



Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health

Dear Colleagues:

The Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health launched our strategic plan during a time of significant upheaval and change in our world. Not only did we seek to chart a course for our future during a global pandemic, we also did so during a time of significant collective reckoning with historic and present-day racism in our society. All of which have enormous impacts on babies, families, and the workforce who serve them.

While our journey, or at least our aspiration to launch our journey, to become an anti-racist organization started before the events of the summer of 2020, all of us at the Alliance have recognized that to make substantive and significant progress in this effort, we needed to ensure that diversity, equity, inclusion, anti-racism, and social justice are embedded in all that we do. This strategic plan seeks to do just that. Our new mission statement puts this at the core of our work with AIMHs in our support of the workforce in ways that benefit all infants, young children and families.

The strategic planning process also highlighted other critical themes that we have sought to reflect in our priorities for the coming years. First, we recognize that while our passion is for babies, young children, and their families, our work centers on the workforce. The workforce offers us great opportunity to have the impact we seek. Second, we recognize that in order to support the workforce, we must redouble our efforts to strengthen our relationships with, and support the capacity of, the Associations for Infant Mental Health (AIMHs). We cannot realize our vision for impact without strong, connected, and supported AIMHs as our partners. Third, we recognize that the Alliance is very young and early in our development.

With this plan we seize the opportunity to view infant mental health work as social justice work and to practice cultural humility. The intent of this plan is to ensure that the IECMH sector embraces anti-racist work and is reflective of those we serve in terms of race, culture, and ethnic identity, and economic background. Furthermore, we want those that are involved in IECMH to be recognized and appropriately compensated.

We are excited to share this plan with you and greatly appreciate everyone who took the time and effort to contribute to our learning and exploration during this process.

Sincerely,
Members of the Planning Team

Executive Committee of the Board of Directors

- Susan Dickstein (President Jan 2019-Jul 2021, VP Apr 2016 – Dec 2018)
- Catherine Liesman (Treasurer Apr 2016-present)
- Kate Rosenblum (President Aug 2021-present; VP Jan 2019-Jul 2021)
- Angela Webster (Secretary Jan 2020-present)

Staff

- Ashley McCormick (Endorsement & Communications Director 2018-present)
- Nichole Paradis (Executive Director 2018-present)

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS – OVERVIEW

The planning process was launched in July 2020. The goals of this process were to create a shared vision and a plan to realize this vision. A third-party consultant (Fio Partners, LLC) was engaged to provide experience and input to the efforts. Fio gathered data from internal and external sources to capture observations of the organization from a variety of perspectives and sources:

- Financial Analysis (through the Nonprofit Finance Fund)
- Staff Focus Group
- Board Survey
- Management Safeguards/Supports Self-Assessment
- Key Stakeholder Interviews
- Endorsed Professional Survey
- AIMH Focus Groups

The information gathered was shared with the Board of Directors members for use in a virtual retreat in November 2020. At these sessions, Board members provided input to the overall strategic direction reflected in the plan, as well as provided input into suggested goals, strategies, and tactics. Staff leadership worked with Fio to consolidate this input and transform the information gathered into a three-year strategic plan to guide The Alliance. A focus group was held with ten Associations for Infant Mental Health to obtain their input and feedback on a high-level draft of the plan (Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals) in January 2021.

The strategic plan lays out a three-year scope of work, with high-level goals, key strategies, and proposed tactics, as well as short term initiatives in support of these goals and strategies. A detailed implementation plan for the first year is also being developed.

WHAT WE LEARNED THROUGH THE PLANNING PROCESS

Diversity Equity and Inclusion is Viewed as a Top Priority for the Alliance from Within the Alliance and from the Field

From the outset of our planning process, the need to elevate diversity, equity, and inclusion to be a top priority for the strategic plan was evident. Not only did design team members raise this issue in our very first meeting, but this topic also came up in virtually every interview, focus group, and survey. It is clear that not only has the Alliance recognized the importance of accelerating its journey to become more diverse, equitable, and inclusive in all aspects of its work, but so have its stakeholders, supporters, and partners. Furthermore, there is broad recognition that DEI work is necessary but not sufficient for the Alliance, and that it needs to go further in its commitments and its work to become an anti-racist organization that strives for social justice.

There is a Need to Provide Increased Clarity as it Relates to Roles and Responsibilities of the Alliance Staff, the Alliance Board, and State Associations, and the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health

Similarly, the lack of role clarity was not only identified by internal stakeholders (AIMHs, etc.), but also by external stakeholders and partners. Some of the confusion stems from the Alliance's origin story, in that it emerged from the work of the Michigan Association. Some of the confusion relates to the question as to whether AIMHs see the Alliance as themselves or as a separate and distinct entity (who's Alliance). While much of this role confusion is growing pains, there are opportunities to better define and codify these roles and responsibilities across all parties.

The Alliance Would Benefit from Greater Brand Clarity and Better Understanding of its Role from the Perspective of its Stakeholders

A related challenge for the Alliance is brand clarity. To some extent, the brand of the Alliance remains entangled with the current state of its relationship with the Michigan Association, which retains a majority of board seats and some intellectual property. Some of this confusion relates to the Alliance's focus on infants, toddlers, and families while its actual work is focused on workforce and AIMHs. This lack of clarity has implications for setting clear priorities for staff, clear direction for the organization, and the inability to prioritize opportunities.

There is a Need to Match Alliance Capacity with Organizational Demands and Staff Workloads

Organizational demands and aspirations for impact have grown within and from the Alliance faster than internal capacity has been created to meet them. The strength of the current staff and its limitations due to the sheer number of staff have been noted by the staff team and identified by AIMHs, board, and external stakeholders alike. Much of this is related to the Alliance's current business model and how the Alliance is resourced. Considerations of securing and investing additional resources to build its capacity or de-prioritizing some commitments are likely needed to balance demand and capacity.

The Field of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health is Still Evolving

One of the challenges that the Alliance faces and opportunities before it is the fact that the field of infant and early childhood mental health is still evolving. It appears that the field is unsettled around terminology, is grappling with understanding power and privilege, and is seeking to ground its work in solid research. This sense of flux is both a challenge for the Alliance in articulating its work and an opportunity for the Alliance to take a leadership role in defining the field.

The Business Model Needs to Evolve to Ensure Long Term Sustainability of the Alliance

The work of the Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF) to analyze and benchmark the Alliance's financials helps to highlight the fact that the underlying business model for Endorsement is unlikely to be self-sustaining over the long term. The NFF's work can be built upon to better understand the magnitude of the revenue/expense gap for Endorsement over the long run, as well as better understanding which areas of Alliance activity can be enhanced to generate needed resources to support Endorsement and other Alliance operations. To the extent that research efforts yield positive results on the return on investment of Endorsement, there may be an opportunity to revise the financial model of Endorsement to make it self-sustaining over the long run.

There is an Opportunity for the Board to Evolve -- Both in How it Functions and in its Composition

As the Alliance seeks to be an international organization that embeds diversity, equity, inclusion, anti-racism, and social justice into all that it does while placing the workforce at the center of its work, there are many opportunities for the governance function of the Alliance to move in this direction as well. Much of this is understandable from a stage of development perspective, where the Board is very much reflective of a Founder's Board that is now needing to transition to a governing Board. Feedback from internal and external stakeholders alike identified areas such as board diversity, the "balance of power" between MI-AIMH and the Alliance, the role and voices of AIMHs in determining the composition of the Board, and the extent to which the requisite knowledge and skillsets of the Board matches the intended future work.

There is Dynamic Tension Between the Alliance’s Desire to Improve the Emotional and Mental Health of Infants and Toddlers with the Organization’s Focus on Workforce Development and the Need to Support and Strengthen its Associations of Infant Mental Health

Lastly, there is a recognition that the staff and Board are composed of individuals that are deeply passionate about infants and families, however, the work of the Alliance is largely focused on workforce and Associations of Infant Mental Health. The Alliance does not serve or support families directly and has a very indirect relationship with Endorsed professionals. Recognizing this dynamic tension may be important to help the Alliance focus on workforce development and capacity building of AIMHs as key levers of impact for infants and families.

MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

OLD MISSION

To build and sustain a reflective, skilled, culturally competent, and relationship-based workforce that supports pregnant women, infants, young children, and their families.

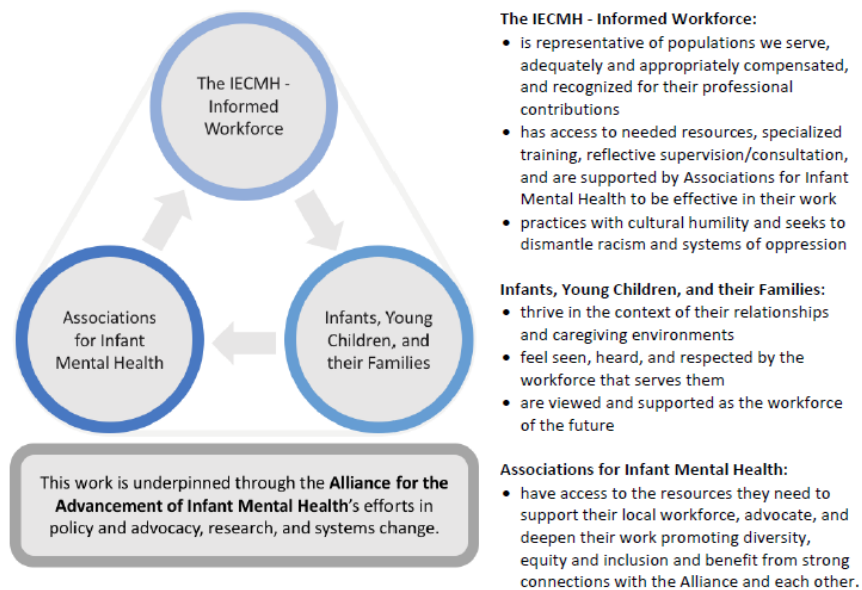
NEW MISSION

The mission of the Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health is to build and sustain a diverse workforce, informed by infant and early childhood mental health principles, that strengthen early relationships. We accomplish our mission through advancing social and economic justice and becoming an antiracist organization, supporting professional development and research, and engaging Associations for Infant Mental Health as partners.

OLD VISION

All infants and young children begin their lives with warm, sensitive, stable and responsive caregiving relationships

OUR NEW VISION FOR THOSE WE SEEK TO IMPACT



OUR NEW VISION FOR THE ORGANIZATION

The Alliance aspires to:

- Lead by providing expertise and partnership in preparing and supporting the workforce to provide relationship-focused IECMH-informed services
- Have the financial and organizational capacity to sustainably support the operational and visionary work of the organization
- Demonstrate and communicate the value and impact of a professional, IECMH-informed workforce to the broader public
- Partner with Associations for Infant Mental Health to build their capacity to support, grow, diversify, and advocate for the IECMH-informed workforce
- Continuously strive to become an anti-racist organization and support Associations for Infant Mental Health in their journeys toward social justice

OUR PROPOSED VALUES

Diversity -- We recognize that diverse leadership enhances our skill, innovation, and excellence and is necessary for us to be dynamic, competitive, and sustainable in our efforts to strengthen the workforce. We are committed to building and supporting a diverse staff and board that is racially, culturally, ethnically, and economically representative of the workforce, and the families they serve. We honor and value the diverse backgrounds of all babies and families.

Equity and Social Justice - We recognize that white supremacy culture has influenced our organization, our work, and our field. We seek feedback on how it shows up and how we work to eliminate it. We are committed to the consistent use of equity principles to share power, shape, and improve all that we do.

Integrity -- We follow through on our commitments. We are trustworthy, accountable, and transparent in all of our actions. We own our mistakes and take responsibility. Our processes are rigorous and consistent so that all involved know what to expect from us.

Reflection -- We strive to be a learning organization that thinks deeply, both individually and with each other about our intent and our impact. We seek a high degree of congruence between our words and actions. We are deliberate and intentional in our actions and decisions.

Relationships and Collaboration - We recognize that individual and organizational relationships built on trust and mutual respect are essential to our impact, and that we are most successful when we work with others. We continuously invest in strengthening our relationships and work to repair those relationships when there are ruptures.

Member-Centered Action -- We listen to our members and make sure that our members are seen and heard. We seek their input and feedback so that we can continuously learn, evolve, and improve. We strive to create community for and with our members so that all have a sense of belonging. We constantly evaluate the distribution of resources and power between ourselves and our members to find balance and equity.

PLAN GOALS

Goal #1: Advance Workforce Development Efforts that Reflect our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and Racial Justice and to Sustain the Sectors

Goal #2: Ensure that Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice are Embedded in All that We Do

Goal #3: Strengthen and Expand Associations of Infant Mental Health

Goal #4: Position the Alliance as a Leading Supporter of the Professional Development for the Infant and Early Childhood Workforce

Goal #5: Build a Sustainable Business Model that Successfully Resources the Alliance's Operational Supports to the Field and the AIMHs

Goal #6: Ensure our Governance Structure Reflects our Diversity as a Field, Our International Presence, and Our Focus on Workforce

Goal #1: Advance Workforce Development Efforts that Reflect our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice and to Sustain the Sector

Strategy 1: Establish a Research Agenda for the Alliance that Promotes Equity and Sustainability in the Sector

Strategy 2: Change Workforce Development Standards to be Anti-Racist

Strategy 3: Launch a Sector Based Workforce Development Agenda That Increases Equitable Access to Participation In Professional Development And Endorsement

Early Childhood Education: Support and Strengthen the Professional Workforce to Achieve Living Wage

Home Visiting: Increase accessibility and appeal of Endorsement for Home Visitors

Child Welfare: Support Effort Reduce Disparities through Addressing Implicit Bias

Early Intervention: Disseminate IECMH principles to Entirety of Early Intervention workforce through a DEI lens

Behavioral Health: Address the workforce crisis within our scope

Health: Disseminate IECMH principles to Health Care Workforce through a DEI lens

IECMH Consultation

Goal #2: Ensure that Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice are Embedded in All that We Do

Strategy 1: Develop a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Racial Justice Learning Agenda for the Board, Staff, and Alliance Work Groups, with Invitations for AIMH Leadership to Participate

Strategy 2: Conduct an Internal Assessment of the Alliance with respect to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and Racial Justice

Strategy 3: Develop an Intentional Approach to Listening and Engagement Around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and Racial Justice

Goal #3: Strengthen and Expand Associations of Infant Mental Health in the US and Abroad

Strategy 1: Enhance Communications Between Alliance and AIMHs

Strategy 2: Ensure AIMH Voice in all Policy and Strategic Decisions and Priorities

Strategy 3: Work with Existing AIMHs to Support Them in Capacity Building and Statewide Policy Work

Strategy 4: Stimulate the Creation/Strengthening of New AIMHs in the US and Abroad

Strategy 5: Ensure Quality Assurance and Reciprocity of Endorsement Across Member AIMHs

Goal#4: Position the Alliance as a Leading Supporter of the Professional Development for the Infant and Early Childhood Workforce

Strategy 1: Develop a Marketing and Branding Plan for the Alliance

Strategy 2: Create a Fund Development Program that Focuses on Securing National Funding to Support Workforce Development and Related Alliance Efforts

Strategy 3: Identify and Prioritize Collaborations and Partnerships Based on Strategic Priorities of Placing Workforce Development at the Center of the Work and Embedding of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice

Goal #5: Build a Sustainable Business Model that Successfully Resources the Alliance’s Operational Supports to the Field and the AIMHs

Strategy 1: Invest in and Align Organizational Supports with Current Work

Human Resources

Information Management

Endorsement Infrastructure

Quality Improvement

Strategy 2: Determine Future Relationship with The Guidance Center

Strategy 3: Establish a New Business Model that Adequately Resources the Alliance to Carry Out Its Mission and Explore New Lines of Business to Support Long Term Sustainability

Goal #6: Ensure our Governance Structure Reflects our Diversity as a Field, Our International Presence, and Our Focus on Workforce

Strategy 1: Launch an Intentional Plan to Increase the Diversity of the Board and Staff

Strategy 2: Rebalance Power, Authority, and Influence Between the AIMHs, the Alliance Board, the Alliance Staff, and MI-AIMH

Strategy 3: Consider Expanding the Composition of our Board Beyond AIMH Representatives

Strategy 4: Establish and Implement a Formal Board Education Program for All Board Members