

Ethical & Boundary
Considerations when Providing
Infant Mental Health Services
to Infants, Toddlers, & their
Families

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WSU/Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute
IMH Program & Healthier Urban Families Program
Michigan IMH Statewide Meeting
Day Two: April 16, 2021

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Bring your
awareness to
the present
moment

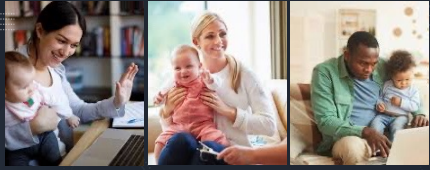


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Be present in the moment you are in...

- 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Technique
- Five things you can see
- 4 things you can hear
- 3 things you can touch
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste
- Tuning into our senses can help us to stay in the present moment
- This can help ground us in this moment of learning and growing


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How are you currently providing IECMH services –
virtually,
a hybrid model,
or in person?

**Introductions
& Objectives**

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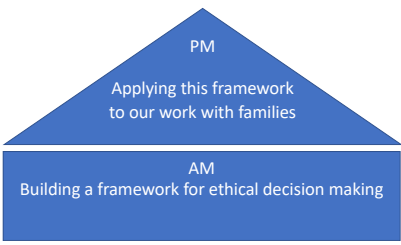


Our Current Reality: Covid Residuals

- Vaccines, Boosters & Treatment
- Cases Decrease
- Return to Work and School
- Resume In-Person Services
- Return to Normalcy

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A plan for our day together



AM
Building a framework for ethical decision making

PM
Applying this framework to our work with families

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Agenda, Part I – How our day together will go

- Stretch breaks/lunch
- Chat/Raise hand
- Small groups/break out rooms
- Case presentation/large group discussion

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Agenda, Part II – Training Objectives

- Define "professional ethics" and "professional boundaries" as related to therapeutic work with infants and families.
- Explain the importance of integrating culture within our understanding of ethical and boundary issues
- List at least two unique perspectives related to infant mental health practice that could impact the clarity of professional boundaries.
- List at least two ethical principles listed in the MI-AMH code of ethics.
- List two ways to ensure ethical practice within infant mental health work.
- Identify the connection between an understanding of culture and enhanced work with infants and families
- Explore how to engage in sensitive conversations about race and culture
- Engage in opportunities to apply ethical frameworks to experiences in their own work

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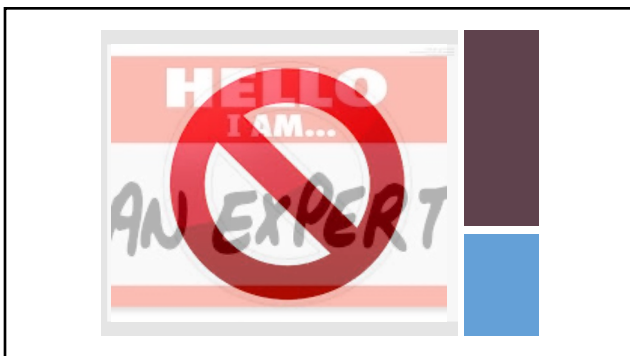
Agenda, Part III – Timed Agenda

- 9:00 am – 9:30 am: Introduction & Goals for Training
- 9:30 am – 10:00 am: Theoretical frameworks – Ethics & Boundaries
- 10:00 am – 10:30 am: The connection between the personal & professional
- 10:30 am – 10:45 am: **Morning Break**
- 10:45 am – 11:15 am: Diversity, equity, inclusion, & cultural considerations
- 11:15 am – 11:30 am: Overview of ethical guides
- 11:30 am – 12:00 pm: Relationship-based work & ethical decision-making
- 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm: **LUNCH**
- 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm: Race, Ethnicity, and Diversity-Informed Work
- 2:00 pm – 2:15 pm: Case vignette
- 2:15 pm – 2:30 pm: **Afternoon Break**
- 2:30 pm – 3:00 pm: Small group discussion
- 3:00 pm – 3:45 pm: Addressing ethical dilemmas
- 3:45 pm – 4:00 pm: Questions and Evaluation

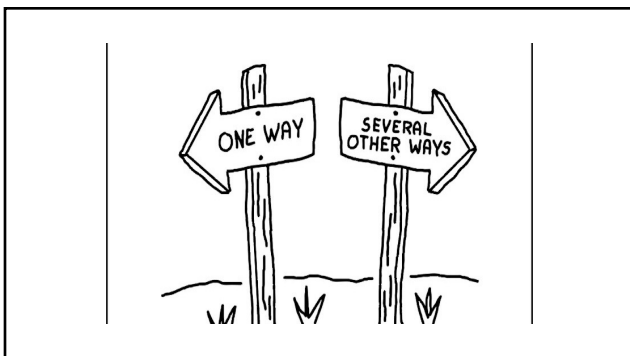
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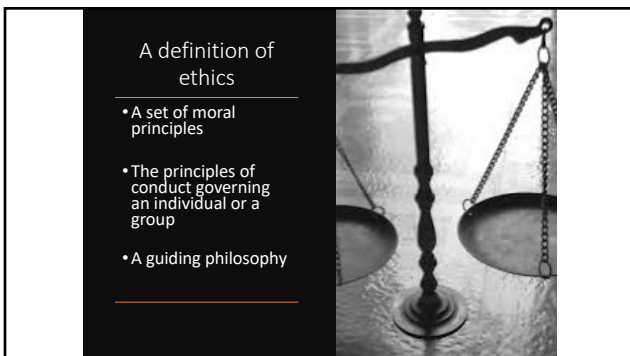
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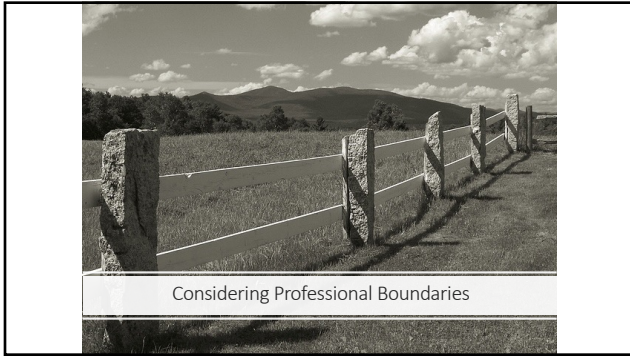
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A definition of professional boundaries

Define effective and appropriate interaction between professionals and the public they serve

Exist to protect both the professional and the client

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Boundary Issues that you may have encountered

- Dual Roles/Multiple Relationships
- Sharing Personal Information/Self Disclosure
- Client Centered or Self Determination – FIX IT!
- Exchange of gifts or goods
- Invitation to important events
- Ending therapeutic relationship – wanting to stay in touch (social media, can we still talk?), when and how to let go, connects to self determination; client doesn't show for ending
- What happens when WE do these things?
 - Want to fix it
 - Dual roles/multiple relationships – working outside our expertise
 - Therapeutic touchpoints – milestones in the therapeutic relationships that evoke feelings in us – ie. Families ready to move on.

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Having Boundary Dilemmas? – You are Doing Your Job

- Invested & engaged in a relationship
- Caring
- Empathy
- Flexibility

The stronger the relationship – the blurrier things can become



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Ethical Theory and Frameworks

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Ethics Theory

Absolutism	Relativism
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Right/Wrong• Good/Bad• Strict, universally accepted standards to address ethical challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Context is taken into account• Ethical standards depend on cultural practices, political climate, religious beliefs, norms, moral standards, etc.

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From 'Them' to 'Us'

In social work there was a shift
from a focus on the
client's morality
to
a focus on the
practitioner's ethics.

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Ethical Theories



UTILITARIANISM



RIGHTS-BASED THEORY



ETHICS OF CARE


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The connection
between the personal
and the professional

What is the difference?

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What are your professional and personal values?


- What are professional values that you bring to this work?
- What are personal values that you bring to this work?

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We believe these qualities and values to not function independently –


Professional

Personal



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Stretch Break



See you in 15 minutes!

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Diversity-Informed Practice

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Motivation to be Diversity Informed

- Better Understand Family
 - Choices
 - Experiences
 - Motivation
 - Barriers

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Diversity-Informed Tenets

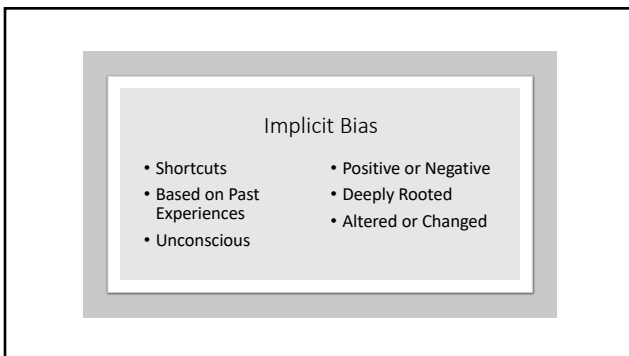
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Write down your first thought and feelings



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Journal Your Response


-  Did some pictures result in an immediate positive response?
-  Did some pictures result in discomfort/worry/concern?
-  Was there dissonance between how you "should" feel and did feel?

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NASW Code of Ethics

Ethical Values and Principles

- Service
- Social Justice
- Dignity and Worth of the Person
- Importance of Human Relationships
- Integrity
- Competence

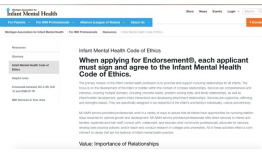


socialworkers.org/pubs/code/default.asp

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MI-AIMH Code of Ethics

- Importance of Relationships
- Respect for Ethnicity, Culture, Individuality, and Diversity
- Integrity
- Confidentiality
- Knowledge and Skill Building
- Reflective Practice



<https://mi-aimh.org/infant-mental-health-code-of-ethics/>

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NASW, ASWB, CSWE, & CSWA Standards for
Technology
in Social Work Practice


Provide information to the public
Design and deliver services
Gather, manage, store information about clients
Educate and supervise social workers

https://www.socialworkers.org/includes/newincludes/homepage/PRA-BRO-33617.TechStandards_FINAL_POSTING.pdf


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Are Ethical Considerations Different for IECMH Practitioners?

- Relationship-based perspective
- The presence of a baby/young child
- Thoughts about parenting – perfect to good enough
- Home-based implementation
- Triggers from our own lives




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The Centrality of Relationships

- Relationship ‘needs’ of the families who seek our services can feel heavy at times
- We are involved with these families for a long time – at what is viewed as a potentially vulnerable time in their lives
- We think deeply about how we engage families and understand the parallel process
- Developing & maintaining relationships virtually

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A baby’s presence can...

- ...evoke feelings of vulnerability
- ...call to mind all the babies in the room
- ...evoke core hurts and longings
- ...conjure dependence and need for protection

And these can...

- ...impact how we are – how we show up for families
- ...blur boundaries

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Rapid developmental changes during the first three years of life can evoke feelings of urgency which can...


- ...get in the way of supporting caregivers ‘where they are’
- ...get in the way of maintaining a reflective stance
- ...get in the way of establishing relationships with caregivers
- ...get in the way of finding & feeling empathy for the caregivers – the baby can’t wait!

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'Being Good Enough' Challenges All of Us

- What does it mean to be a good enough parent?
- Who gets to say when a parent is being 'good enough' – by whose standards?
- The 'good enough' parallel
 - Parents
 - Us
- Dealing with the unprecedented nature of the pandemic - do any of us feel good enough right now?
 - Not enough resources
 - Not enough time
 - Not enough space to think

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Providing Interventions in the Family's Home Can Blur Professional Boundaries

- The intensity of the home environment – in person or virtual
- The balance of power – you are on their turf
- The confusion of the personal & professional – am I a friend or a professional?
- The increase in access to information – both yours and theirs

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We believe in the impact of the early caregiving & attachment relationship

- Therefore, we can't ignore that we, too, were babies once
- Our early caregiving experiences shaped us & our capacity to:
 - reflect
 - identify emotional & mental states in ourselves and in others
 - regulate our emotions

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Use of Self

- Self awareness
 - Professional
 - Personal
- Relationship awareness
- Reflective practice
- Authenticity

A cartoon illustration of a person standing at a self-checkout station. A sign above the station reads 'SELF CHECKOUT'. The person is looking at the camera and saying 'Looks OK.' in a speech bubble. The station has a 'SCAN HERE' sign and a 'STRECHER' sign. The cartoon is signed 'Sprenger'.

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The IMH home visitor double bind

It is the uniqueness of the IMH home visiting relationship that both

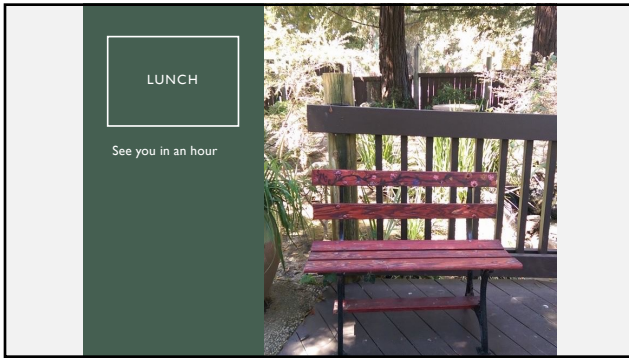
- 1) impacts the most change in high-risk infants and families and
- 2) blurs the ethical and boundary lines

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IMH strategies that highlight the personal within the professional

- Offering a place for reflection about the parent-infant relationship
- Offering developmental guidance
- Being consistent, dependable, and compassionate
- Noticing the baby's development
- Using humor
- Offering the time and space to develop a genuine relationship
- Being intentional about using a diversity-informed lens
- Noticing and appreciating the role/impact/importance of race & culture in our work

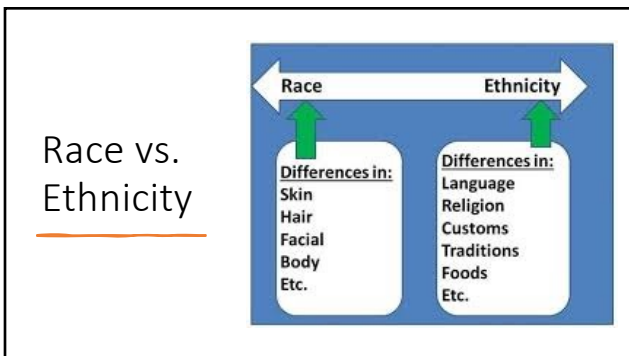
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Race –The Elephant in the Room

- Race vs. Cultural Competency
- Racist is more loaded
- Race is a part of our national culture
- We talk about it all of the time
- Race determines outcomes

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Challenges to Diversity-Informed Work

- Unsure how to talk about it
- Unsure when to talk about it
- Concerns about client/family reaction
- What if client is racist

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"Harsh Parenting" - The History

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Arrests and Incarceration

- Black youth are 5x's more likely to be arrested than white youth
- Black youth are 4 x's more likely to be incarcerated than white youth'
- Forty-four percent of youth in detention centers are Black despite making up 16 percent of population

The Sentencing Project

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After Great Pain,
a Formal Feeling
Comes

by Emily Dickinson

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The High Cost of Poverty

Anyone who has ever struggled with poverty knows how extremely expensive it is to be poor.

James Baldwin

BrainyQuote


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The History May Be Forgotten but the Feelings Remain

alamy stock photo



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Case Study

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Afternoon Break



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Case Study Questions

1. Your overall feeling(s) after reading case
2. What does it make you think of?
3. What does Kaylah need from you?
4. Are there cultural considerations, if yes, what are they?
5. Where is your attention being drawn to most? Kayla, her partner, the two-year old or the baby?
6. What, if any, ethical dilemmas came up for you?

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Ethical Dilemma Discomfort

- Comfortable considering someone else's dilemma
- Avoid discussing our own
- Judgement
- Consequences

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DISCONNECT

Assessing A Potential Cultural Disconnect – What Just Happened Here?

- Who was unsettled
- What was the trigger
- What were the feelings
- Was trust impacted
- Whose lens are you using

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Pework -
When there
has Been a
Cultural
Disconnect -

- 1 Seek information and support
- 2 Acknowledge the role of privilege
- 3 Recognize your limitations

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When there has been a Cultural Disconnect-
Talk to Client

- Acknowledge it
- Name it
- Ask client about past experiences
- Share your knowledge base/limitations
- Connect on a common layer
- Join with the client in the quest to raise awareness
- Compromise

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Name 4 descriptors of yourself

Layering Exercise



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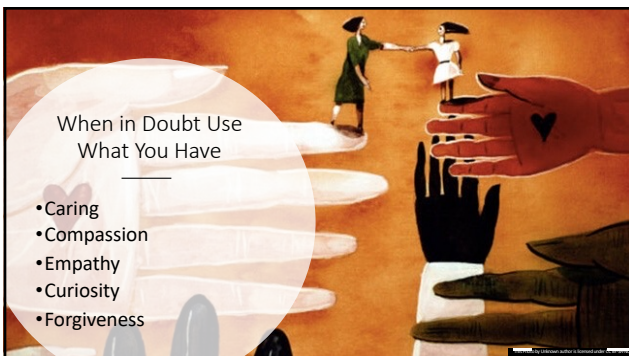
Questions about Layers

- Are all of your layers equally important to you?
- Would you have used these same descriptors 10 years ago?
- Are all of your descriptors positive?
- Do your layers include gender, race, or culture?

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When in Doubt Use What You Have

- Caring
- Compassion
- Empathy
- Curiosity
- Forgiveness



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I've learned that
 people will forget what you said,
 people will forget what you did,
 but people will never forget
 how you made them feel.
Maya Angelou



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