

INFANT/TODDLER (I/T) COMPETENCIES

DRAFT

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INTRODUCTION to the Infant Toddler Competencies

In the summer of 2016, the Child Development Division of the Department for Children and Families with the Vermont Head Start Collaboration office invited professionals from diverse perspectives to form the Vermont Infant Toddler (I/T) Credential Development Stakeholders' Taskforce. That Taskforce with the support of a facilitator and national consultants used the *Strategic Planning Steps to Develop the Infant Toddler Professional Credential* to design a Vermont Infant Toddler Credential. In the spring of 2017, the Taskforce determined that infant toddler competencies were needed as the foundation for the credential. With input from the Taskforce, an adhoc group worked for a year to create the first full draft of the Vermont Infant Toddler Competencies.

The Content of the Infant Toddler (I/T) Competencies

- The I/T Competencies build upon and should be referenced with, the [2017 Vermont Core Knowledge and Competencies](#) for early childhood professionals (2017 CK and C). The 2017 CK and C align with the NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards and the Vermont Agency of Education Professional Standards for Early Childhood Endorsement. Like the 2017 CK and C, the I/T Competencies reference the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS). The I/T Competencies are specifically pertinent to those working with pregnant women, infants and toddlers, and their families. Like the 2017 CK and C, the I/T Competencies are written as skill statements.
- The I/T Competencies incorporate relevant portions of two national competencies documents for professionals working with infants and toddlers: the Zero to Three Critical Competencies, and Collaborative for Understanding the Pedagogy of Infant/Toddler Development (CUPID). The committee also referenced many other national documents defining the skills and knowledge of professionals working with this age range. (See Appendix)
- The I/T Competencies are relevant for professionals working in programs that serve infants and toddlers, directors of those programs, and home visitors. Knowledge and skills relevant to the prenatal period are included and especially important for home visitors. This credential does not replace existing home visitor or early intervention credentials/certifications.

The Structure of the Infant Toddler (I/T) Competencies

- Competencies particularly relevant for Home Visitor are marked HV.
- The Core Knowledge Areas in the 2017 CK and C - with their subheadings, also serve as the categories for the I/T Competencies. The I/T Competencies, however, combine the knowledge areas "What We Teach" and "How We Teach," due to the unique nature of the infant/toddler period.
- The competencies progress across three, cumulative tiers. Tier 3 competencies include Tier 1 and 2. Tier 2 includes Tier 1. There are fewer competencies as the Tiers increase.
- The committee designed the Tiers to align with the Early Childhood Career Ladder. Tier 1 equates with Level II, Tier 2 equates with Level III, and Tier 3 equates with Level IV.

The use of the Infant Toddler Competencies

Like all professional competencies, the I/T Competencies can be used as a framework to assess professional competence, define curricula, plan training, set staff goals, frame job descriptions and evaluate performance. They provide a common language for infant toddler professionals.

Knowledge Area: CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Tier 1 (level II)	Tier 2 (Level III)	Tier 3 (Level IV)
a) Demonstrates understanding that young children learn and develop through play, especially child-initiated play.	a) Identifies and supports specific play patterns of groups of infants and toddlers.	a) Identifies and supports specific play patterns of individual infants and toddlers
b) Recognizes the prenatal, infant and toddler years as a unique developmental period of brain growth and development and recognizes developmental differences unique to this age range.	b) Adjusts interactions and practices to keep pace with the child's unique progression of development and brain growth.	
c) Recognizes how experiences, environmental factors, and biological factors influence growth and development during this time period, contributing to the uniqueness of each individual.	c) Modifies interactions with child based on their understanding how experiences, environmental factors, and biological factors influence growth and development.	
e) Identifies how individual temperamental tendencies of infants and toddlers are expressed, and provides positive responsive interactions and experiences.	e) Models and facilitates development of "goodness of fit" between children and the adults in their life.	
f) Recognizes the unique and rapid sequence of I/T development in all domains: physical, cognitive, social, emotional, self-care, and communication and literacy;	f) Provides environments and experiences that both challenge and support development.	f) Evaluates and modifies the environment and experiences in order to challenge and support children's development.
g) Recognizes that appropriate risk-taking, through exploration, is necessary for children's growth.	g) Allows supportive risk-taking by children as they explore.	g) Designs appropriate risk-taking opportunities for children as they explore.

Tier 1 (level II)	Tier 2 (Level III)	Tier 3 (Level IV)
h) Recognizes that the foundation for building resilience begins prenatally; and that birth to three is a critical time in the formation of skills related to building resilience.	h) Identifies and uses research-based and current strategies to promote resiliency and to build protective factors in children.	
i) Recognizes sensory needs, temperament, reactions to sensory stimulation, range, and reactions to changing states and transitions.	i) Positively supports the child's development of self-regulation.	i) Designs and coordinates with others to support the child's development of self-regulation.
j) Recognizes and promotes behavior as communication and a critical period for language development.	j) Provides intentional opportunities and engages with the child to enhance communication skills.	j) Evaluates the effectiveness of strategies used to enhance the child's communication skills.
k) Recognizes the development of social and emotional competence as critical for brain development and all other learning.	k) Identifies and uses research-based and current strategies for the development of social and emotional skills, recognizing that these are key components of developing healthy brain architecture.	k) Evaluates the effectiveness of strategies utilized to support the social/emotional competence of every child, and makes adaptations as needed.
l) Describes fundamental capacities for joint attention and regulation, engagement across a wide range of emotions.	l) Plans and implements for two-way communication with the child.	l) Supports navigation of complex social problem solving by the child.
m) Identifies how the environment and adult interactions influence infant/toddler behavior.	m) Adapts own interactions and the environment to support optimal development of individual children.	m) Assesses environment and adult interactions, and informs others about how these influence the behavior of each infant and toddler.

Knowledge Area: Families and Communities

Tier 1 (level 11)	Tier 2 (Level III)	Tier 3 (Level IV)
a) Demonstrates respect for how various family structures, circumstances, values, and cultures impact relationships with infants and toddlers (example: feeding, sleeping and daily routines...).	a) Effectively engages family members in order to synthesize the family's belief systems with professional knowledge and policies.	
b) Supports parents/guardians as they understand and honor their child's unique personality, identity, temperament and initiative.	b) Create opportunities for families to use information about their child's temperament to enhance the child's learning throughout different stages of development.	
c) Helps parents/guardians observe and support their child's development.	c) Provides guidance to families on current benchmarks and anticipated developmental milestones unique to each child.	c) Provide strategies for families to observe and support all aspects of child's development in the home.
d) HV: Recognizes that parents/guardians have unique goals for their children and family, which may be distinct from the goals of the home visitor.	d) HV: Uses strength-based approaches to assist families in identifying their goals.	d) HV: Supports families in achieving their goals.
e) Recognizes, honors, and supports expectant parents and parents/guardians of I/T's dreams and goals for their children and their family.	e) Recognizes and accepts that expectant parents and parents/guardians of I/T's have unique dreams and goals for their children and family	e) Supports parents/guardians in articulating their dreams and goals for their children and family

Tier 1 (level 11)	Tier 2 (Level III)	Tier 3 (Level IV)
f) Appreciates and demonstrates respect for the various emotional responses and experiences of expectant families and those with very young children, and understands how these emotional states can influence family dynamics, communication, and expectations.	f) Promotes parental resilience by supporting families to manage stress effectively and buffer children during stressful times	f) Designs activities that support families in building protective factors and encourage families to access concrete support in times of need
g) Recognizes and supports parent-child attunement and attachment among the child, family members and other caregivers.	g) Creates setting specific opportunities that support parent-child attunement and attachment among the child, family members and other caregivers.	g) Designs expanded setting specific opportunities to enhance parent-child attunement and attachment among the child, family members and other caregivers.
h) Supports parent's strengths through recognition and validation of choices and skills.		
i) Demonstrates awareness of community resources available to families, and the process of referral to these resources for expectant parents/guardians and parents/guardians of I/T; and supports families to advocate for themselves.	i) Create opportunities for families to develop skills and tools to identify their needs and advocate for themselves to connect to services	i) Coordinates opportunities for families to provide concrete support to other families in the program or community to encourage reciprocity
j) Demonstrates knowledge of the types, possible causes, risk factors and symptoms and potential impact of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders and the higher risk of domestic violence during pregnancy.	j) Supports families to connect with appropriate community resources	j) Coordinates opportunities for community and connection to support new and expectant families.

Tier 1 (level 11)	Tier 2 (Level III)	Tier 3 (Level IV)
k) Recognizes the importance of working in partnership with families of dual-/multi-language learners to support home language development	k) Incorporates commonly used and familiar words in the child's home language(s) into the child care setting	
l) Identifies strategies and opportunities to support parents/guardians in increasing their understanding of their children's learning and development through play	l) Selects strategies to support parents/guardians in increasing their understanding of their children's learning and development through play	l) Implements these strategies
m) HV: Demonstrates skills for collaborating with parents/guardians to establish common goals for future visits.	m) HV: Promotes opportunities for parents/guardians to build skills in planning for home visits.	m) HV: Supports the family to take the lead in setting goals and planning for home visits.
n) HV: Recognizes the attitudes, cultural contexts, or barriers that may impact a mother's decision to initiate or continue breastfeeding.	n) HV: Responsive to the attitudes, cultural contexts, or barriers that may impact a mother's decision to initiate or continue breastfeeding.	

Knowledge Area: OBSERVING and ASSESSING

Tier 1 (level II)	Tier 2 (Level III)	Tier 3 (Level IV)
a) Identifies what to look for during observations of Infants and toddlers, and how to interpret the data.	a) Practices a system of on-going observations of individual infants and toddlers and the group to inform curriculum and communicate with families.	
b) Describes the rationale and purpose for various types of research-based Infant/ Toddler assessment and screening tools, and is able to administer screening tools appropriately.	b) Identifies, is trained in, and uses research-based Infant/Toddler specific assessment tools (criterion based, play based, standardized assessments) in accordance with State/Programmatic requirements. Analyzes result and makes appropriate referrals as needed.	b) Communicates results of assessments with families and appropriate community partners in support of child and program goals.
c) Recognizes the unique characteristics of documentation related to Infants and Toddlers.	c) Practices documentation of infant and toddler behavior and development (i.e. schedules and routines).	
d) Observes the child while in natural environments, recognizing the family and environmental context, child's health, and current arousal state at the time to best learn about the child.	d) Interprets results of all assessments for individual children.	d) Develops experiences for individual child based on results of assessments.

Knowledge Area: HOW WE TEACH and WHAT WE TEACH

Tier 1 (level II)	Tier 2 (Level III)	Tier 3 (Level IV)
a) Recognizes how experiences of the day including routines, i.e. diaper changing, dressing, meals, and transitions, are essential parts of the curricula.	a) Incorporates experiences of the day in implementing curricula.	a) Evaluates the success of the opportunities offered and makes adaptations to the curriculum.
b) Practices responsive relationships with children, recognizing that consistent, responsive relationships with primary caregivers shape the architecture of the brain, and promote attachment.	b) Consistently practices respectful and responsive relationships with children.	b) Articulates and models consistent reflective and responsive practice with children, and supports other professionals to do so.
c) Creates responsive and safe learning environments that are unique to the developing and changing needs of infants and toddlers. (Examples in Appendix)	c) Plans and modifies the learning environment to meet needs and interests of individual children.	
d) Uses open ended and varied materials with a wide range of sensory properties for creating meaningful, rich experiences in which multiple children can engage.	d) Makes modifications to materials to meet the needs of individual children.	
e) Practices strategies that support creating a community of young learners of infants and toddlers and enhances a sense of belonging.	e) Recognizes and modifies strategies to balance individual needs and interests as well as the group experience.	

Tier 1 (level II)	Tier 2 (Level III)	Tier 3 (Level IV)
<p>f) Practices strategies that support social and emotional development of infants and toddlers.</p> <p>(Examples in Appendix)</p>	<p>f) Modifies strategies to meet individual needs of children and the group.</p>	
<p>g) Recognizes that infants and toddlers learn best when given opportunities to engage in meaningful activities throughout their daily play and caregiving routines.</p>	<p>g) Provides individualized opportunities for meaningful activities to engage infants and toddlers throughout the day.</p>	<p>g) Designs and evaluates opportunities that address individual needs, strengths and interests of each infant and toddler.</p>
<p>h) Practices strategies that support children's' development of play skills.</p> <p>(Examples in appendix)</p>	<p>h) Uses observations to enhance opportunities to support children's' play skills</p>	<p>h) Designs opportunities to Individualize experiences to support children's play skills</p>
<p>i) Encourages persistence with a task by offering verbal support, interest, and questions e.g. "I wonder what would happen if you laid the block on its side?"</p>		
<p>j) Identifies opportunities that support infants and toddlers to predict, explain and reason about the people and world around them.</p>	<p>j) Adapts interactions, the environment, and materials to enhance infants and toddlers opportunities to make predictions, explaining, and reason</p>	<p>j) Evaluates effectiveness of adaptations and continues to adapt appropriately</p>
<p>k) Demonstrate sensitivity to children's signs of fatigue or overstimulation and adjust the pace of activities, tone of voice and behavior in response.</p>	<p>k) Adapts environment and materials in response to children's levels of energy and need for stimulation.</p>	<p>k) Partners with other adults in the environment, to promote responsiveness to children's levels of energy and need for stimulation.</p>

Tier 1 (level II)	Tier 2 (Level III)	Tier 3 (Level IV)
<p>MATHEMATICS</p> <p>a) Demonstrates intentional use of materials and descriptive language that offers a wide variety of opportunities to discover mathematical concepts.</p> <p>(examples in appendix)</p>	<p>a) Adapts materials and language to meet mathematical concepts that match the interests and developmental levels of the group and individual children</p>	<p>a) Evaluates the effectiveness of the integration of mathematical concepts into the program to match children’s interests and developmental levels.</p>
<p>SCIENCE</p> <p>a) Offers infants and toddlers supportive language and repeated opportunities to explore their world infusing scientific concepts.</p> <p>(examples in appendix)</p>	<p>a) Adapts materials and language to meet scientific concepts that match the interests and developmental levels of the group and individual children.</p>	<p>a) Evaluates the effectiveness of the integration of scientific concepts into the program to match children’s interests and developmental levels.</p>
<p>APPROACHES TO LEARNING</p> <p>a) Offers opportunities to encourage the child’s own initiative, curiosity, explorations, problem solving, persistence, and play development</p>		
<p>EMOTIONAL</p> <p>a) Supports the infants’ and toddlers’ progression of regulation from co-regulation to self-regulation through infancy and toddlerhood</p>		
<p>SOCIAL</p> <p>a) Uses intentional language, actions, and environments to support children’s sense of self, belonging and engagement with others.</p>	<p>a) Facilitates toddlers’ social interactions with peers using peer-mediated interventions</p>	

Tier 1 (level II)	Tier 2 (Level III)	Tier 3 (Level IV)
<p>LANGUAGE</p> <p>a) Uses a variety of verbal and non-verbal communication in a serve and return manner to encourage children’s verbal and non-verbal responses.</p> <p>b) Narrates activity using a total communication approach pairing signs/gestures to words/labels to an object or activity as the child is engaged in that activity.</p>	<p>a) Promotes individual children’s communication skills by adjusting adult’s tone, pitch, volume and speed/intensity and non- verbal messaging.</p>	<p>a) Assesses individual children’s communication style and methods and adapts communication approaches accordingly.</p>
<p>LITERACY</p> <p>a) Promotes a positive attitude toward books and other literacy materials by engaging in shared and independent experiences.</p>	<p>a) Provides a variety of literacy opportunities that reflect children’s culture, language, interests and developmental level.</p>	<p>a) Analyzes appropriateness of literacy materials; incorporates and extends concepts, ideas and children’s reactions to the materials.</p>
<p>SOCIAL STUDIES</p> <p>a) Provides materials, picture books and experiences reflecting child’s sense of self and community.</p>	<p>a) Expand materials and opportunities to reflect a wider variety of cultures in the global community as the child grows.</p>	
<p>CREATIVE ARTS</p> <p>a) Encourages child’s self-expression in all modalities and uses language to support the child’s creative process.</p> <p>(examples in appendix)</p>	<p>a) Adapts opportunities and materials to reflect individual children’s interests and developmental levels.</p>	

Knowledge Area: PROFESSIONALISM (definition: – being committed to ongoing professional development through formal and informal opportunities. Also includes how you behave as a professional self-care, self-awareness, and reflective practice)

Reflective Practice (this subheading is not in 2017 CK and C)

Tier 1 (level II)	Tier 2 (Level III)	Tier 3 (Level IV)
a) Recognizes and reflects on how the practitioner’s own assumptions about the intent of children’s behavior can impact the practitioner’s response and practice.	a) Evaluates and adjusts assumptions to ensure practitioner’s response and practice are strength based and reflect the child’s context.	
b) HV: Recognizes the impact of the practitioner-parent relationship on the parent-child relationship.	b) HV: Applies research-based strategies to strengthen the parent-child relationship and modifies as needed	
c) Identifies personal values and culture and how they influence one’s teaching and interactions with children and families and other professionals.	c) Recognizes differences and adapts behaviors as appropriate when there are differences of values while maintaining respect for others.	c) Models behaviors and supports other adults to recognize and accept differing values while maintaining respect for others.
d) HV: Demonstrates skills for guiding parent’s reflections on parenting, child development and well-being including sharing one’s own reflections appropriately.	d) HV: Assesses the effectiveness of strategies used to guide parents, recognizes when strategies used to guide parents are not working, researches additional options, and modifies as needed.	

Knowledge Area: PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

(Specifically for program administrators)

Tier 1 (level II)	Tier 2 (Level III)	Tier 3 (Level IV)
a) Implements policies and practices to communicate with parents/guardians regarding immunization requirements.	a) Provides training for staff about communicating with parents/guardians regarding immunization requirements.	
b) Implements policies and practices that welcome all parents/guardians and supports parents who choose to breastfeed.	b) Provides ongoing training with staff on how to better support parents who choose to breastfeed.	b) Regularly assesses policies and implements changes as needed.
c) Implements policies and practices that support the <i>Program for Infant Toddler Care Six Essential Practices</i> which include Primary Caregiving and Continuity of Care. (See Appendix for Information)	c) Provides ongoing training to support staff in implementing the <i>Program for Infant Toddler Care Six Essential Practices</i> .	c) Evaluates policy effectiveness in individual settings and implements changes if needed.
d) Implements policies and practices that support various transitions experienced by children and families.	d) Provides ongoing training with staff on practices to support various transitions experienced by children and families.	d) Regularly assesses policies and implements changes as needed.
e) Provides regular opportunities for reflective practice among staff.	e) Provides reflective supervision with staff.	
f) Implements policies that recognize diversity and enable inclusion in all aspects of programming practices and interactions with families/children and staff.	f) Offers opportunities for ongoing training to support staff in implementing policies related to diversity and inclusion.	f) Evaluates the effectiveness of the policies and practices related to diversity and inclusion.

Knowledge Area: HEALTH, SAFETY, AND NUTRITION

Tier 1 (level II)	Tier 2 (Level III)	Tier 3 (Level IV)
<p>NUTRITION</p> <p>a) HV: Describes the impact of maternal nutrition on the developing fetus as indicated in <i>Caring for Our Children</i>.</p>	<p>a) HV: Support families' increasing knowledge of the impact of maternal nutrition on the developing fetus. Encourage conversation with medical provider.</p>	<p>a) HV: Connect families to community resources regarding nutrition and breastfeeding options.</p>
<p>b) Understands the advantages of, and challenges to continued breastfeeding, and recognizes importance of encouraging breastfeeding families to continue breastfeeding</p>	<p>b) Supporting the parents, both physically and emotionally, to continue breastfeeding. Encourage conversation with medical provider.</p>	<p>b) Connect to breastfeeding-related community resources as needed</p>
<p>c) Recognizes that feeding is a learning process for both parent/guardian and infant or toddler, including children with chronic health issues, and special health needs.</p>	<p>c) Recognizes and responds to infant and toddler cues related to feeding (hunger, overstimulation, satiation, fatigue, etc.) in conjunction with the parent/guardian. Encourage conversation with medical provider.</p>	<p>c) Connect to community resources as needed.</p>
<p>d) Recognizes developmental signs of readiness for introduction of textures, solids, finger-feeding, etc.</p>	<p>d) Supports child's move from liquid to solid foods, in partnership with families, recognizing the role of portion size, texture, variety, balanced diet, potential allergies and food sensitivities. Encourages conversation with medical provider.</p>	<p>d) Connect to community resources as needed</p>
<p>e) Follows individual feeding patterns of the infant: promotes and supports feeding on demand.</p>	<p>e) Collaborates with parents regarding individual infants' feeding patterns and families values, preferences, and beliefs.</p>	<p>e) Seeks additional information and resources as needed</p>

Tier 1 (level II)	Tier 2 (Level III)	Tier 3 (Level IV)
<p>HEALTH</p> <p>a) HV: Recognizes impact of environment and teratogens (an agent that can disturb the development of an embryo/fetus), for pregnant mothers.</p>	<p>a) HV: Supporting pregnant moms in avoiding teratogens and establishing healthy and safe environments for optimal physical, mental and oral health.</p>	<p>a) HV: Seeks additional information and resources as needed, and connects families to community resources as needed.</p>
<p>b) HV: Recognizes the impact of environment on health and the importance of maintenance of optimal physical, mental, and oral health for all family members.</p>	<p>b) HV: Supports all parents/guardians to maintain optimal physical, mental, and oral health</p>	<p>b) HV: Seeks additional information and resources as needed, and connects families to community resources as needed.</p>
<p>c) Recognizes common childhood illness in infants and toddlers and knows how to respond appropriately.</p>	<p>c) Supports parents to increase knowledge of prevention and treatment of childhood illnesses and maintain a medical home.</p>	<p>c) Seeks additional information and resources as needed and connects families to community resources as needed.</p>
<p>d) Recognizes the biological rhythms and individual sleeping patterns of infants and toddlers.</p>	<p>d) Collaborates with parents/guardians and creates environments and routines in their program that support responsiveness to the individual sleeping patterns and biological rhythms of infants and toddlers.</p>	<p>d) Advocates for and supports changes to policies and practices to promote responsiveness to biological rhythms and individual sleeping patterns.</p>
<p>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</p> <p>a) Describes the recommendations of <i>Caring for Our Children 3rd edition</i> regarding tummy time for infants, and time in confining equipment such as high chair, bouncy seat, car seat, swings, strollers (unless specified in individual care plan).</p>	<p>a) Implements the recommendations of <i>Caring for Our Children 3rd edition</i> and shares these recommendations with parent/guardians.</p>	<p>a) Advocates for and supports changes to policies and practices to promote implementation of recommendations of <i>Caring for Our Children 3rd edition</i> related to tummy time, etc.</p>

Tier 1 (level II)	Tier 2 (Level III)	Tier 3 (Level IV)
b) Describes significance of gross motor movement and physical activity to support learning and brain development for I/T.	b) Provides opportunities in indoor and outdoor learning environments for gross motor movement and physical activity in support of learning and brain development for I/T. Shares related information with parents.	

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APPENDICES

Dispositions:

In addition to the Dispositions in the Core Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals, these dispositions were added, specific to infant toddler professionals.

- Appreciates the unique Infant and Toddler developmental stages and respects the balance of autonomy and security of the child that may be expressed by challenging behaviors
- XXXXXXX

Infant Toddler Credential Committee members

Documents used to inform and define the development of the IT Competencies, references and research

- *Caring for Our Children 3rd edition* – recommendations regarding nutrition, breastfeeding, and the introduction of milk for infants and toddlers according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, Institute of Medicine, and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- *Program for Infant Toddler Care - Six Essential Practices*

Examples of the competencies in practice

Infant Toddler Observation Tool (DRAFT)

Other