

The Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health, USA

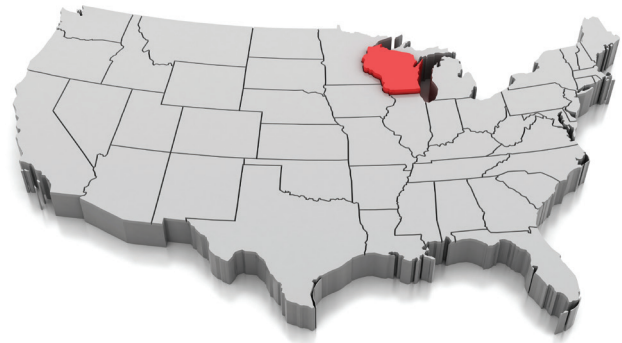
By Lana Nenide, Executive Director

The Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health (WI-AIMH) was established in 2001 as a statewide non-profit organization to promote infant and early childhood mental health through raising public awareness, developing professional capacity and advocating for policies which are in the best interest of infants, young children and their families.

The vision of the organization is to aim for all Wisconsin infants and young children to reach their fullest potential through nurturing and consistent relationships within the context of family, community, and culture.

One of the critical elements of WI-AIMH's work has been developing professional capacity for all those who work with or on behalf of infants, toddlers, and their families. Since 2009, WI-AIMH has offered Wisconsin professionals the opportunity to earn the Endorsement for Culturally Sensitive, Relationship-Focused Practice Promoting Infant Mental Health, a national and international workforce development initiative. WI-AIMH also holds an annual Infant and Early Childhood and Mental Health Conference, featuring nationally-known speakers as well as presenters from around Wisconsin who share information about promoting social and emotional development in everyday activities, as well as early intervention and treatment strategies for infants, young children, and their families. Since its inception, conference participation has grown steadily, with last year's conference drawing over 300 attendees.

Additionally, WI-AIMH coordinates statewide professional development projects: Home Visiting Reflective Practice Project and Pyramid Model for Social and Emotional Competence. Home Visiting Reflective Practice project, started in 2011, provides on-site reflective consultation to state-funded home visiting sites; and the Pyramid Model, launched in 2009, offers evidence-based strategies for parents and professionals to support optimal social and emotional development and prevent challenging behaviors.



In an effort to increase public awareness of the importance of Infant Mental Health and provide support throughout Wisconsin, WI-AIMH began efforts towards establishing regional chapters as a local resource for professionals across systems in disciplines that touch the lives of infants, young children and their families. The Northeast chapter was formally launched in 2016, with additional chapters currently in development for introduction in 2017 and 2018.

As “the voice for Wisconsin babies,” WI-AIMH has also worked with local legislators and policy-makers to share information related to early brain development and how very early experiences and first relationships influence a child's success, health, and well-being. To this end, WI-AIMH staff members have testified before legislative committees, participated in state advisory and policy meetings, and led efforts to establish an infant-toddler policy workgroup in Wisconsin, which is charged with: increasing access to infant mental health consultants, expanding home visiting, establishing infant/toddler specialists, and using Medicaid to fund infant and early childhood mental health consultation.

WI-AIMH strives for each and every child to have a strong foundation for life-long success. WI-AIMH has been a long-standing member of the Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health and is thrilled to now be formally part of the WAIMH family. Website link: www.wiaimh.org.