposure and practice in working from an Infant Mental Health perspective when serving children 0-3 years old with their parent/caregiver.
- Gain a exposure to assessment and diagnostic criteria in the field of Infant Mental Health from commonly used and rigorously studied tools (eg: Emotional Availability Scales) and the diagnostic manual for infants, the Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood: Revised Edition (DC:0-5)
- Engage in the practice of self-reflection and awareness in order to notice counter-transferential issues and one's own "ghost from the nursery" (Fraiberg) that arise when working with children 0-3 years old and their caregivers.
- Meet 25 hours of training criteria for the New York State Association for Infant Mental Health Endorsement.

**Rationale**

New York State, and the Rochester area specifically, are experiencing an increased valuing of and demand for Infant Mental Health specialists in all disciplines. Fortunately, The New York State Association for Infant Mental Health's joined the national trend by adopting The Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health's *Endorsement for Culturally Sensitive, Relationship-Focused Practice Promoting Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health*®. The Endorsement® system is the premiere, global effort that identifies best practice competencies across disciplines and settings, offering multiple career pathways for professional development in the infant, early childhood and family field. This course aims to meet many of the training competency criteria for the New York State Infant Mental Health Endorsement of 30 hours of Infant Mental Health training and will allow professionals to pursue this post-degree specialization and credential; a specialization and credential in high demand in the Rochester area

with 1,000's of children 0-3 years old and their parents impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Please visit [nysaimh.org](http://nysaimh.org) for further details about the trajectory of Infant Mental Health across the state and the Endorsement process.

## **Participants**

This course is applicable for professionals and current students with a strong curiosity, interest and possible current practice in working with parents and infants/young children from a deep, clinical perspective. Additionally, clinicians and professionals may be interested in taking this course in order to be prepared for the NY State Infant Mental Health Endorsement that will be rostering Infant Mental Health Specialists from multiple disciplines, adding to qualified and well trained professionals in our community. Finally, professionals who work as leaders, advocates and policymakers in infant and young child serving professions will find this training useful in imbedding best practices in their particular disciplines and organizations. These disciplines, fields and professions include nurses, child-life specialists, social workers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech therapists, policy makers, physicians, home visiting professionals, therapists, clinical supervisors, child welfare, attorneys for children, early childhood educators, and program directors.

## **Coursework Details**

This course focuses on attachment theory, Infant Mental Health, Social-Emotional Development of children 0-3 years old, the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences, in particular trauma and attachment disruptions, assessment and diagnosis of the parent-infant relationship and the social-emotional and attachment health of the infant.

Weatherston (2000) highlights the tenets of Infant Mental Health that are guideposts for this course:

- 1) Optimal growth and development occur within nurturing relationships.
- 2) The birth and care of a baby offer a family the possibility of new relationships, growth and change.
- 3) What happens in the early years affects the course of development across the life span.
- 4) Early developing attachment relationships may be distorted or disturbed by parental histories of unresolved losses and traumatic life events (“ghosts in the nursery”)
- 5) The therapeutic presence of an Infant Mental Health specialist may reduce the risk of relationship failure and offer the hopefulness of warm and nurturing parental responses.

## **Cost**

SPCC has a deep commitment to building multi-disciplinary Infant Mental Health Capacity in Western New York, including making the training as accessible as possible. For information related to cost, please email [trainings@spcc-roch.org](mailto:trainings@spcc-roch.org).

## Schedule of Offered Trainings

This ten-week training is typically offered three times per year, with the first session beginning in the third week of January, the second session beginning the second week in July and the third session beginning the second week in September. The training meetings occur for ten consecutive Wednesdays from 9:30-11am in Rochester, NY. This results in 15 hours of face to face training, and includes approximately 6 hours of independent learning (e.g.: assigned readings, learning exercises) outside of meeting times. Please note that Continuing Education Credits are not available for readings and learning activities.

## Instructors

**Sarah Fitzgibbons, LMHC, MT-BC, IMH-E®, Infant Mental Health Mentor- Clinical** (Lead Facilitator) has spent the past 18+ years practicing, researching, supervising, teaching and developing programs in the field of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health, with a specific expertise in infants and young children impacted by trauma, loss, attachment disruptions, child welfare, and parent-child relationship assessments. Sarah currently works as the Clinical Director at The Society for the Protection and Care of Children in Rochester, NY. Sarah holds a Bachelors degree in Music Therapy, and a Master's Degree in Counseling Psychology from Naropa University and completed post-Masters training in Infant Mental Health through the University of Colorado (The Kempe Center). In 2015, Sarah was invited to participate as one of six I-ECMH experts across New York State to become Endorsed at the highest level in the field: Infant Mental Health Clinical Mentor (IMHM-C). She is a governing board member for The New York State Association for Infant Mental Health (NYS-AIMH), and serves as the Endorsement Committee Chairperson for NYS-AIMH. Additionally, she works with national I-ECMH leaders to advance the field, ensure fidelity, and increase capacity. In addition to her role at SPCC, Sarah is an instructor of Infant Mental Health coursework at The Warner School of Education (University of Rochester). Sarah is deeply committed to cultivating and nurturing Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health expertise across our community and state through relationship based, culturally sensitive practice, teaching, supervision, and consultation. Above all other training, education, experience and license, Sarah has been most deeply challenged, enriched and inspired in her professional work through her lifelong role as a mother and daughter.

**Megan Smith, MT-BC, LCAT, IMH-E®, Infant Family Specialist**, (Facilitator and Training Coordinator) is an Infant/Early Childhood Therapist in the Family Trauma Intervention Program at Society for Protection and Care of Children in Rochester, NY. Megan is also co-founder and executive director of 501(c)3 Alice's Encore: Community Music & Mindfulness, Inc. As a music therapist, she has experience working with people of all ages and abilities in educational, medical, behavioral health, and private settings. Her clinical and academic research has included Group Music Therapy for Empathy and Self-Esteem Development in Children, and Development of a Model for Music Therapy in the Pediatric Emergency Department. She presents on and trains in the topics of Trauma, Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health, Mindfulness, and Music Therapy

at the local and national level. Megan currently sits on the Training and Education Committee of the NYS Association for Infant Mental Health and the ECDI Social-Emotional Committee.

**Alana Russotti, LMSW, IMH-E®, Infant Mental Health Specialist**, (Co-Facilitator) has been working with children and families impacted by trauma in our community for over 10 years. Alana holds a Bachelor's degree from St. John Fisher College in Psychology and Women & Gender Studies, and a Master's Degree from Fordham University in Social Work with a Clinical Concentration. Fueled by a core belief that the most meaningful way to support children is through their relationships with their caregivers, she began her career at SPCC in the Supervised Visitation Program. In 2014, after identifying a need for more intensive treatment options for children in foster care and high-conflict custody situations, Alana co-created Rochester's first Therapeutic Visitation Program; she currently works as the Clinical Supervisor of this program. Alana holds particular expertise in providing and consulting in areas of Reflective Supervision, parent-child Emotional Availability®, child welfare, child-centered high-conflict custody, Child-Centered Play Therapy, the impact of trauma on children, and Infant Mental Health. Relationships are at the core of who Alana is and she deeply values the impact of healthy relationships between multi-disciplinary systems, in the supervisory relationship, and with clients alike; Alana is grateful for the personal and professional relationships that give her the fuel and grounding to do this work.

As the Supervisor of the Teen Age Parent Support Services Program (TAPSS) at the Society for the Protection and Care of Children (SPCC) in Rochester, NY, **Bonnie Allen, MS, IMH-E®, Infant Mental Health Mentor- Policy**, (Co-Facilitator) has developed a passion for working with young parents and their small children through the IMH lens. She has been providing both direct, home-based service and clinical and programmatic supervision in the program since 1998. Bonnie earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Criminal Justice, a Master's degree in Non-Profit Management and holds a Certificate in Trauma Counseling through the University at Buffalo's Department of Continuing Education. As a National Trainer for the Parents as Teachers (PAT) National Center, Bonnie has been providing PAT Foundational, PAT Foundational II, and Partnering with Teen Parents training since 2009. Bonnie is currently awaiting exam results for her IMHM-P endorsement application through the NYS Association for Infant Mental Health. Bonnie has long recognized the importance of culturally sensitive, trauma-informed and relationship-based work and since receiving her first training in IMH, has been committed to incorporating the principles and practices of IMH into the work of the TAPSS program and 'spreading the word' about this critical and foundational way of being and seeing when working with families with young children.

*"Infant mental health" is defined as the healthy social and emotional development of a child from birth to 3 years; and a growing field of research and practice devoted to the promotion of healthy social and emotional development, prevention of mental health problems; and treatment of the mental health problems of very young children in the context of their families.*

*- Zero To Three*

## **Training Schedule**

Class 1- Introduction to the Theory and Practice of IMH

Class 2- The Importance of Attachment Security

Class 3- IMH & Implications of Pregnancy/Labor/Delivery

Class 4- Social, Emotional & Attachment Development of Infants 0-3 years

Class 5-

- Understanding how “problems are defined”
- Clinical assumptions in IMH
- The language of interaction in IMH
- Home Visiting in IMH

Class 6-

- IMH social history taking
- Baby as transference object
- IMH and ambivalence

Class 7-

- Cancellations, lateness and missed appointments in IMH
- The IMH specialist’s interaction with the baby
- Building a referral network
- Countertransference and the need for reflective supervision.

Class 8- IMH and trauma

Class 9- Multi-disciplinary IMH assessment

Class 10- Multi-disciplinary IMH general intervention