**Sarah Shea, PhD, LMSW, IECMH-E®**



Dr. Sarah Shea is endorsed as an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Mentor (Research/Faculty) and is a member of MI-AIMH, having served as a MI-AIMH Biennial Conference Co-Chair in 2015 and 2017. Sarah is an Associate Professor of Social Work at Eastern Michigan University (EMU) where she is the Field Program Director. Sarah created two infant mental health (IMH) courses, which she teaches in the MSW program.

Sarah’s past research at EMU has focused on evaluations of several of MI-AIMH’s training series to better understand how training impacts IMH professionals and their practice with infants, toddlers, and families. Additionally, Sarah has a strong interest in research regarding reflective supervision and as a member of the Michigan Infant Mental Health Research Collaborative; Sarah contributed to the Michigan Infant Mental Health-Home Visiting evaluation’s reflective supervision study. Sarah is currently the primary investigator of an evaluation of the implementation of RSC with early childhood professionals and supervisors in Pennsylvania through collaboration with the Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health.

Sarah has always had a strong commitment to the unique needs of infants and toddlers in foster care that is rooted in her past clinical experiences providing infant and early childhood mental health services. In 2018, Sarah became the project director for a pilot initiative to develop, implement, and evaluate new IMH content within the existing mandatory training (PRIDE) for all potential foster parents. This project, funded by the Michigan Health Endowment Fund, is currently in the pilot phase in 7 counties in Michigan. Sarah initially conducted a Statewide survey of 150 foster parents to better understand their IMH knowledge and based on these findings, existing research, and the input of an advisory group composed of IMH experts, child welfare professionals, and a foster parent, Sarah created 2 hours of IMH focused training that emphasizes the importance of relationships between foster parent and infant, between infant and birth parent, and between birth parent and foster parent. Sarah also achieved certification as a Understanding NEAR (Neurobiology, Epigenetics, Adverse Childhood Experiences, and Resilience) master trainer and included in the 7-county pilot a 1-hour ACE’s training using the Understanding NEAR curriculum in a format designed for foster parents.

In addition to the training that will be offered a monthly basis in the 7 counties to all prospective foster parents seeking foster parent licensure, Sarah created an IMH resource guide for parents as well as an IMH services guide that provides foster parents with county-specific information about how to access and advocate for IMH services for infants and toddlers in foster care and their families. Finally, the project also includes the creation of 2 videos that can be accessed by foster parents across Michigan; the videos will focus on the use of reflective functioning during visits between birth parents and infants and toddlers and the importance of supporting all relationships in the infant’s life. The videos are currently in production and are expected to become available in July-August 2019.

In conjunction with these efforts, In May 2019, Sarah became the primary investigator and project director for a contract awarded by MDHHS to replace the entire PRIDE training with a new training curriculum that will be required of all those seeking foster parent licensure. Sarah will lead a team at EMU that includes Dr.’s Jennifer Farley and Jenny Fritz in the creation, pilot, and Statewide implementation of this mandatory training. This project provides an opportunity to not only institute the new IMH training in the foster parent licensure process but also to insure that all mandatory foster parent training supports the relational health of children and youth in foster care.