

ANNOUNCEMENT

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Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning
Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Support

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Subject: Early Intervention Service Delivery: Coaching Across Settings
To: Pennsylvania Infant, Toddler and Preschool Early Intervention Program Leaders
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PURPOSE

To establish the vision and expectations for how Early Intervention (EI) services are to be delivered to infants, toddlers and preschool children and their families, caregivers and coaching supports to early childhood education (ECE) professionals. This announcement highlights EI principles in Pennsylvania and provides guidance and consistency in the implementation of personnel and organizational structures for Pennsylvania's initiative, Early Intervention Service Delivery: Coaching Across Settings.

BACKGROUND

Pennsylvania's EI program has been promoting coaching supports and services and collaborative partnerships for infants, toddlers and preschool children with disabilities and their families, caregivers, and ECE professionals for many years. These supports and services enhance a child's growth and development and utilize a set of core principles that ensures services are evidence-based, individualized, and embedded in meaningful and functional outcomes, while working collaboratively with the families, caregivers, and ECE professionals.

These core principles can be found within Parts B and C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). According to 20 U.S.C. § 1400(c)(5)(B), "[a]lmost 30 years of research and experience has demonstrated the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by States strengthening the role and responsibility of parents and ensuring that families of children with disabilities have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home." The IDEA also provides that there is

an urgent and substantial need “to enhance the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their infants and toddlers with disabilities.” 20 U.S.C. § 1431(a)(4). As further indicated in Part C of IDEA at 20 U.S.C. § 1436(a)(2) states, one of the requirements related to the development of the individualized family services plan is the “identification of the supports and services necessary to enhance the family’s capacity to meet the developmental needs of the infant or toddler.”

Federal regulation also emphasizes that EI services are “designed to meet the developmental needs of an infant or toddler with a disability and the needs of the family to assist appropriately in the infant’s or toddler’s development.” 34 C.F.R. § 303.13.

The IDEA requires the Individualized Education Program (IEP) include “a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services . . . to be provided to the child . . . and include program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided for the child.” 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(IV).

Professional early childhood organizations and discipline specific organizations also support coaching and collaborative services and supports. EI practice documents from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), and Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children emphasize the role of parents as the primary recipient of EI services.

According to the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI), training and coaching are two forms of professional development included in a broader definition of ECE professional development.

DISCUSSION

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) has defined coaching for their early childhood programs. Coaching is defined as a relationship-based process led by a professional with specialized and adult learning knowledge and skills, who often serves in a different role than the recipient(s) (NAEYC & NACCRRA, 2011). Coaching is designed to promote sustainable growth in knowledge, skills and behaviors for an individual or group. The focus when coaching a parent is observation, instruction and reflection so professionals, families and caregivers can use evidence-based practices for the development of young children in everyday activities and routines. The focus when coaching a professional is the development of the skills

and knowledge to effectively implement evidence-based practices for the development of young children. Coaching is intended to build capacity for specific professional dispositions when used in the ECE workforce.

The Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Supports (BEISFS) has developed additional EI principles that align with OCDEL principles. These principles are:

- 1) EI programs provide services through coaching supports that are evidence-based and individualized for the child and his or her family, caregiver and ECE professionals recognizing young children learn best through everyday experiences and interactions with nurturing people in familiar contexts.
- 2) During coaching, meaningful and functional outcomes are embedded within familiar learning opportunities that exist in the child's typical routines, within the home and community activities or ECE programs.
- 3) EI service personnel/providers and ECE professionals work collaboratively with the family, caregivers and each other to provide culturally responsive, family prioritized, coordinated and flexible coaching supports.
- 4) EI coaching supports integrate all aspects of child development and learning from first contacts through transitions between and among ECE programs.
- 5) The primary role of EI service personnel/providers is to coach and support the family members, caregivers and ECE professionals in a child's life.

These principles will be implemented for all children and across all settings within the statewide EI program birth to school age. Organizational and personnel structures defined by the BEISFS shall be implemented following an implementation science framework to ensure a long-term system change process to implement and sustain coaching supports. This initiative will be planned through a multi-year implementation process.

BEISFS is committed to supporting high-quality home visits and itinerant services, utilizing research-informed and evidence-based practices. This will be done both with consistency and fidelity so all families receive high-quality services. BEISFS recognizes there are many resources and models of coaching promoted nationally, but is using one model so families, caregivers and ECE professionals have a similar experience and fidelity can be determined. The most current information on coaching can be found at <http://www.eita-pa.org/coaching-and-collaborative-partnerships/>.

When implementing coaching support, it is also important to recognize equity in ECE programs. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) position on equity states: “All children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that help them achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society. Thus, all early childhood educators have a professional obligation to advance equity. They can do this best when they are effectively supported by the early learning settings in which they work and when they and their wider communities embrace diversity and full inclusion as strengths, uphold fundamental principles of fairness and justice, and work to eliminate structural inequities that limit equitable learning opportunities.”

NEXT STEPS

- 1) BEISFS will create the organizational and personnel structures, including measurement for fidelity for consistent implementation of coaching at the local level.
- 2) BEISFS through Early Intervention Technical Assistance (EITA) will provide training and technical assistance to support local programs to implement coaching supports.
- 3) BEISFS through EITA along with OCDEL partners and local EI programs will provide information, training and technical assistance to families and ECE programs so they understand coaching practices and benefits.
- 4) Local Infant, Toddler and Preschool EI programs will participate in identified activities established for the roll-out process.
- 5) Local Infant, Toddler and Preschool EI programs will review information on their coaching activities with their Local Interagency Coordinating Council.