

ASSOCIATION OF INFANT MENTAL HEALTH IN TENNESSEE

Reflective Supervision/Consultation (RS/C)

What is Reflective Supervision/Consultation?

Reflective practice is the ability to slow down, notice our own thoughts and feelings, and wonder about the thoughts and feelings of others.

Reflective Supervision/Consultation (RS/C) is a safe space in which an Infant Mental Health professional engages in a reflective, collaborative, and regular relationship with a supervisor. In this relationship, the IMH professional is able to explore their thoughts and feelings about their work with infants/very young children and families. RS/C, like Infant Mental Health practices, utilizes the relationship as a vehicle for learning and growth.

Work with infants/very young children can be very challenging and emotional. RS/C aids professionals in gaining a deeper understanding of the complexities of their work with families which leads to improved outcomes for family engagement and intervention. RS/C is characterized by the emphasis it places on understanding and exploring how relationships affect other relationships, particularly how the relationship between a supervisor and a provider impacts the relationship between a provider and the caregiver, and ultimately, the relationship between the caregiver and the infant. The interwoven nature of relationships is described as the parallel process. This is exemplified in the platinum rule:

“Do unto others as you would have others do unto others”
— Jeree Pawl, 1995

“The development of competence to work with infants, young children, and their families involves the emotions as well as the intellect. Awareness of powerful attitudes and feelings is as essential as the acquisition of scientific knowledge and therapeutic skill.”

—Zero to Three, 1990

To help professionals reflect on their work and attend to the parallel process, supervision encourages professionals to be comfortable with not knowing/ambiguity, to practice mindfulness, to be aware of personal/cultural bias, to recognize and regulate strong emotions prior to reacting, and to be willing to process emotions and reactions in the context of the supervisory relationship. There are three essential elements of reflective supervision: reflection, collaboration, and regularity.



How does Reflective Supervision/Consultation relate to Endorsement®?

Reflective Supervision is an essential part of Endorsement® for Categories II, III, and IV and is strongly encouraged for Category I. Each category requires various quantities of Reflective Supervision. Category IV also requires that an applicant provide some amount of RS/C, as both holding and receiving other's emotions is essential to Infant Mental Health work. Reflective Supervision is traditionally provided by someone who is Endorsed, but in some situations, can be provided by individuals who are approved by AIMHiTN.

Receiving Reflective Supervision

For the purposes of Endorsement®, RS/C must be provided by an individual who is Endorsed at a Category II, III, IV or an individual who has been approved as a reflective supervisor. There are currently approved reflective supervisors in each of the grand regions across Tennessee. For more information about contacting a reflective supervisor, please visit AIMHiTN.org

Reflective supervision is “the place to understand the meaning of your work with a family and the meaning and impact of your relationship with the family.”

—Jeree Pawl, public address.

Supporting Reflective Practice

- Being comfortable with ambiguity/not knowing
- Practicing mindfulness
- Reflecting on your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- Considering how your behavior impacts others
- Pausing and reflecting before acting
- Wondering about the meaning of other's behavior
- Taking others' perspectives
- Being aware of your personal/cultural biases
- Lifelong learning

“The Reflective Supervision partnership nurtures a process of remembering, reviewing, and thinking out loud about a specific child, the people who surround that child, and what happens (or doesn't) between them. Reflective supervision enhances vision, clarifying what is seen and even what is see-able.”

—Shahmoon-Shanok, 2006

Strong Foundations. Healthy Relationships. Bright Futures.



Association of Infant Mental Health in Tennessee is a professional membership organization. We welcome all those who are part of the early childhood workforce to join us as we make a lasting impact on infants, toddlers, their families, and the future of Tennessee.

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