



**The 3rd Annual Reflective Supervision/Consultation Symposium:
Statement to Our Members
September 2018**

Last month, the [Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health](#) (Alliance) and the [Colorado Association for Infant Mental Health](#) (CoAIMH) were thrilled to welcome **166 infant and early childhood colleagues from 29 states** to the Colorado School of Mines in Golden, Colorado for the *3rd Annual Reflective Supervision/Consultation Symposium: Mining the Depths, An Exploration of Equity Through the Reflective Process!* (A different Alliance state hosts the event each year. The Pennsylvania Association for Infant Mental Health will be the 2019 state, and the event will be held in Pittsburgh.)

Many reactions about the event have been expressed, both from attendees and from stakeholders who did not attend the event, but have engaged in community discussions about the event. CoAIMH welcomes this and **are grateful for the opportunity to create dialogue around issues of equity, race, cultural diversity, power, and privilege in the infant and early childhood field.**

The CoAIMH Executive Board and staff would like to take this opportunity to share some of our "behind-the-scenes" thoughts, planning methods, and the overall year-long journey that led to the delivery of this event with you, our membership base. We seek to offer (and receive) transparency in an effort to build a stronger infant and early childhood mental health community across Colorado.

The overall purpose of this event was to offer a space where we could bravely and openly discuss issues of equity, race, cultural diversity, and intersectionality within the context of reflective supervision in our field. Part of the reason we sought to bring this theme to the event was in direct response to last year's RS/C Symposium in Minnesota where participants raised questions related to the intersection of RS/C and equity and social justice. Focusing the 3rd Annual RS/C Symposium on these issues was a bold step for both the Alliance and CoAIMH; at times uncomfortable, anxiety-producing, and left us at times feeling unsure of ourselves yet always committed. As we all know, CoAIMH and the Alliance did not expect to solve the problem of racial inequity during these three days.

As attendees likely noticed, the planning committee (in Colorado and for the Alliance) was largely comprised of white women. This reflects historical, systemic racism and social inequalities, what we were trying to address. The irony of this was not lost on us throughout the planning year, nor is the fact that this statement was composed largely of white women. Our planning was informed by committee members of different racial, gender, and ethnic backgrounds but the larger presence was white and female. **We are**

driven to do better with including more representation from a variety of voices in our programs and events moving forward and are open to respectful ways to make space and grow in this area.

Attendees may have also noticed that our "live" supervisions were also largely comprised of white women. We engaged in many conversations about what these sessions would look like while focusing on exploring equity in reflective practice. As one might imagine, being asked to participate in a live supervision in general, much less for an event focusing on this theme, caused a range of emotions for several colleagues. **We fully validate the concerns and feelings associated with a lack of representation while also feeling grateful for the willingness and openness from those who agreed to be publicly vulnerable for the purposes of our learning and growth.** In the work of addressing racism and social inequality there is often this difficulty - who takes on this work, oppressed or the oppressor? When do we work separately in groups of affiliation and when and how do we come together?

What drove CoAIMH through the awkward moments, difficult conversations, courageous expression, and missteps that made up the planning process was a feeling that this is an issue we could not ignore. We were guided to name whatever was happening as clearly and honestly as possible and find respectful solutions. We see this event as a beginning of what we hope to be a focus for both organizations (CoAIMH and the Alliance) in our work moving forward.

Integral and ever-present in our field (and in the reflective process) is the ability to recognize when we are uncomfortable, sit with that discomfort, and reflect on our response. **We invite you to sit with us through this uncomfortable time and work alongside us to address equity, race, power, privilege, and cultural diversity in our field one awkward step at a time, recognizing that many of our colleagues have been doing this work for a long time/entire lives.**

We are incredibly thankful to all of you for going on this journey with us and sharing your grace through, and frank feedback about, misses as well as our successes as the facilitators of the symposium. We hope that each of you who attended were able to take away something that will have a positive impact on your work with young children and their families and caregivers, in whatever professional role you hold.

Please know that CoAIMH is always open to engaging in discussions around these issues and thinking together about how we can effectively engage all voices and move the needle toward equity. The best way to reach CoAIMH is info@coaimh.org.

If you have comments to share, but wish to remain anonymous, we invite you to please consider sharing them with CoAIMH via [this link](#).

Thank you for your continued grace and partnership,
CoAIMH Executive Board and Staff