



Scholarships for Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health (I/ECMH)

In collaboration with New Hanover County (NHC) and funding from the federal American Rescue Plan, Smart Start of New Hanover County (SSNHC) is pleased to offer scholarships in graduate level Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health studies beginning Spring 2022. This scholarship can provide tuition assistance to experienced professionals pursuing a graduate certificate in I/ECMH and who plan to incorporate these principles into their existing roles and practice settings. It is not designed to be used to train or establish someone as a licensed, clinical professional.

The current mental health system remains particularly challenging for families with young children. When proper supports are not in place, the developmental needs of infants and toddlers or the importance of treating caregivers and children together can often be overlooked. The primary focus of this scholarship is to increase the quality of mental health, social-emotional, and relational supports for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families living within New Hanover County.

Ideal candidates may include social workers, early childhood educators, early interventionists, early childhood special educators, early childhood program administrators, policy advocates, psychologists, counselors, pediatricians, nurses, public health educators, child protective services personnel, and other professionals who work directly with young children and their families.

The I/ECMH Scholarship can help provide tuition support for students enrolled in approved, online certificate programs that:

- Enhance the student's understanding of infant and early childhood mental health.
- Focus on the relationship of social, cognitive, and communication development in young children.
- Prepare practitioners to address the social-emotional, relational, and mental health needs of infants, young children, and their caregivers by applying an infant mental health lens to practice in a variety of settings and different disciplines.
- Teach participants how to intervene in troubled parent-child relationships and work with young children with social and emotional behavioral concerns and their caregivers.

Scholarship Eligibility

- Must reside and work in New Hanover County.
- Currently work 30 or more hours per week with, or on behalf of, young children (prenatal to six) and/or their caregivers.
- Present proof of acceptance into an approved online I/ECMH certificate or degree program and comply with all necessary university and program requirements.

Application Process

- Submit a completed application along with:
 - Attestation of support from current supervisor.
 - Two letters of recommendation from non-relatives. Only one letter may be submitted from someone at your current place of employment.

- Statement of intent to remain working in New Hanover County in a position that serves young children and their families while enrolled in coursework.
- Agree to have application and recommendations read, reviewed, and verified by a representative of Smart Start and/or an independent scholarship review committee. (SSNHC employees and/or scholarship review committee members are not eligible to apply.)
- Scholarship awards will be based on application score and availability of funds. All grants awarded on a nondiscriminatory basis.
- The amount and duration of financial assistance offered may vary between awardees. The maximum award per person will be \$10,000. Awarded amounts will be based on individual's chosen institution, duration of study, application score, and/or availability of funds.

Award Requirements

- Commitment to complete enrolled program (Programs may begin as soon as Fall 2022 and must be completed on or before July 2024).
- Remain in good academic standing and successfully graduate from the selected program.
- Continue employment with an approved employer for the duration of the program.
- Agree to repay funds received should awardee fail to uphold program or scholarship requirements in a semester.
- Agree to participate in some learning communities work with fellow scholarship recipients.
- Applicant must have the financial means to pay all program expenses over and above the awarded amount and/or not covered under the scholarship.
- Scholarship is a one-time award, paid over the span of the approved program. To ensure full payout of awarded amount, student must uphold all conditions and requirements.
- Qualified educational expenses covered by the scholarship include credit-hour based tuition costs up to the awarded amount. Reimbursement for books and other course-related expenses other than fees may be considered, but are not guaranteed, and may be based on availability of funds.
- Awarded amounts are paid directly to the learning institution at the beginning of each semester based on the student's enrolled course load for that term. Students are required to submit proof of class completion from previous semester, along with tuition invoice for subsequent semester no later than 21 days prior to due date.

Approved Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health (I/ECMH) Programs

Each of the programs below require a minimum of a bachelor's degree from an accredited college in a related area, along with 2-5 years of professional experience.

Erikson Institute - Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Certificate Program

Online

Fall 2022 thru Spring 2024

Estimate cost of tuition: \$14,000*

Credit Hours: 18

Graduate academic program designed to support experienced professionals working with infants, young children, and families. Students learn to support the mental health and social-emotional needs of infants, young children, and their families. The program is 18-credit hours completed over two academic years. This program is fully online with a combination of synchronous and asynchronous classes. Applications accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year. Priority submission dates do apply.

Website: <https://www.erikson.edu/graduate-education/graduate-certificates/infant-early-childhood-mental-health-certificate-program/>

University Minnesota - Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Graduate Certificate

Online

Applications open Spring 2022 for Fall 2022-Spring 2024 cohort

Academic Credit Program: Estimated cost of tuition \$14,870*

Continuing Education Unit Program: Estimated cost of tuition \$7,500*

Credit Hours: 20

Course load is 3-5 credit hours per semester.

UMN offers two options: the Academic Credit Program (ACP) and the Continuing Education Unit Program (CEU). The ACP will require admission to the University and results in a Graduate Certificate. The CEU program includes the same coursework as the ACP and students will receive documentation of hours earned for each course. The CEU program is a less expensive option for applicants for whom the Graduate Certificate is not necessary.

Website: <https://online.umn.edu/degrees-certificates/infant-and-early-childhood-mental-health-certificate>

UNC- Charlotte – Early Childhood Mental Health Graduate Certificate

Online

Fall 2022 – Spring 2023

Estimated cost of tuition: \$3300*

Credit Hours: 15

The School of Social Work and Department of Special Education and Child Development collaborate on this joint certificate program in Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) focusing on children birth to five years of age and their families. Courses can be taken in any order. Students typically complete this certificate in 2-3 semesters.

Eligible applicants seeking an ECMH certificate through UNC-Charlotte may qualify for tuition assistance through the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood North Carolina Scholarship program. Assistance may include full tuition and payment of other course-related fees. Please visit <https://www.childcareservices.org/programs/teach-north-carolina/> for more information or to apply.

T.E.A.C.H. scholarship awardees are not eligible to receive I/ECMH scholarship funds.

Website: <https://socialwork.charlotte.edu/early-childhood-mental-health-graduate-certificate/5>

Portland State University – Infant/Toddler Mental Health Graduate Certificate

Online

Fall 2022 thru Summer 2023 or Winter 2022 thru Spring 2024

Estimated cost of tuition: \$12,000*

Credit Hours: 20

The Infant/Toddler Mental Health (ITMH) graduate certificate is a fully online, 20-credit program designed for service providers who work with families with children age prenatal to 3 years old. The instructional team is composed of faculty from the fields of psychology, special education, and counseling and highlights the most current research and interventions throughout ITMH coursework.

Website: <https://www.pdx.edu/academics/programs/graduate/infanttoddler-mental-health>

Univ. S. Florida – Infant/Family Mental Health Graduate Certificate

Online

January 2022 thru December 2022

Estimated cost of tuition: TBD*

Credit Hours: 12

The Infant-Family Mental Health (IFMH) graduate certificate program provides broad coverage of theoretical/conceptual and applied issues necessary for understanding infant-parent relationships and infant and toddler social and emotional development. The program consists of 4 semesters of coursework (Jan-Dec), 3 credit hours each semester.

Website: <https://www.usf.edu/arts-sciences/departments/psychology/graduate/graduate-certificates/infant-family-mental-health/index.aspx>

**Estimated costs include credit hour-based tuition only and do not include books, fees, and/or other charges. Amount listed based on information secured through school website at time of printing. For a more comprehensive and reliable estimate of costs associated with program, please contact school directly.*

Other I/ECMH Programs

Additional I/ECMH programs may be considered provided they meet eligibility requirements. Criteria to qualify as an approved program include:

- All programs must be offered by accredited universities within the United States.
- No for-profit universities will be considered.
- All programs must be completed by July 2024.
- Must relate to infant/toddler or infant/early childhood mental health. Family Mental Health programs do not qualify.
- Scholarship applicant must submit information for proposed program to SSNHC for approval.
- Program must be fully online to allow for continuous employment while pursuing degree or certificate.

For more information about Smart Start of New Hanover County's Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Scholarship program or to receive an application, please email kim.boyce@newhanoverkids.org or call (910)815-3731 x1006.