



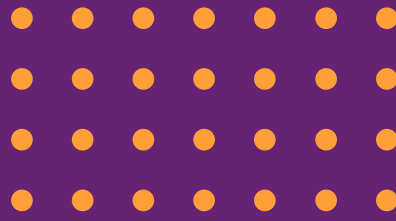
2025-2026

ANNUAL REPORT



INfancy Onward

WHAT IS INFANCY ONWARD?



Infancy Onward is a statewide prevention program of Mental Health America of Indiana and a member association of the global Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health. Founded in 2000, INfancy Onward is Indiana's association for infant and early childhood mental health, helping to support professionals working with or on behalf of infants and young children up to 6 years of age through mental health education, advocacy, and credentialing.

Our mission is to advance the conditions which provide an early start toward optimal mental health. We do this by supporting professional development with an Infant Mental Health Endorsement®, an Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsement®, free Reflective Consultation groups for members seeking Endorsement, an annual conference and trainings around young children, families, social, emotional and brain development, the effects of trauma on young children, and relationship building.

WHO IS INFANCY ONWARD?

Behind every program and partnership is a team dedicated to advancing the field of infant and early childhood mental health in Indiana!

- **Director of Endorsement** – guides and supports Indiana’s professionals through the IECMH Endorsement® process
- **Director of Outreach & Training** – designs and delivers impactful infant and early childhood mental health training and outreach statewide
- **Early Childhood Mental Health Manager** – serves as subject matter expert for family and consumer education providing infant and early childhood mental health tools and materials

We are excited to have a talented
and fully staffed team –
Maria Casbon,
Emelia Dowden,
Cassie Eberly,
and Kaily Osborne!

WHAT IS INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH (IECMH)?



**Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health
is the developing capacity of a child,
from birth to age six, to:**

- ✦ **experience, regulate, and express emotions**
- ✦ **form close and secure interpersonal relationships**
- ✦ **explore the environment, and learn**



THE IMPORTANCE OF INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH

Brain Architecture

We have a shared stake to make sure babies develop sturdy brain architecture, because this foundation supports a lifetime of learning and productive participation in society. A reliable caregiver who is responsive to a baby's needs is the base for secure attachment, which allows an infant to explore and learn.

Body and Health

Toxic stress from broken caregiver-infant relationships can push a baby's stress hormones into overdrive. When constantly present, these hormones disrupt brain and physical development. And babies can't learn if their brains and bodies are working against them. The antidote to toxic stress? Affection and protection by a nurturing caregiver.

Behavior and Relationships

Secure attachment is a fundamental building block of social function. Children need relationships with sensitive caregivers to self-regulate, get along with others, solve problems, and be productive – the basis for civic and economic prosperity.

INDIANA'S ENDORSED PROFESSIONALS

INfancy Onward offers two mental health Endorsement types for Indiana professionals working with, or on behalf of, infants, toddlers, and young children.

Infant Mental Health Endorsement (IMH-E)[®]

Indiana purchased the license for this Endorsement in 2010. The first cohort of professionals in Indiana earned this Endorsement in 2012.

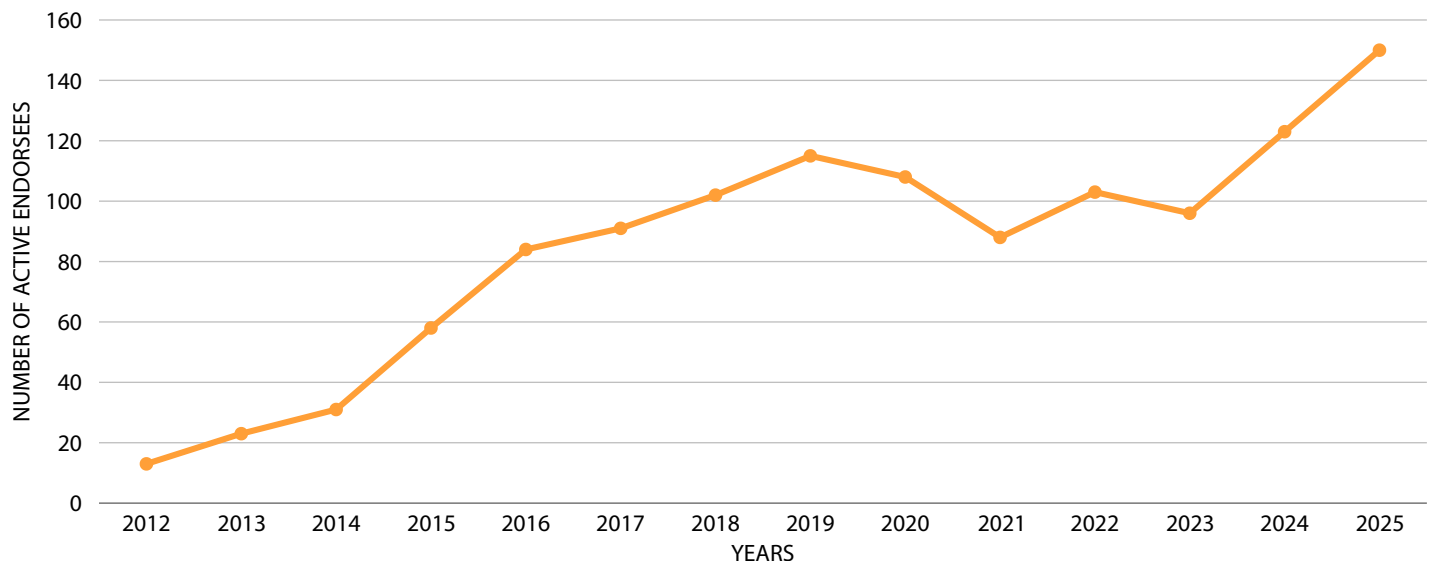
Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsement (ECMH-E)[®]

Indiana purchased the license for this Endorsement in 2019. The first cohort of professionals in Indiana earned this Endorsement in 2020.

42 new INfancy Onward Endorsements were awarded in 2025–2026

- 17 Infant Family Associate
- 10 Infant Family Specialist
- 4 Early Childhood Family Associates
- 11 Endorsed Reflective Supervisors

Number of Active INfancy Onward Endorseees Through the Years
(End-of-Year Values)



Between **July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026** Indiana gained **27 new endorsed professionals**.

As of June 2026, there are 162 active endorsed professionals serving all 92 counties in Indiana.

View the Endorsement Registry here:

<https://infancy-onward.myeasy.org/endorsement-registry>

Global Reach & Key Achievements

The Endorsement for Culturally Sensitive, Relationship-Focused Practice Promoting Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health is copyrighted by the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health (MI-AIMH). As of July 1, 2026 MI-AIMH created the IECMH International Institute as the new home for the IECMH Endorsement® and Competency Framework®.

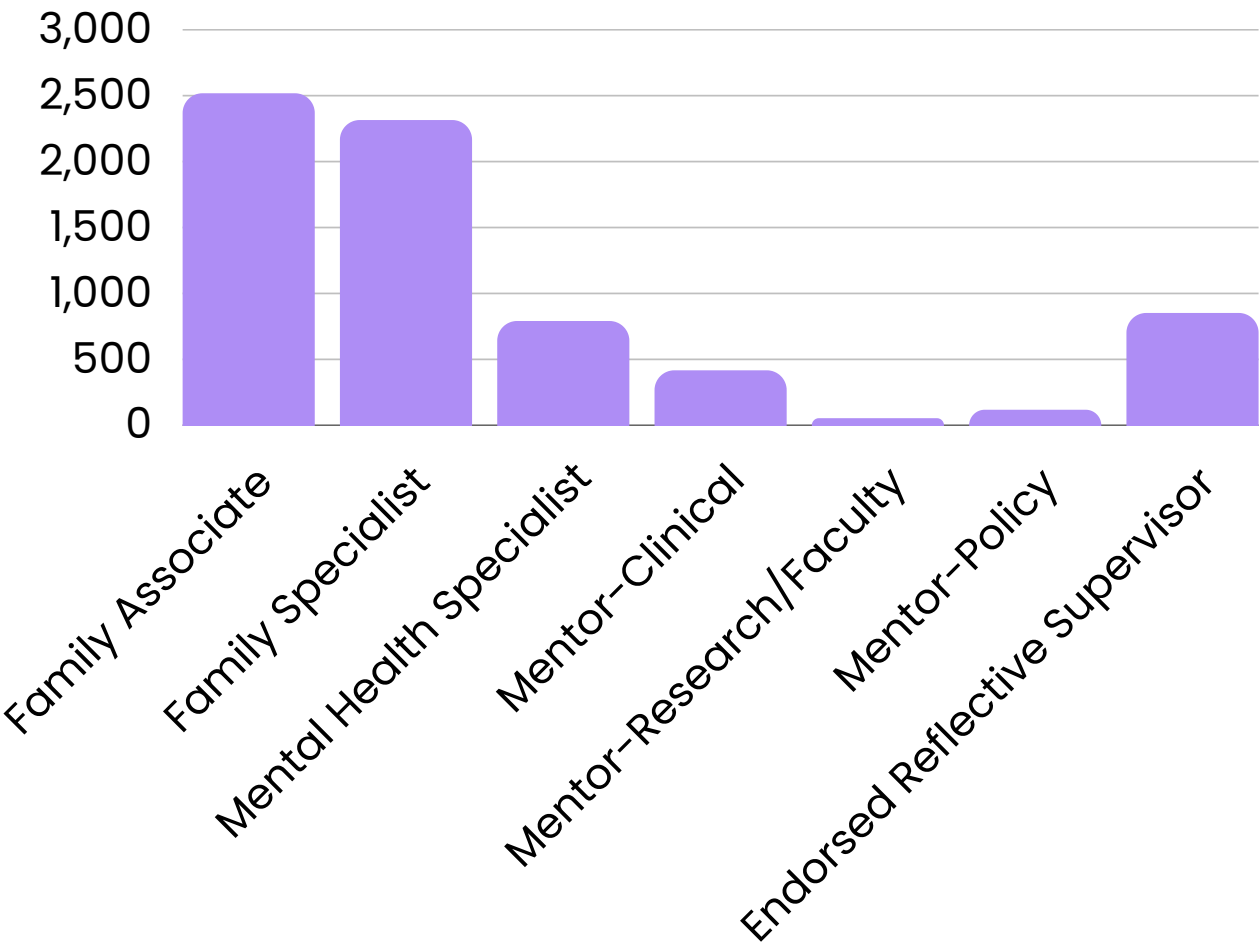
Infant Mental Health Endorsement®

- Licensed by associations in 36 states
- Licensed by two associations in Ireland and Australia

Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsement®

- Licensed by associations in 31 states

There are currently over 7,000 active Endorsement credentials worldwide



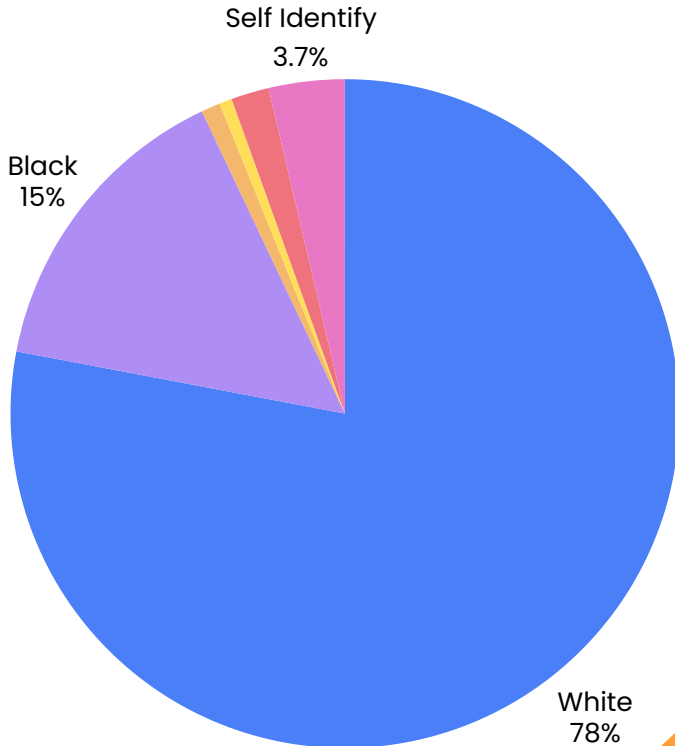
2025-2026 ENDORSEMENT UPDATES

Spring 2026:

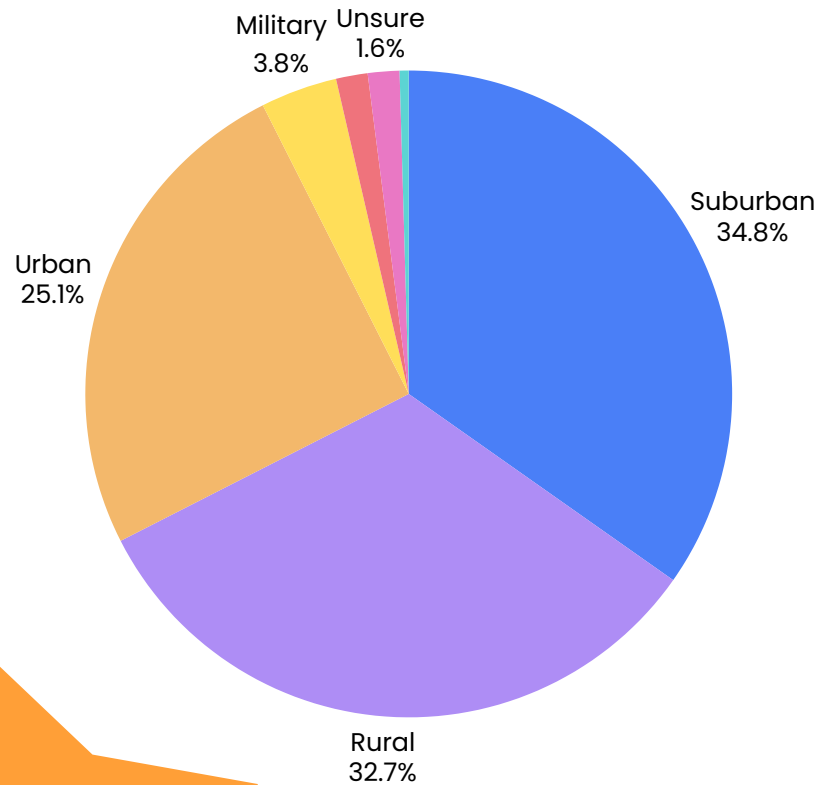
- New 2026 Applicant and Exam Packets
- Full copyright notice within Competency Guidelines page
- Updated Confidentiality Standards for Data Within the Endorsement Application System (EASy)
- The EASy registration process was updated to balance efficiency with the collection of essential information. This update ensures alignment with GDPR privacy standards. The 6-step process reintroduces:
 - Current Employment
 - Reflective Supervision/Consultation provider information
 - Payment Processing Prior to Application Creation
- There is no longer a requirement that one reference to come from an Endorsed professional; Reference Rating Forms were updated to include a Competency Guideline link and an attestation that they have reviewed them; Other updates to References include:
 - Updated Reference Rating Form Instructions at the top of the form
 - Condensed reference information sections
 - A revised 3-point Likert scale modeled after ERS: No/Not Yet, At Times/Emerging, Consistently/Effectively
 - A conclusion section modeled after ERS, including: Area of strength, Area for growth, Additional comments
 - As part of this revision, the current policy regarding "No more than 6 "No Opportunity to Observe ratings" will become void.

2026 MEMBERSHIP

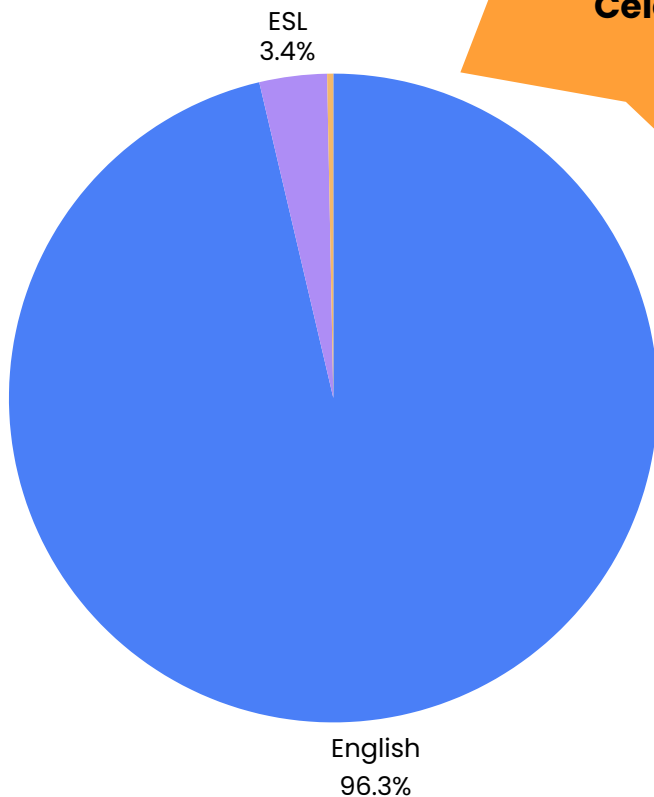
Background



Communities Served

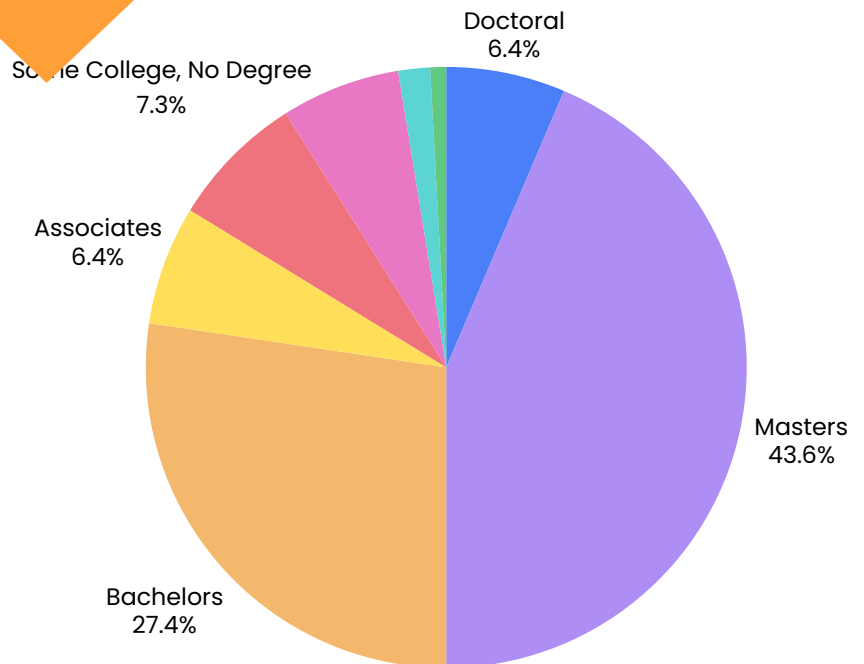


Language



**Huge thank you to
those who
participated in our
2025 Members
Celebration and
Auction!**

Education



2025-2026 OUTREACH AND TRAINING

Hosted **40 live trainings** providing over **100 training hours** to more than **700 participants!**

Staffed over **30 exhibit tables** at conferences and provider fairs making more than **325 connections** with potential Endorsement candidates and future training and collaboration opportunities around the state

Provided trauma-informed training, mentoring, and support for a **cohort of 30 early childhood educators** across three child care programs in Marion County's underserved communities

Supported over **20 family engagement opportunities** reaching over **600 people!**



Annual Conference: ***Rooted In Resilience***

Professionals from across gathered in May to strengthen infant and early childhood mental health knowledge, collaboration, and leadership.

The conference featured nationally recognized keynote speakers, specialized learning tracks for early childhood professionals, mental health professionals, and reflective supervisors, as well as a policy panel focused on advancing infant and early childhood mental health across Indiana.



Conference Highlights

- 54 conference attendees
- 11 conference speakers and presenters
- 9 educational breakout sessions
- Specialized learning tracks for early childhood professionals, mental health professionals, and reflective supervisors
- Statewide networking and collaboration opportunities
- Policy panel focused on infant and early childhood mental health
- National keynote presentations emphasizing resilience and relationship-based practice



Looking Ahead

The INfancy Onward Annual Conference brings professionals together to learn, collaborate, and strengthen support for infants, young children, families, and those who serve them across Indiana.

By bringing together professionals from diverse disciplines, the annual conference strengthens relationships, shared knowledge, and statewide partnerships that are essential for building a comprehensive infant and early childhood mental health system in Indiana.

Plan to join us in 2027!



ADVANCING EARLY RELATIONAL HEALTH: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Infancy Onward completed the first phase of a statewide Family Engagement Needs Assessment, gathering insights from 119 professionals on practices, barriers, and workforce needs. These findings will guide future training, family leadership, and system improvements. Here are the highlights:

- Respondents represented a broad range of disciplines, including early childhood education, mental health, home visiting, healthcare, early intervention, child welfare, family support, and community organizations.
 - The majority of respondents reported more than 15 years of experience working with infants, young children, and families.
 - Nearly all respondents identified family engagement as very important or extremely important to their work.
 - Respondents reported routinely using evidence-based family engagement practices, including parent education, strength-based communication, reflective listening, trauma-informed approaches, and shared decision-making.
 - Approximately 60% of respondents indicated that their organization provides training on family engagement practices.
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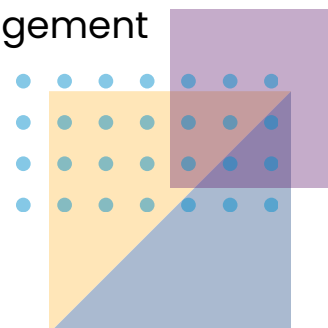
Survey Key Findings

- Survey responses demonstrated a strong commitment to family engagement. Professionals reported *confidence in engaging families* and described regularly using relationship-based, family-centered practices.
- And, respondents identified *important opportunities to strengthen family engagement* across programs and systems.
- The most *frequently reported barriers* included: family stress and crisis needs, lack of funding and resources, transportation barriers, staffing shortages, and family distrust of systems
- Respondents also reported that families commonly experience financial stress, transportation challenges, housing instability, parenting stress, childcare access issues, behavioral concerns, and difficulty navigating complex systems, reinforcing the *need for coordinated, relationship-based, family-centered supports*.
- *opportunities identified* to expand family leadership, strengthen culturally responsive engagement practices, improve language access, and provide ongoing workforce training and technical assistance to better support meaningful partnerships with families.

Looking Ahead

The Indiana Family Engagement Needs Assessment represents the first phase of INfancy Onward's statewide Family Engagement Initiative. Findings will inform future professional development, technical assistance, family leadership efforts, and systems-level strategies designed to strengthen partnerships with families across Indiana. As implementation continues, INfancy Onward will use future data collection to evaluate progress, identify emerging needs, and support continuous improvement in family engagement across the state.

The 2026 Indiana Family Engagement Needs Assessment establishes a statewide baseline that will guide future planning, measure progress over time, and support data-informed improvements to family engagement across Indiana



Pyramid Model Training

The Pyramid Model is a new training construct to Indiana.

During FY2025–2026, Infancy Onward strengthened statewide Pyramid Model implementation through professional development, coaching, and technical assistance. Staff completed **15 trainings (132 professional development hours)**, **provided 96 coaching and TA sessions**, **shared 80 coaching resources**, and supported implementation through assessments, Communities of Practice, and Leadership Team meetings across Indiana.

Pyramid Model Highlights

- 15 Pyramid Model trainings attended
- 66 hours of Pyramid Model professional development completed
- 96 coaching and technical assistance meetings provided
- 80 implementation resources shared with grantees
- 69 coaching logs completed
- 17 Pyramid Model trainings and assessments provided
- 16 Communities of Practice attended
- 18 Leadership Team meetings attended

Looking Ahead

INfancy Onward will continue to expand Pyramid Model implementation by strengthening coaching, professional development, and collaborative leadership to support high-quality, relationship-based practices for infants, young children, families, and the professionals who serve them.

Through ongoing coaching, training, and implementation support, INfancy Onward is helping build the infrastructure needed to sustain high-quality child care and practices across Indiana.

SOCIAL MEDIA & MARKETING

Throughout the fiscal year, our social media platforms served as a trusted source for training opportunities, infant and early childhood mental health resources, program updates, awareness campaigns, and partner events. By sharing timely, engaging content, we expanded awareness of available resources and supported professionals and families across Indiana.

69,212

TOTAL IMPRESSIONS

Total impressions represent the number of times our content was displayed across social media platforms.



TOP PERFORMING POSTS



🏆 Honoring a Pioneer in Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health
Our most-viewed post celebrated founder Steve Viehweg's recognition by the NASW Foundation as a pioneer in social work for his decades of contributions to infant and early childhood mental health. The post generated significant engagement as colleagues, partners, and community members celebrated this well-deserved achievement.



🏆 Welcoming New Leadership
Our announcement introducing INfancy Onward's new leadership team was another top-performing post. Community members enthusiastically welcomed Communications and Resource Manager Emelia Dowden and Director of Training and Outreach Cassie Eberly as they joined or assumed new roles to advance the organization's mission.



🏆 Promoting Professional Development
The announcement for the Northern Indiana Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Summit, presented in partnership with Foundations Academy, was among our most successful event promotions. The post helped increase awareness of the conference training opportunities and encouraged professionals to engage in continuing education and networking.

🧠 Early Childhood Mental Health Resources

Evidence-based information and tools for professionals and families.

🎓 Professional Development

Training announcements, webinars, and continuing education opportunities.

🤝 Coalition & Partner Highlights

Community events, partner resources, and collaborative initiatives.

📅 Awareness Campaigns

Monthly campaigns recognizing important health and early childhood topics.

WHAT WE SHARED

CONNECT WITH US!



INfancyOnward.org



[@INfancyOnward](https://www.facebook.com/INfancyOnward)



mhaitraininginstitute.org

This report was created with funding from the Child Care and Development Block Grant awarded to the Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning, a division of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration