Early Intervention Leadership Guide

Office of Child Development and Early Learning
Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Supports

Contents

Last Update 03.28.2025

Introduction

As an Early Intervention (EI) leader, your role is integral to EI in Pennsylvania. This guide is intended to provide resources to support you in your role as a local EI leader. This guide serves as a starting point for understanding the EI process, learning important information you need to know as a local EI leader, and as a point of reference to go back to time and time again as you support professionals, children, and families.

Each section of the guide includes information about a specific topic, as well as general information on EI leaders' responsibilities regarding the topic. However, please note that each local EI program's specific practices and procedures, and thus, EI leaders' roles, may vary. We recommend using the Table of Contents to easily navigate and find answers to questions as they arise.

In the Appendix of the guide, you will find supplemental information on many of the topics that are covered in the guide, including the key departments and offices across the Commonwealth with whom the work of EI intersects, and further information on online professional development tools. The Appendix will be referred to throughout the guide, so you can explore the additional information as you go.

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL)

Conceived in 2007, OCDEL has focused on creating opportunities for the Commonwealth's youngest children to develop and learn to their fullest potential. This goal is accomplished through a framework of supports and systems that help ensure children and their families have access to high-quality services. Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services (DHS) and Department of Education (PDE) jointly oversee OCDEL, while closely partnering with the Department of Health (DOH). To learn more about OCDEL's mission and vision, review the OCDEL page on the PA Department of Human Services website. For more information on each of the Departments and key offices with whom OCDEL partners, please see Appendix A: The Departments of Human Services, Education, and Health. For more information about each of OCDEL's bureaus and business partners, see Appendix B: OCDEL's Bureaus and Business Partners.

Last Update 03.28.2025
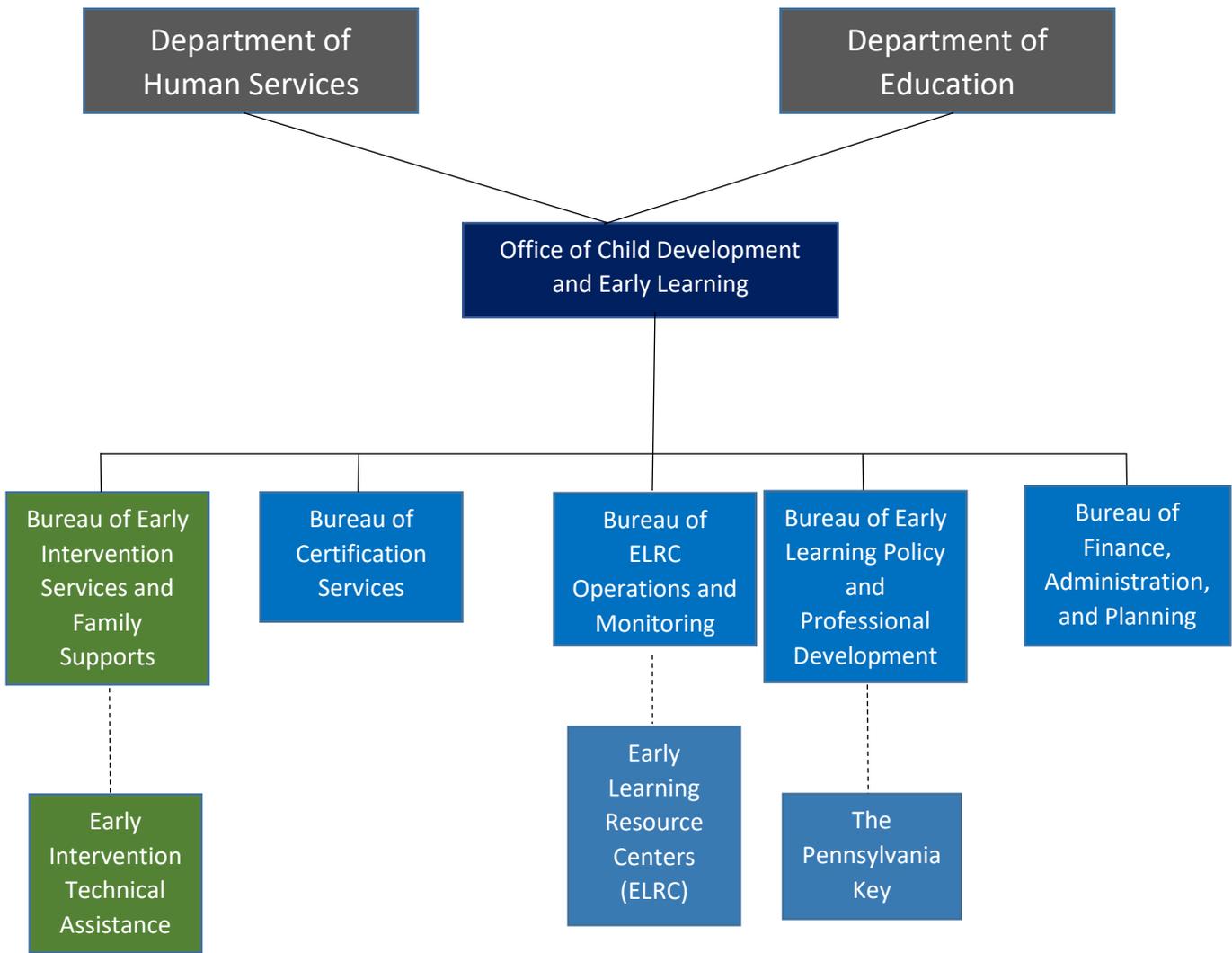
Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Supports (BEISFS)

BEISFS is responsible for the management, implementation, and oversight of the statewide EI program for children birth to school age and their families. Pennsylvania's EI program is implemented through the requirements of federal and state laws and regulations, and state policy announcements. The Bureau Director, along with three Division Chiefs, headquarters staff, and a staff of EI advisors, is responsible for overseeing the local programs.

Each local Infant Toddler EI program and Preschool EI program is assigned an EI advisor, who serves as the primary contact. The EI advisor is responsible for addressing budget questions, data review, verification/monitoring, complaints, and quality improvement.

Additionally, BEISFS also oversees Evidence-Based Home Visiting (EBHV) and Family Support programs. BEISFS is responsible for monitoring and supporting all EBHV and Family Support programs across the state of Pennsylvania, such as the Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) programs and Family Centers. For more information on the types of EBHV and Family Support Programs available across Pennsylvania, please review Appendix C: A Deeper Look at Evidence-Based Home Visiting and Family Support Programs.

Key BEISFS Meetings and Events

BEISFS holds multiple meetings and events that are integral to supporting the Early Intervention system and its leaders, professionals, and families in Pennsylvania.

BEISFS Statewide Leadership Meetings

Statewide leadership meetings are held every other month. Statewide leadership meetings include updates from the Bureau Director and Division Chiefs. The information shared often includes policy clarifications, funding updates, and new resources. Following each leadership meeting, there are regional breakout sessions for both Infant Toddler and Preschool EI leaders to collaborate, problem-solve, and discuss current issues. It is important for EI leaders to attend to hear updates and connect with each other.

Leadership Conferences/Policy Forums

Leadership conferences are held periodically for local EI leaders. Information on these events is emailed to EI leaders when available.

The Leadership page of the EITA Portal provides information on leadership events and resources.

State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) Meetings

The Pennsylvania State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) is a Governor-appointed council that advises and assists the Departments of Health, Education, and Human Services to ensure that a comprehensive delivery system of integrated EI programs and services is available to all eligible infants, toddlers, and preschool children and their families. The SICC has required members, including family members and representatives from higher education, Head Start, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and EI provider agencies and program administrators, as well as representatives from the Pennsylvania Departments of Health, Education and Human Services.

SICC meetings occur six times each year and are typically held on the first Thursday afternoon of the month, every other month. Meetings are open to the public.

EI Leaders are welcome to attend SICC meetings to stay abreast of happenings at the state level. To be added to the SICC listserv and get notified about meetings, EI leaders can email ra-PWSICC@pa.gov. For more information

on SICC meetings, including meeting dates, agendas, and past presentations, please visit the SICC page of the EITA Portal.

Family Meet and Greets are held prior to the meeting as an opportunity for families to learn more about the SICC. EI leaders should share information regarding Meet and Greets with the families in their EI program.

Early Intervention Technical Assistance (EITA)

EITA works on behalf of BEISFS to provide training and technical assistance to the local Infant Toddler and Preschool EI programs. EITA also supports local agencies that provide EBHV and Family Support programs that serve children from birth to school age and their caregivers. EITA is part of the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) and is administered through the Tuscarora Intermediate Unit.

EITA provides professional development in support of statewide initiatives, which are planned in collaboration with BEISFS and aligned with the needs and priorities of the local Infant Toddler EI program and Preschool EI programs. An EITA consultant is assigned to each EI local program and works with the assigned BEISFS advisor and EI leader to develop a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that guides the technical assistance and training provided and supports quality improvement activities.

EITA maintains the EITA Portal, which hosts a multitude of professional development resources, along with national and state resources for EI professionals and families. Additionally, EITA communicates statewide through three newsletters (*EITA Training Announcements*, *Portal to Practice*, and *Coaching Corner*), to inform the field of new resources, training opportunities, and more. EI leaders should sign up for these newsletters by using the subscription links at the bottom of the EITA Portal homepage and encourage others to subscribe.

Who Do I Call?

EI advisors and EITA consultants have a collaborative working relationship with one another, as well as with their assigned local EI programs. EI advisors and EITA consultants will work together to assist local EI programs in addressing questions, concerns, or technical assistance needs.

A good rule of thumb for EI leaders to follow when wondering who they should contact for questions or concerns:

- If there is a concern or question regarding federal or state regulation, policy, data, or fiscal management, contact your EI advisor.
- For training-related issues, contact your EITA consultant.

Laws, Regulations, and Announcements

Federal Statute and Regulations

EI in Pennsylvania is governed by federal statute, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), IDEA regulations at 34 CFR § 300 (Part B), and 34 CFR § 303 (Part C). IDEA charged each state with administering EI services. In Pennsylvania, OCDEL/BEISFS administers both Part C (Infant Toddler EI) and Part B (Preschool EI) of IDEA.

The US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), administers the IDEA through state plan reviews and monitoring of state programs, to ensure consistency with federal requirements and to

ensure that states continue to implement programs designed to improve results for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities.

OSEP measures each state's EI program through key performance indicators and state targets established in the State Performance Plan (SPP). BEISFS submits data annually to OSEP through an Annual Performance Report (APR). The data submitted is also used as part of PA's local determination and verification processes with local EI programs to guide improvement efforts. To learn more about the determination and verification process, see the Local Program Monitoring section of the guide.

State Statute, Regulations, and EI Announcements

EI in Pennsylvania is governed by state statute, Pennsylvania Act 212-1990, and state regulations found in 55 Pa. Code § 4226 (Infant Toddler) and 22 Pa. Code § 14 (Preschool).

EI announcements provide clarification and guidance on the federal or state regulations, and the implementation of EI services.

EI Announcements will be referred to throughout the EI Leadership Guide. All EI Announcements can be found on the PDE website. It is recommended that EI leaders bookmark this website.

BEISFS provides standardized forms for local EI programs to use when administering EI supports and services. Annotated versions of most forms are available to guide you in using these forms. Standardized or annotated forms can be found on the Special Education Forms page of the PaTTAN website. Filter by Infant Toddler or Preschool, as well as by language and/or annotation, to easily find applicable forms.

BEISFS also provides publications to be used by local EI programs. The publications focus on a variety of topics in Early Intervention. Some publications are available for download, while others are available to order. Filter by Early Intervention and use the search bar to find specific topics using the Publication drop-down on the PaTTAN website.

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

EI leaders are responsible for:

- Adhering to all federal and state laws, regulations, and EI announcements.
- Ensuring all standardized forms are correctly utilized.
- Ensuring staff are trained in all federal and state requirements, so they have the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver high-quality EI services.

Funding for Early Intervention Services

Funding for the EI statewide system is made up of federal, state, and local sources.

By law, local EI programs cannot decline to serve additional children, even if the cost to serve those children exceeds the original funding allocation.

Infant Toddler Funding Streams

The majority of funding for Infant Toddler EI services is provided by the state appropriation that is allocated by BEISFS to Infant Toddler EI programs. Each Infant Toddler EI program is issued an allocation at the start of the fiscal year that details categorical allocations to include Part C federal funds, state funds, and Medical Assistance (MA) funds designated by a specific appropriation number. These allocation letters serve as the basis for the quarterly payments made by the budget office/comptroller. For each fiscal year, allocations are based on the previous year's allocation and analysis of data regarding the children served. Re-budget data is collected from each Infant Toddler EI program to determine the need for changes in state funds.

Federal Funds

- IDEA, Part C: The US Department of Education, OSEP awards an annual grant to the PA Department of Human Services for the provision of EI services for infants and toddlers (birth to age three) with disabilities.

Medical Assistance

- Infants, Toddlers, and Families (ITF) Medicaid Waiver: Medicaid Home and Community Based Waiver program for infants and toddlers, birth to age three, who are experiencing a developmental delay(s) evidenced by a minimum of a 50% delay in one or 33% delay in two or more developmental areas and who need EI services. Level of care eligibility is based on the Infant Toddler EI program's eligibility determination that is completed in accordance with procedures outlined in **OCDEL Announcement EI 8-10: *Eligibility for the Infants, Toddlers, and Families Medicaid Waiver*.** The following forms are part of the ITF Medicaid Waiver eligibility process:
  - Form 123: Certification of Need for Infants, Toddlers, and Families Waiver
  - Form 457: Certification of Choice for Infants, Toddlers, and Families Waiver
  - Form 457A: Fair Hearing Request
  - Form 123A: Recertification of Need for Infants, Toddlers, and Families Waiver
  - Form 1768: Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Eligibility/Ineligibility/Change Form (notification to County Assistance Office in PELICAN)
- EI Medical Assistance: funding reimbursed for children eligible for the Pennsylvania Medicaid program.

State Funds

- Funding appropriated by the Pennsylvania state budget to OCDEL is to be used to fund the portion of the EI program not otherwise funded through Federal funding.

Local Funds

- Each local Infant Toddler EI program is also required to have a local county match of 10% of the state funds used for the delivery of EI services.

Infant Toddler EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

Infant Toddler EI leaders are responsible for:

- Implementing procedures that ensure accountability of the use of federal, state, and local funds.
- Ensuring only allowable costs are expended per [55 Pa. Code Chapter 4300 County Mental Health and Intellectual Disability Fiscal Manual](#).
- Coordinating budget requests with the agency fiscal department in a timely manner.
- Documenting training expenditures appropriately.
- Maximizing the use of funds by enrolling infants and toddlers in MA.
- Monitoring contracts for all private providers to ensure they contain all applicable requirements

Additionally, Infant Toddler EI leaders are responsible for the following regarding the ITF Medicaid Waiver:

- Fulfilling all responsibilities as agreed upon in the Operating Agreement signed between the County and OCDEL.
- Training and educating evaluation and service coordination staff on the ITF Medicaid Waiver process, including how to accurately determine eligibility.
- Ensuring staff can adequately support families by helping them understand ITF Medicaid Waiver requirements, guiding them through the process of obtaining necessary family permission, and addressing any questions or concerns families may have regarding waiver-funded services.

Preschool Funding Streams

The majority of funding for Preschool EI services is provided by the state appropriation and is allocated to Preschool EI programs through a Preschool Early Intervention Grant Agreement with BEISFS. The agreements with Preschool EI programs were originally termed Mutually Agreed upon Written Arrangements (MAWA). As defined in PA Act 212, such written arrangement is permitted between PDE and a local intermediate unit, school district, or other public or private agency.

Additionally, Federal funding is allocated to Preschool EI programs by OCDEL.

Federal Funds
- OSEP awards an annual grant to PDE for the provision of EI services for preschool children (three years of age to school age) with disabilities.
  - Federal 611 Component 1 provides funds for children with disabilities based on the total number of eligible young children in the December 1 child count.
  - Federal 619 provides funds that support programs for eligible young children with disabilities and/or developmental delays, three years of age to school age, enrolled in EI programs.

Medical Assistance
- The School-Based ACCESS Program (SBAP) allows the Preschool EI program to receive Medicaid reimbursement for the provision of health-related services as part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) for children who are eligible for Medical Assistance.

State Funds
- A state EI Grant is awarded to each Preschool EI program annually.

Other Funds

- Kindergarten eligible children who remain in EI during the year in which they are eligible to transition receive money from the school district of residence for the provision of services for the additional year. This revenue source varies from program to program according to the number of children who remain in EI and the established cost between the Preschool EI program and the school district of residence for the child.
- Grants and other funding streams may also be included and vary across Preschool EI programs.

BEISFS will solicit input from the Preschool EI programs to discuss the status of funding for the fiscal year and determine if the program's allocation needs to be revised.

Preschool EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

Preschool EI leaders are responsible for:

- Implementing procedures that ensure accountability of the use of federal, state, and local funds.
- Maximizing the use of funds by enrolling preschool children in MA.
- Monitoring contracts for all private providers to ensure they contain all applicable requirements, including enrollment and the completion of the SBAP billing.
- Ensuring only allowable costs are expended per fiscal guidelines.
- Coordinating budget requests with the agency fiscal department or business office in a timely manner.
- Documenting training expenditures appropriately.

Early Intervention in Pennsylvania

EI in Pennsylvania is grounded in three fundamental tenets that shape its approach to supporting children and families. First and foremost is a steadfast commitment to inclusion, ensuring that all infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities actively participate in the community and early childhood programs alongside their peers. Family engagement stands as another pillar, valuing partnerships with families and emphasizing individualized and culturally responsive supports and services. Lastly, PA EI's primary service delivery models are Family Guided Routines Based Intervention (Infant Toddler EI) and Embedded Instruction (Preschool EI).

Inclusion

IDEA Part C (Infants and Toddlers) requires states to provide services for infants and toddlers with disabilities in the natural environment. 34 CFR§ 303.13(a)(8) states "(a) To the maximum extent appropriate, early intervention services are provided in natural environments; and (b) the provision of early intervention services for any infant or toddler with a disability occurs in settings other than a natural environment that is most appropriate, as determined by the parent and the individualized family service plan team, only when early intervention cannot be achieved satisfactorily for the infant or toddler in a natural EI environment." For more information, please refer to **OCDEL Announcement ELS-EI 06-04:** *Natural Environments*.

IDEA Part B (Preschool) requires states to ensure preschool-age children with disabilities receive services in the least restrictive environment (LRE). 34 CFR § 300.114 states, "to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children that are nondisabled; and that special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily."

Pennsylvania has a long-standing commitment to support the inclusion of infants, toddlers, and preschool children as active members in early childhood programs and community settings. The goal is for children with disabilities and/or developmental delays to participate and succeed in the same learning environments as their same-age peers. EI provides supports to the child and family in settings that are consistent with their needs, building upon the natural learning occurring in those first few years, and is individualized to enhance the child's growth.

Community partnerships are also an important component in enhancing local, inclusive learning opportunities for all young children. EI leaders play a key role in establishing partnerships with their counterparts across agencies within their communities. Sharing program goals and a culture of inclusion to promote shared collaboration for the benefit of all children and families is essential.

For more information on PA policies, see **OCDEL Announcement DS-03:** *Inclusion of All Children in Early Childhood Programs* and OCDEL **Announcement EI 17-02:** *Reducing Suspension and Expulsion in Early Childhood Programs*, along with additional supporting documents.

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

EI Leaders are responsible for:

- Ensuring children receive EI services in their natural environment or the least restrictive environment to the maximum extent possible.
- Developing and strengthening partnerships so supports and services for children with disabilities can be provided within daily routines and activities. This involves building relationships with early childhood education programs and families receiving EI services.

Early Intervention Service Delivery: Coaching Across Settings

OCDEL Announcement EI 20-03: *Early Intervention Service Delivery: Coaching Across Settings* establishes the vision and expectations for how EI services are to be delivered in PA and provides the following EI principles for providing supports and services. 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, caregivers, 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 support.
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.

In PA, there are two evidence-based practices as the method by which coaching supports are being implemented. Over the past few years, PA has been strategically rolling out these models so that EI services are delivered consistently across the commonwealth. Please note that, as programs are at different points in the service delivery rollout, EI leaders should check with their EITA consultants regarding the status of their program.

Infant Toddler Service Delivery Evidence-Based Practice: Family Guided Routines Based Intervention (FGRBI)

FGRBI is an EI approach that incorporates Part C of the IDEA legal mandates and guidelines to promote child-directed learning into the functional everyday routines and activities of young children and their families. FGRBI provides systematic implementation within a flexible framework that also allows for family participation and leadership.

For more information:

- Visit the Infant Toddler Service Delivery page on the EITA Portal.
- To learn more about this framework, take the *Family Guided Routines Based Intervention (FGRBI) course*

Preschool Service Delivery Evidence-Based Practice: Embedded Instruction

Embedded instruction is an approach that uses the 3Rs of Early Learning: relationships, repetition, and routines, to help preschool-aged children with disabilities learn the skills they need to access and participate fully in

everyday activities. Embedded instruction focuses on providing children with embedded learning opportunities where they can learn developmentally appropriate skills in ongoing activities and routines.

For more information on embedded instruction and the learning path, as well as resources and videos about everyday learning opportunities:

- Visit the Preschool Service Delivery page of the EITA Portal.
- Take the overview of *Embedded Instruction for Early Learning in Pennsylvania* course

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities:

- **Developing and maintaining the program local Core Leadership Team (CLT). Within the CLT, develop and implement action plans based on a needs assessment.**

  The Core Leadership Team (CLT) is comprised of individuals in each county Infant Toddler or Preschool EI program who will develop, guide, and monitor the implementation of the respective service delivery models. Through monthly meetings, the team will manage the change effort by identifying and providing the supports needed to implement coaching practices across contexts. Annually, the CLT is responsible for completing a needs assessment, developing, and implementing an action plan to integrate coaching into their Early Intervention practices.

  The CLT should be limited to 6 – 8 key persons in roles such as:

    o EI Infant Toddler or Preschool EI leader(s)
    o Other County Representative/IU Representative
        o SC Supervisor, SC Representative, Eval Team member
    o Administrator Representative from Major Provider Agencies
    o Representative from Independent Providers
    o EITA Consultant
    o Early Childhood Partner(s)

- **Ensuring provider staff are completing related professional development to deliver services consistently and with fidelity so that all families receive the same quality of service, in alignment with the *Principles of Early Intervention in Pennsylvania*, regardless of where they live.**

  Effective FY 21-22, all PA Early Intervention Professionals (Service Coordinators, providers, evaluators and administrators) were required to complete *Early Intervention Service Delivery: Coaching Across Settings* through the EITA Portal. EI leaders should ensure that all new staff and contract providers who have not previously completed this course do so.

  In conjunction with the CLT, EI leaders are responsible for implementing strategies that support ongoing professional development for staff and contracted providers through appropriate learning pathways:

    o Infant Toddler Learning Path information
    o Preschool Learning Path information

- **Sharing resources, tools, and communications with local program stakeholders (families, providers, service coordinators, community partners, etc.)**
    o Early Intervention Service Delivery Page on the EITA Portal

- o *Coaching Corner* Newsletter: Subscribe to receive the monthly newsletter, which provides resources and information on coaching.
- o BEISFS and EITA send emails to EI leaders regularly with service delivery updates to be shared with appropriate audiences.

Family Engagement in Early Intervention

BEISFS supports programs across the Commonwealth that connect families of children in EI with one another and empower families to build leadership skills and advocate at the local, state, and national levels.

The following programs primarily focus on linking families in EI with other families:

- Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania connects families of children and adults with a disability or special need to a peer supporter (mentor) for purposes of emotional support and information.
- Family Connections for Language and Learning is a program made up of a team of experienced parents of children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf/blind and deaf/hard of hearing adults. They can help families as they navigate the EI system and explore communication opportunities for their child.
- Parent Cafes take place periodically and are a chance for parents and caregivers to meet and talk with other parents and caregivers about the joys and challenges of parenting.

The following programs primarily focus on supporting family leadership development:

- Confidence and Competence: Partners in Policymaking Early Intervention (C2P2 EI) is an innovative program that provides participants with up-to-date information, leadership development training, resources, and skills. Participants learn about the local, state, and national issues that affect children with disabilities.
- Parents as Partners in Professional Development (P3D) brings together families of children receiving Early Intervention or Family Support Services to share their experiences with the EI system to improve training and resources. P3D also promotes connections between families.

For more information on BEISFS family engagement resources, review the publication, Early Intervention Family Resources and the Families page of the EITA Portal.

EI Family Survey

The voices and opinions of families are integral to the EI quality improvement process. BEISFS distributes an annual survey to all families to gather feedback on their experience in EI. Survey results validate the strengths of EI programs and identify growth opportunities. The distribution and analysis of the family survey is a reporting requirement of OSEP. The survey return rate and results are part of each local program's annual determination. For more information on the determination process, please review the Local Program Monitoring section of the guide.

The annual Family Survey rollout begins in January and concludes in six months. Weekly updates on return rate progress are provided to each local EI program through DocuShare to assist programs in achieving the expected return rate. For more information on DocuShare, review the Getting to Know your Program Management Tools section of the guide.

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

EI leaders are responsible for:

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- Ensuring that providers and professionals provide families with information about, linkages with other families, leadership development resources, and engagement opportunities.

Additionally, EI leaders are responsible for the annual Family Survey, which includes:

- Disseminating the survey links to families within their programs.
- Developing a plan to encourage all families, including those who are typically underrepresented, to respond to the Family Survey. This plan should include steps to reach families who need additional assistance to respond to a survey and may include providing incentives to families for returning surveys.
- Monitoring return rates on an ongoing basis.
- Changing dissemination strategies if they aren't effective in getting surveys returned.
- Using the survey data to enhance services for families and children in EI.

Overview of the Early Intervention Process

Procedural Safeguards

Procedural safeguards are intended to protect the interests and rights of children and their families. For families to be fully informed of their rights and safeguards, they must also understand the EI system and their role as partners and informed decision-makers. Procedural safeguards function as the checks and balances of the EI system that ensure quality, equity, and the protection of an impartial system for complaint resolution. EI personnel are legally obligated under federal and state laws and regulations to explain procedural safeguards to families and to support an active understanding of these safeguards for all involved.

General responsibility for procedural safeguard requirements for Infant Toddler EI can be found in IDEA 303.400 and 55 Pa. Code § 4226.91-103; procedural safeguard requirements for Preschool EI can be found in 22 Pa. Code §14.161-163 and IDEA Subpart E.

The following is a list of the essential components of procedural safeguards with resources to learn more about each component.

Definition of Parent and Surrogate Parent

Parent is defined as a biological or adoptive parent of a child; a foster parent; a guardian authorized to act as the child's parent, or authorized to make EI, educational, health or developmental decisions for the child; an individual acting in the place of a biological or adoptive parent (including a grandparent, stepparent, or other relative) with whom the child lives, or an individual who is legally responsible for the child's welfare; or a surrogate parent who has been appointed in accordance with applicable federal and state regulations.

There may be times when it is necessary to appoint a "surrogate parent" for a child. This requirement would apply when a parent cannot be identified; the whereabouts of an identified parent, after reasonable efforts, cannot be discovered; or the child is in the legal custody of a county children and youth agency.

The surrogate must be a person who has no interests that conflict with the interests of the child the surrogate represents; who has knowledge and skills to ensure adequate representation of the child; and who is willing to assume the responsibilities of being a surrogate parent. They also cannot be an employee of an agency or person providing EI services or other services to the child or to any family members of the child, or an employee of any state agency. The surrogate parent may represent the child in all matters related to Early Intervention.

The foster parent of a child in substitute care, who meets the criteria, may serve as a parent/surrogate parent for the child with the approval of the county children and youth agency that has legal custody of the child.

Consent

Consent in EI is defined as:

- The parent/guardian has been fully informed of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought, in their native language.
- The parent/guardian understands and agrees in writing to the carrying out of the activity for which their consent is sought, and the consent form describes that activity and lists the EI records (if any) that will be released and to whom they will be released; and

- The parent/guardian understands that the granting of consent is voluntary on their part and may be revoked at any time. If a parent/guardian revokes consent, that revocation is not retroactive (i.e., it does not apply to an action that occurred before the consent was revoked).

Written consent must be obtained before:

- Conducting the initial evaluation and assessment or any reevaluations
- Initiating or changing EI services
- Referring an at-risk child to the tracking system (Infant Toddler only)
- Determining eligibility for Medicaid waiver services (Infant Toddler only)
- Billing the School-Based ACCESS Program (Preschool only)

Parents/guardians have the right to thoroughly understand all activities and written records about their child. If they prefer another language or way of communicating, the EI program is required to secure an interpreter, if possible. It is the EI program's responsibility to help the parents/guardians understand the information so that they can be informed team members and decision-makers.

Confidentiality and Access to Child Records

Confidentiality must be assured at the collection, maintenance, use, storage, disclosure, and destruction stages of a child's EI record and all personally identifiable information. This applies from the point in time when the child is referred to EI. Keeping child records secure and confidential is required for anyone working in EI; all staff must ensure that they are keeping information confidential as specified in state and federal regulations and related legislation including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

The EI record is the family's record. EI programs are required to provide a copy of the child's record to the family upon request. If the family does not understand the way records are written, the information needs to be explained to them in a way that they can understand so they have the same information as other team members.

EI records must not be shared with anyone outside of the EI program, unless parental permission is obtained. Within the Infant Toddler EI program for children who are within 90 days before their third birthday, the Infant Toddler EI Program is required to share the child's name, date of birth, and parent contact information (including name, address, and phone numbers) with the Preschool EI program for which the child may be eligible. No other information will be shared without parental consent. This is outlined in **OCDEL Announcement EI-13 01**: *Transition of Toddlers to Preschool or Other Community Settings*. Within Preschool EI programs, records are not released to the school district until the child is enrolled in school-age programming or the family has signed an intent to register form during a school-age transition meeting. As outlined in **OCDEL Announcement EI 09-19:** *Transition of Preschool Children to School Age Programs,* the EI program assures that all records are kept private until either of these situations occurs.

For further information regarding confidentiality, please refer to **OCDEL Announcement EI 12-03:** *Confidentiality, Parent Consent and Surrogate Parents* and **OCDEL Announcement EI 12-02:** *Updates to Early Intervention Policy Based on Requirements in IDEA Part C Regulations*.

Prior Written Notice

Families have the right to receive any proposed changes to their child's programming in advance, such as evaluations, service changes, or other actions that may affect the child. When evaluating a child in EI or

providing services for the first time, a parent/guardian must give permission in writing beforehand. In the Infant Toddler EI program, this is done through the review and signing of a [release of information](#) and the [Parent Rights Agreement (PRA).](#) An [annotated version of the PRA](#) is also available for the leaders' reference. In Pennsylvania, prior written notice is provided by means of an LEA Prior Written Notice Form/[Notice of Recommended Educational Placement](#). Families should be given reasonable notice of this proposal or refusal so that if they do not agree with the LEA, they may take appropriate action. Reasonable notice means ten days. An [annotated version of the NOREP](#) is also available for reference.

The notice must detail the proposed or refused actions, the reasons, and the parent's rights to conflict resolution, mediation, due process hearings, and filing complaints. Notices should be clear and in the parent's native language, if possible. For non-written languages, the notice must be provided orally or by other means with written confirmation that these requirements have been met. The notice must also inform parents of their procedural safeguards, and sources for assistance in understanding these provisions.

Preschool EI programs must also notify parents if they initiate or expedite a due process hearing, refuse an independent educational evaluation (IEE) at public expense, or if parents revoke consent for Early Intervention Services. Additionally, the notice should describe other options considered by the IEP team and why those options were rejected, along with other supporting factors influencing the agency's decision.

Dispute Resolution

Families sometimes have concerns about their child's EI services. Procedural safeguards are in place to help them resolve these issues through a process known as dispute resolution. There are several options available for families for addressing concerns that can be found in the [Problem Solving in Early Intervention](#) publication, located on the PaTTAN website. Initially, parents/caregivers should contact their Service Coordinator (Infant Toddler) or EI representative (Preschool) to discuss any questions or concerns about their child's EI services at the local level. Infant Toddler EI programs are responsible for holding a conflict resolution meeting within seven calendar days from when a written or oral request for conflict has been initiated.

In addition, families can seek assistance from the BEISFS before filing a formal complaint. BEISFS provides support and facilitates effective communication between families and the EI programs to efficiently address concerns. If immediate resolution isn't possible, families have the option to file a formal written complaint, which BEISFS will investigate within 60 days. If substantiated, a corrective plan will be developed within 30 days.

For more information regarding complaints, please refer to **OCDEL Announcement EI 11-01:** *IDEA Early Intervention Complaint Procedures.*

Parents and caregivers also have the option to use IFSP/IEP facilitation, where a neutral facilitator assists in communication between parties during meetings. If disagreements about a child's services cannot be resolved informally, mediation and/or due process may be pursued. Mediation helps participants work toward a mutually agreeable solution. If the EI program fails to resolve the complaint within 30 days, a due process hearing may proceed, with timelines beginning thereafter unless adjusted by mutual agreement. If the parent does not participate despite the EI program's documented efforts, the hearing office may dismiss the complaint. The [Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR)](#) provides the resources for parents to reach an agreement on a child's EI services or program.

In Preschool EI, when a family/caregiver files a due process complaint, the Preschool EI program must convene a resolution meeting within 15 days. This meeting includes the parent(s), relevant IEP team members, and a decision-making representative from the Preschool EI program, aiming to resolve the complaint before

considering a due process hearing. If an agreement is reached, pertinent documents such as the IEP are revised accordingly. If no resolution is reached, the due process hearing will proceed. All other procedural safeguards remain available, and the resolution process is voluntary for parents, who are not required to participate before exercising other procedural rights.

It is essential to understand that no single option within the EI procedural safeguards process takes precedence over another. Each family's needs must be addressed on an individual basis, ensuring that the chosen approach best supports their unique circumstances. For more information regarding mediation, due process, and IFSP facilitation, please refer **to OCDEL Announcement EI 12-05:** *Mediation, Due Process and IFSP Facilitation Procedures for Infant Toddler Early Intervention.*

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

EI leaders are responsible for:

- Establishing procedures that align with state and federal requirements for procedural safeguards.
- Ensuring all staff and providers are well-informed, adhere to these standards, and can explain procedural safeguards to families in a way that they can understand.
- Familiarizing themselves and staff with the resources available to support a family's understanding of their procedural safeguards rights, including *A Family's Introduction to Early Intervention in Pennsylvania*, and the *Procedural Safeguard Notice*.
- Learning about the dispute resolution process, which includes resolving issues informally at the local level, knowing when and how to seek assistance from BEISFS, and guiding families through the process of filing written complaints.
- Facilitating communication or initiate mediation or due process procedures if necessary and according to the *Problem Solving in Early Intervention Brochure*.

Additionally, per verification requirements, EI leaders are responsible for:

- Implementing a process for tracking and reviewing concerns on an ongoing basis, including local complaints, local conflict resolution meetings (IT only), state complaint investigations, and requests for IFSP or IEP facilitation, mediation, and due process.
- Developing and implementing a process to identify systemic issues generated by complaints, as well as corrective action procedures for quality improvement based on the review of complaint data.
- Overseeing the protection of child and family information, ensuring confidentiality and compliance with legal requirements to safeguard sensitive information effectively.

EI leaders and staff can utilize resources available through the EITA Portal, including job aids, to enhance their understanding of these responsibilities. Examples include:

- *Infant Toddler EI Procedural Safeguards* job aid
- *Preschool EI Procedural Safeguards* job *aid*
- *Confidentiality* job aid

Child Find and the Referral Process

Child Find and public awareness activities are key components of the EI system. They are required by both federal and state regulations to identify all eligible children as early as possible.

Pennsylvania's statewide public awareness system for EI is the CONNECT Helpline, which assists families by directly linking them to their county Infant Toddler EI program or their local Preschool EI program. When a parent or family member has a question or concern about their child's development, they may call the CONNECT Helpline at 1.800.692.7288, email help@connectpa.net, or submit a form online. Additional referrals may come in via COMPASS. EI leaders and designated staff are responsible for retrieving these referrals in PELICAN-EI.

COMPASS, an online tool for Pennsylvanians to apply for many health and human service programs, contains a referral tool for families to see EI services. These referrals are sent directly from COMPASS to the local program's PELICAN-EI system. EI leaders and designated staff are responsible for retrieving these referrals in PELICAN-EI.

Additionally, Infant Toddler and Preschool EI programs must maintain an effective, comprehensive, and coordinated Child Find system that includes interagency collaboration with other local agencies responsible for administering various education, health, and social service programs.

Child Find requirements for Infant Toddler EI can be found in 55 Pa. Code § 4226.24. Child Find requirements for Preschool EI can be found in 22 Pa. Code §14.152. For more information on Child Find requirements regarding specific populations, refer to **OCDEL Announcement 13-01:** *Children Experiencing homelessness*; **OCDEL Announcement EI 09-13***: Childfind System Including Children who are Wards of the State, Children Living in Residential Facilities, Children Who Were Abused and Children who are Homeless*; and **OCDEL Announcement 22-01:** *Lead Exposure in Infant/Toddlers and Preschoolers.*

Children can be referred to EI in various ways, such as through hospital referrals, discussions between families and pediatricians, or recommendations from early childhood education program staff. For more information on coordinating efforts related to Child Find in Infant Toddler EI, please see **OCDEL Announcement EI 12-02:** *Updates to Early Intervention Policy Based on Requirements in IDEA Part C Regulations*.

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

EI leaders are responsible for:

- Ensuring that administrative staff, service coordinators, or other designated individuals respond to all referrals as described in 55 Pa. Code § 4226.24.
- Conducting and participating in Child Find activities to inform the public of EI services. Activities may include, but are not limited to, partnering with other community resources supporting children and families representing at-risk populations, meeting with local pediatricians and health care providers to distribute brochures about EI, and participating in community health and wellness events.
- Utilizing available materials are available from BEISFS to support Child Find efforts. Both the Early Intervention brochure and the Help Me Grow brochure should be used to support outreach activities. Hard copies can be requested by emailing eita@pattan.net.

Eligibility for Early Intervention Services in Pennsylvania

The Screening Process

EI for all children, regardless of age, begins with a screening. Screening provides a snapshot of whether a child's development is on track and informs further evaluation procedures for children suspected of having a developmental delay. In order to not duplicate efforts, programs should accept screening results from early childhood education programs, home visiting programs, pediatricians, etc.

Screening requirements for Infant Toddler EI can be found in **OCDEL Announcement EI 12-01:** *Screening, Evaluation, and Assessment in Early Intervention*. Screening requirements for Preschool EI can be found in 22

[Pa. Code § 14.122](). Please note that families can decline screening at any time and proceed directly to the evaluation process.

Please note that children with any degree of diagnosed, permanent hearing loss, including mild or unilateral hearing loss, should be immediately referred to an Early Intervention program, as they are automatically eligible for appropriate services and supports. **Please refer to OCDEL Announcement EI 21-03:** *Recommendations for Infants, Toddlers and Preschool-Age Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*, for additional support.

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

EI leaders are responsible for:

- Developing local procedures regarding screening.
- Ensuring that staff are prepared to use valid and appropriate screening tools.
- Making certain that staff inform families of their right to request an evaluation at any time during the screening process.

The Evaluation Process

Evaluation is defined as the procedures used by appropriately qualified personnel to determine a child's initial and ongoing eligibility for EI services. Assessments are the tools used by qualified personnel to identify each child's unique strengths and needs, and to determine appropriate services to meet those needs.

Evaluation requirements for Infant Toddler EI can be found in [55 Pa. Code § 4226.22](), while evaluation requirements for Preschool EI can be found in [22 Pa. Code §14.153](). For more information regarding evaluation, please refer to **OCDEL Announcement EI 13-08:** *Eligibility for Infant Toddler and Preschool Early Intervention.*

The evaluation process, whether for Infant Toddler EI or Preschool EI, includes the following:

- A family-directed assessment to identify the resources, priorities, concerns, supports, and services necessary to enhance the family's capacity to meet the needs of their child.
- A review of appropriate medical and other records.
- A formal evaluation by qualified personnel using one or more approved tools or assessments.

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

EI leaders are responsible for:

- Ensuring that every child referred to EI receives a timely, comprehensive, multidisciplinary evaluation with parental consent. Each EI leader is responsible for their program's compliance with federal and state timelines for evaluations to take place.
- Confirming that personnel conducting evaluations are properly trained in the selection of and use of appropriate tools and assessments and ensuring qualified personnel conduct all evaluations and assessments in the child/family's native language. This may require having procedures in place to set up interpretation services as necessary.
- Ensuring evaluation teams are completing the [Infant Toddler Evaluation Report (ER)]() or the [Preschool ER]() with the required information, including strengths and needs of the child, eligibility determinations, functional impacts of any identified delays/disabilities, and recommendations for supports to assist the child's development, learning, and growth. An [annotated Infant Toddler ER]() and an [annotated Preschool ER]() are available for reference under Forms on the PaTTAN website.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility for EI supports and services is determined based on specific criteria outlined in 34 CFR §303.321 and 34 CFR § 300.8. For more information, please refer to **OCDEL Announcement EI 13-08***: Eligibility for Infant Toddler and Preschool Early Intervention.*

Eligibility for Infants and Toddlers

An infant or toddler is eligible for EI under the following circumstances, as per 55 Pa. Code § 4226.22(a)(3):

1. A delay of 25% of the infant's or toddler's chronological age in one or more of the developmental areas or if a developmental delay in one of the developmental areas is documented by a test performance of 1.5 standard deviations below the mean on an accepted or recognized assessment for infants or toddlers.
2. A diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay.
3. Qualified personnel, as determined by local EI program leadership, use informed clinical opinion, especially when there are no standardized measures, or the standardized measures are not appropriate for an infant's or toddler's chronological age or developmental area.

At-Risk Tracking for Infant Toddler Early Intervention Services

Infants and toddlers may be eligible for tracking services if they fall into any of the following categories:

- Birth weight below 3.5 pounds
- Cared for in a hospital neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)
- Affected by prenatal substance exposure, including alcohol
- Referred by Children, Youth & Families
- Exposed to lead
- Experiencing homelessness
- County follow-up (defined by each EI program)

There is a systemic process to monitor the development of at-risk infants and toddlers to determine whether they have become eligible for EI services. Children eligible for tracking services should receive ongoing assessments and developmental screenings from their EI program. The timing of these assessments and screenings is decided jointly by the family and the evaluation team. Families and caregivers may also request an evaluation at any time. For more information regarding at-risk tracking, please refer to 55 Pa. Code § 4226.25 and 55 Pa. Code § 4226.26. Further information on tracking and supports for infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness can be found in **OCDEL Announcement EI 14-01: *At-Risk Tracking for Infants and Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness.***

For guidance around children who have been referred to PA's EI programs and have been receiving services in another state, please refer to **OCDEL Announcement EI 13-04: *Infant and Toddlers Referred to Pennsylvania's Early Intervention Program from Out of State.***

Eligibility for Preschool Children

A preschool-aged child is eligible for EI under the following circumstances:

1. A delay of 25% of the child's chronological age or 1.5 standard deviations below the mean in one or more of the developmental areas.

2. Identified as having any of the following: intellectual disability, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance, an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, another health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities.

In addition to having a disability or developmental delay, a preschool-aged child must require specially designed instruction to be eligible for EI services.

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

EI leaders are responsible for:

- Managing timelines and adhering to guidance regarding eligibility.
- Training evaluation teams on eligibility criteria and making appropriate determinations based on evaluations.
- Ensuring parents receive their evaluation reports promptly, in compliance with state requirements.
- Reviewing their evaluation and eligibility procedures to ensure consistency with federal and state requirements.

The Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Program (IEP)

The IFSP (for infants and toddlers) and the IEP (for preschool children) are individualized plans for children who are eligible for EI services. These plans cover the child's developmental status, the most recent evaluation results, family concerns and resources, expected outcomes and goals, specific EI services, and the location of services based on everyday routines and activities. Additionally, the plans address transitions from EI to other services, for the continuity and support of the child's ongoing development.

IFSPs must be developed in accordance with 55 Pa. Code § 4226.72 and 55 Pa. Code § 4226.73 and based on the evaluation and assessment described in 55 Pa. Code § 4226.61. They must contain the information specified in 55 Pa. Code § 4226.74 and be developed prior to funding source decisions.

IEPs must be developed in accordance with 22 Pa. Code §14.154.

The statewide IFSP and IEP documents are part of the PELICAN-EI data system. An annotated IFSP and annotated IEP can be downloaded from the forms page of the PaTTAN website.

For more information regarding the IFSP, please review **OCDEL Announcement EI 12-02: *Updates to Early Intervention Policy Based on Requirements in IDEA Part C Regulations***.

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

EI leaders are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all children and families have an IFSP/IEP that aligns with state and federal regulations. To ensure that all related timelines and requirements are being met, leaders should frequently review PELICAN-EI data and adjust local processes as needed. More information about PELICAN-EI is available in the *Using Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks-Early Intervention (PELICAN EI) and Program Management Tools* section of the guide.

- Developing local procedures for the timely development and monitoring of these plans and creating an efficient and effective process to provide oversight of plan development, monitoring, and implementation.
- Ensuring that, at a minimum, a review of the IFSP being conducted every six months from the time of the initial/annual IFSP. The IEP must be reviewed at least annually.

Service Delivery

EI services are designed to meet the unique needs of each child and family, as determined through the comprehensive evaluation process and detailed in the IFSP/IEP. EI services support the child and family/caregivers in building the skills necessary to achieve their outcomes or goals and participate in everyday routines within their home and community.

To the maximum extent appropriate, as per federal regulations outlined in 34 CFR § 303.1436.d and 34 CFR § 300.1412.a, services and supports must be delivered in the child's natural/least restrictive environment. This means that services are delivered wherever the child and family would ordinarily be (i.e. home, child care/preschool, community, etc.) and are embedded in the learning opportunities that exist within the typical routines of the child and family in accordance with PA's service delivery models.

For Infant Toddler EI programs, services must be documented in the state-approved session note format in accordance with **OCDEL Announcement EI 23-01:** *Early Intervention Session Note***.**

In Pennsylvania, Early Intervention services for preschoolers follow a "stretch calendar" over a 12-month period, compared to the traditional 180-day school year for school-aged students. Breaks in services typically should not exceed three weeks, but if a child is at risk of losing skills during these breaks, the IEP team must evaluate performance data to decide if services are needed during scheduled breaks. For more information, please refer to **OCDEL Announcement EI 08-03:** *Extent and Duration of Early Intervention Programs for Preschoolers, including services during scheduled breaks in their programs***.**

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

EI leaders are responsible for:

- Developing and implementing local service delivery policies and procedures and meeting the requirements of federal and state regulations and PA's service delivery model.
- Regularly reviewing session notes (Infant Toddler EI) or service documentation (Preschool EI) to ensure that the services provided are meeting the children's needs effectively; are compliant for billing purposes; are in functional contexts; and adjustments are being made to services as needed to support the child/family in achieving their outcomes/goals.
- Ensure that all related timelines and requirements are being met by frequently reviewing PELICAN-EI data and adjusting local processes as needed.
- Building relationships with local partners, including child care centers and preschools, that support the provision of services within the child and family's natural routines and environments.

Service Coordination in Infant Toddler Early Intervention

In Infant Toddler EI, Service Coordinators (SCs) serve as the single point of contact for families regarding their EI services. As per 55 Pa. Code §4226.51-2, SCs are responsible for assisting infants and toddlers, and their families/caregivers with accessing needed EI services as well as coordinating and monitoring the provision of such services.

SCs guide families through the EI system and provide essential information about available EI supports, services, and other community resources.

The roles and responsibilities of SCs are detailed in **OCDEL Announcement EI 18-01:** *Infant Toddler Early Intervention Service Coordination*. More information about service coordination services can also be found in **OCDEL Announcement EI 12-02:** *Updates to Early Intervention Policy Based on Requirements in IDEA Part C Regulations*.

Resources are available on the [Infant Toddler Service Coordination page of the EITA Portal](#) to support SCs in their work. In particular, the [Service Coordination Guide](#) was created to be a helpful tool and resource for SCs and their supervisors. The SC Guide provides an overview of general EI processes in PA, SCs' responsibilities, and resources to support SCs in navigating the system.

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities:

Infant Toddler EI leaders are responsible for:

- Ensuring that SCs adhere to regulatory requirements and standards, including meeting specified qualifications for hiring, which are outlined in [55 Pa. Code §4226.53](#).
- Facilitating ongoing training and professional development opportunities to help SCs stay current with best practices, policies, and procedures within EI services.
- Supporting SCs in coordinating and monitoring EI services by providing the necessary resources and tools for effective caseload management and collaboration with various agencies and individuals.
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating SCs' performance and the efficacy of SC services by reviewing monthly reports on service timeliness and ensuring that IFSPs meet the needs of children and families.
- Providing adequate resources to support SCs, including access to community resources, tools, and administrative support processes, so they can effectively serve as the single point of contact to meet the needs of children and families.

Monitoring Child Progress

To ensure children are making adequate progress toward their IFSP outcomes or IEP goals, data is collected and evaluated, both formally and informally. Progress monitoring is a process involving data collection, analysis, documentation, and team decision-making.

Based on the results of progress monitoring, the IFSP or IEP team may propose modifications to strategies or services to support the child in making progress towards his or her IFSP outcomes or IEP goals or to determine if a re-evaluation is needed and/or eligibility has changed.

Progress monitoring data should be presented to the family in a manner that is understandable and describes progress in specific, functional terms. Ongoing communication between professionals and families is essential for ongoing progress monitoring efforts.

Procedures for progress monitoring in Infant Toddler EI can be found in [55 Pa. Code § 4226.72](#) , while procedures for progress monitoring in Preschool EI can be found in [22 Pa. Code §14.154.](#) Please note that specific guidance for Preschool EI programs regarding progress monitoring schedules is determined locally. Additionally, further information supporting the IFSP review process can be found in IDEA [34 CFR § 303.342,](#) and information regarding the IEP review process can be found in IDEA [34 CFR § 300.324](#).

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

EI Leaders are responsible for:

- Familiarizing themselves with state and federal progress monitoring requirements.
- Establishing local procedures and practices around progress monitoring.
- Ensuring EI professionals collect and evaluate data regularly, both formally and informally, to assess progress toward established outcomes and goals.
- Ensuring that progress toward goals or outcomes is clearly noted, and that data is communicated to parents/caregivers in an understandable and effective manner during the IFSP/IEP review process.
- Supporting ongoing communication among team members to foster collaborative efforts in addressing the child's needs.

Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO)

In addition to progress monitoring on a child's IFSP outcomes or IEP goals, EI programs are required to measure progress through Early Childhood Outcome (ECO) data. The purpose of ECO is to demonstrate the high quality of Pennsylvania's EI program at a statewide level; fulfilling federal reporting requirements mandated by OSEP related to program accountability. EI programs are required to collect data on three standardized Early Childhood Outcomes established by OSEP. Data is gathered for all infants, toddlers, and preschool children upon entry and exit from EI; however, infants and toddlers enrolled in tracking are not part of the ECO data collection.

Information about the ECO process and timelines can be found in **OCDEL Announcement EI 12-07: *Collecting and Reporting Child Outcome Data in Infant Toddler and Preschool Early Intervention Programs*.** The three Early Childhood Outcomes are as follows:

1. Gaining positive social-emotional skills, including social relationships. This outcome measures how children interact and play with family, other adults, and other children.
2. Learning and using new knowledge and skills. This outcome measures how children learn and use basic language and communication skills, such as counting and problem-solving, that will prepare them to be successful learners.
3. Using appropriate behaviors to meet needs. This outcome measures how children gradually become more independent by learning how to move from place to place, feed themselves, and take care of basic needs.

The three Early Childhood Outcomes cut across developmental domains to represent the integrated nature of how children develop, learn, and thrive. The range of these outcomes provides a framework for describing and consistently measuring children's functional skills and behaviors across settings and situations.

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

The EI Leader is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the EI program adheres to the requirements regarding ECO data.
- Establishing procedures for gathering and reporting ECO data, including ensuring that procedures are established to capture initial ECO data for all eligible children within 60 days of their IFSP/IEP development and collect exit data for children receiving at least six months of continuous EI services.
- Choosing an authentic assessment tool that must be used by all providers working within the local EI program.

- Ensuring that all professionals are informed and knowledgeable about ECO data so that the information collected can be used to enhance strategies and ensure the effectiveness and accountability of EI programs.

The Transition Process

Transition planning should be viewed as a collaborative, team process that occurs throughout a child and family's experience in EI, not one specific event. EI professionals facilitate and provide support to children and families in a variety of transitions, including but not limited to transitions to home, an early childhood education program, community setting, or to school-age programs. EI professionals, in partnership with families, should begin the transition process early and continue to review and monitor the steps along the way, to individualize the experience for the family and enhance the family's capacity to support the growth and development of their child.

A variety of transitions may occur for children and families in EI, including moving from the Infant Toddler EI program to the Preschool EI program, moving from the Preschool EI program to kindergarten, or exiting EI because the child no longer needs services. Transitions from Infant Toddler to Preschool EI happen on a rolling basis. The transition process begins when a child is two years and three months old and concludes with the official transition to Preschool EI on the child's third birthday. The transition from Preschool EI to school-age programs requires planning each fall to hold transition meetings in the winter for any child eligible to transition to kindergarten.

Federal requirements regarding transition can be found in 34 CFR § 300.1436 and 34 CFR § 300.43; state requirements regarding transition can be found for Preschool EI programs in 22 Pa. Code § 14.157 and for Infant Toddler EI programs in 55 Pa. Code § 4226.77. For further clarification regarding requirements for EI transitions in PA, please refer to the **OCDEL Announcement EI 13-01:** *Transition of Toddlers to Preschool or Other Community Services* and **OCDEL Announcement EI 09-19:** *Transition of Preschool Children to School-Age Programs.* Additional information, including the EI Transition Resource Library which includes transition-related forms, documents, and websites for families, caregivers, and professionals regarding transition, can be found on the Transition page of the EITA Portal.

Partnerships between Preschool EI programs and school districts are essential for ensuring a coordinated, comprehensive, and effective approach to supporting young children as they transition from EI to school age. EI leaders partnering with school districts ensures a smooth and coordinated transition, helping maintain continuity in the child's developmental support and educational program. This collaboration optimizes community resources and creates a cohesive support network for children and families. School districts have specialized staff and resources who can provide valuable support and services to children transitioning from EI. With collaboration, EI providers and school districts can integrate services more effectively, ensuring that children receive support. The continuity of information is essential for creating and updating IEPs, ensuring that children receive appropriate and individualized support throughout their education.

EI publications are available that can be shared with families to support the transition process. *Supporting Families through the Transition Process from Infant Toddler EI to Preschool EI* and *Supporting Families through the Transition Process from Preschool EI to School-Age Programs* can both be downloaded from the PaTTAN website in multiple languages.

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities
EI leaders are responsible for:

- Establishing local procedures related to transition.
- Adhering to requirements and timelines including ensuring transition notification, scheduling transition meetings, and supporting staff as they develop and implement transition plans with families.
- Developing collaborative relationships with their transition partners to ensure timely and fiscally responsible determination of eligibility of children who are transitioning.
- Reviewing and monitoring monthly transition data regularly to ensure transition processes are functioning efficiently and effectively.

Using Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks-Early Intervention (PELICAN-EI) and Program Management Tools

Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks-Early Intervention (PELICAN-EI)

PELICAN-EI is a case management system used to manage the records of children receiving EI supports and services in Pennsylvania. PELICAN-EI is supported by the Home and Community Based Services Information System (HCSIS) to assist EI programs with registration, case management, planning, financial management, and reporting.

Accessing PELICAN-EI (HCSIS)

To access PELICAN-EI, contact the Business Partner Administrator (BP Admin). There is a designated BP Admin in every Infant Toddler EI program and Preschool EI program who provides access to PELICAN-EI by setting up user roles and providing user IDs to access the system. EI leaders will need their own user ID and a passcode to access the system.

When logging into PELICAN-EI, users are logging into HCSIS.

Microsoft Edge is the browser that should be used to access PELICAN-EI. Other browsers are not supported, and issues may be encountered with the functionality of the system.

HCSIS Help Desk

The HCSIS Help Desk is a "Technical Issues" help desk that was established for the sole purpose of responding to user issues. Each local EI program will have procedures for when to contact the Help Desk when issues are encountered in PELICAN-EI. These local procedures will help determine which issues can be resolved locally through internal processes and which are technical issues that must be addressed by the HCSIS Help Desk.

The Help Desk helps with error messages that you may encounter while using PELICAN-EI and provides follow up to those issues. It also tracks and informs BEISFS of system-wide issues that may require a technical "data fix" in the PELICAN-EI system. It is important to note that some corrections can only be made from a higher systems level and may take additional time to resolve.

Emailing is the most efficient method of requesting assistance, as it allows users to continue working on a child's record while waiting for a response from the Help Desk.

> Email: c-hhcsishd@pa.gov
> Phone: (866) 444-1264
> Fax: (717) 540-0960
> Hours: Monday – Friday: 7:45AM – 5:00 PM

To resolve an issue faster, provide as much information as possible, including:

- User ID of person performing the task
- Child's MCI number

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- Screen names, menu paths and activity being performed when the error occurred
- 2 Screen shots of the page; one each of the pages before, and after the error message is displayed.

After reporting an issue, the user will receive an email that contains a Reference Number (INxxxxx01), and details about the issue. Please save this email, as the Reference Number will need to be provided for all future inquires.

If the Help Desk instructs a user to contact OCDEL for further assistance, the user can email the BEISFS at RA-ocdintervention@pa.gov.

Training Requests

The purpose of the HCSIS Help Desk is to handle technical issues, not to provide PELICAN-EI training. EI leaders should talk with their EITA Consultant about PELICAN-EI training needs and develop a plan to address these individual needs.

Additionally, users who require training assistance on how to use PELICAN-EI should utilize the Learning Management System (LMS). EI leaders should contact their EI program's BP Admin if a user does not have an LMS account. Additional information about the LMS is detailed below.

Learning Management System (LMS)

The LMS houses documents that include descriptions of how PELICAN-EI functionality works. These resources are useful training materials and serve as an appropriate first strategy when seeking answers about how to implement or problem solve data entry processes. It also provides information about how to assign child records, how to create and manage caseloads, transfer and close records and other resources to help with program oversight.

Access to the LMS is granted through the local BP Admin. The LMS can be accessed through a link on the HCSIS home page or by using this link when not in HCSIS.

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

EI leaders are responsible for:

- Ensuring access to PELICAN-EI, which requires working with your BP admin to ensure that all relevant staff have appropriate user roles and access IDs. There must be a process in place if a transition of the BP admin role changes.
- Overseeing the proper assignment of records and management of caseloads, which requires confirming records are transferred and closed correctly.
- Reviewing system usage and data entry processes to identify and correct issues or inefficiencies.
- Maintaining open communication both within their program and among external partners to ensure that any system-related issues are promptly addressed and resolved. EI leaders must work collaboratively with IT support, and BP admin to maintain smooth operation and access to PELICAN-EI.
- Familiarizing themselves with the Learning Management System (LMS) and establishing a plan for how new staff will use the LMS for training materials and resources as they learn how to navigate PELICAN-EI.
- Promoting continuous learning and use of the LMS to stay updated on system changes and functionalities.
- Understanding how to utilize the HCSIS help desk, which includes establishing and communicating local procedures for determining when to escalate an issue to the HCSIS Help Desk.

- Educating staff on how to provide comprehensive information when reporting issues to the Help Desk, which includes providing adequate information so issues can be resolved effectively and in a timely manner.

Get to Know Your Program Management Tools

Data literacy is an essential skill for EI leaders in the day-to-day management of EI programs. Defined as the ability to read, write, and communicate data, data literacy includes an understanding of data sources, analytical methods and techniques, and an understanding of quality program management. A variety of data resources are available to EI leaders in DocuShare and the Data Warehouse, to help support data-driven decision-making for program improvement.

Data literacy resources are available on the Leadership Topic of Interest page of the EITA Portal and includes the *Deeper Dive into Data* newsletter as well as helpful tools for data analysis.

Early Intervention leaders should be aware of the following management tools that provide access to data.

DocuShare

EI leaders can access targeted reports and other information in DocuShare on a regular basis through a live file sharing system. EI leaders can find information regarding verification, including program worksheets, supervisor interview questions, checklists, monthly data reports, and local determination summaries. The reports in DocuShare can be used to make data-based decisions. EI leaders may also choose to use this information to inform practice and find individual trends within the data set.

Accessing DocuShare

A username and passcode are needed. The EI leader should contact their EI Advisor to obtain access. Access to DocuShare should be restricted to personnel in the local program who have the business need and authorization to see data about all child records. Individual Service Coordinators or Preschool teachers should not have access to DocuShare. Once DocuShare access is granted, the same login information that is used for HCSIS will also be used for DocuShare.

Data Reports

DocuShare is the repository for EI program data that can be reviewed monthly. The source of the data is information that is entered into PELICAN-EI.

These Excel file reports include a breakdown of required timelines, child specific data, educational environments, and how that data compares to other EI programs.

There are two types of reports that are uploaded to DocuShare monthly. These reports are available around mid-month. The data is accurate as of the end of the previous month.

Statewide Aggregate Reports: This Excel file contains percentages for each EI program across the state for multiple data points used for Verification and Local Determinations. This is a good place to start to look at data to see if performance percentages for each data point are being met. This report does not contain child specific data. The path in Docushare for the Statewide Reports is:

Home >> OCDEL >> Bureau of Early Intervention Services >> Infant/Toddler & Preschool General Information >> 1.0 Statewide Aggregate Reports

Fiscal Year to Date Monthly-Quarterly (Program Specific) Reports: This is an Excel file that has multiple tabs to look at Verification and Local Determination data report results. The first tab of these spreadsheets contains instructions on what data is included in each tab. Reviewing these instructions is helpful as EI leaders begin to examine the data.

This report contains child-specific information. By using these reports, EI leaders can review records that do not meet required timelines and analyze program-wide trends.

Here is the path for the Program Specific Reports:

Home >> OCDEL >> Bureau of Early Intervention Services >> Infant/Toddler & Preschool General Information >> LOCAL PROGRAM FOLDER >> FYTD Monthly-Quarterly Reports

Enterprise Data Warehouse

Enterprise Data Warehouse, often referred to as the Data Warehouse or COGNOS, consists of a copy of select data from PELICAN-EI.

The information in the various sections of the Data Warehouse is the same information that is contained in the monthly reports located in DocuShare. Most EI leaders find using the monthly reports from DocuShare useful in managing their data. However, as EI leaders become more familiar with analyzing and monitoring data, accessing and reviewing "near real-time" reports in Data Warehouse may help to further enhance data management practices. The data in these reports is updated on a regular basis, allowing for timely management without waiting for the next month's report to be generated and loaded into DocuShare.

Accessing Data Warehouse

The Data Warehouse registration form can be found on the LMS under the PELICAN EI All: Data Warehouse module. To obtain an account, complete the form and send it back to BEISFS at RA-ocdintervention@pa.gov. Once an account has been created, the EI leader will receive an email confirmation from the Data Warehouse. Be sure to log in immediately, to ensure the registration has been processed correctly.

A username and passcode are needed to access these data reports. Please note this is the same login information that is used for HCSIS. If issues arise after receiving a username and passcode, email RA-DataWarehouseReg@pa.gov. It is recommended that users log in once every 60 days to ensure that the account does not get locked out. Accounts that are not active are locked out after 60 days.

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

EI leaders are responsible for:
- Reviewing EI program data available in DocuShare at least monthly for accuracy of the data as well as for program improvement.
- Using data to confirm timelines are being met and provide training support in areas where assistance is needed.
- Maintaining open communication with staff and working collaboratively to develop processes for data entry, and data cleanup.
- Reporting any discrepancies or issues found in data reviews to their EI Advisor.
- Understanding how to properly use each of the management tools and how they function in conjunction with one another. By reviewing OCDEL monthly data reports, EI leaders can make informed decisions and identify trends to ensure their EI program is running efficiently and effectively.

- Familiarizing themselves with Data Warehouse, which provides reports in near real-time and can act as a supplement to the monthly DocuShare reports.
- Utilizing DocuShare and Data Warehouse to make informed, data-driven program management decisions.

Infant Toddler Early Intervention Provider Registry

The Infant Toddler Early Intervention Provider Registry is an online, statewide system to accurately track the qualifications, credentials, and training requirements of EI Infant Toddler providers and SCs. The administrator or supervisor of an Infant Toddler EI program, agency, or service coordination entity is responsible for setting up the EI Provider Registry for their staff. Individual providers can manage their information, or an agency designee may do it for them.

Programs and agencies may access reports such as the Interventionist List, Interventionist Education Details, Interventionist Training, Hours Summary, and Interventionist Clearances, and Licenses. These reports should be used to monitor ongoing training hours and qualifications of staff working in your County or Program. The reports will also be used for local program determination results and activities. This includes ensuring interventionists' clearances and licenses are current, and training hours are being earned.

Resources to support the use of the EI Provider Registry can be found on the EITA Portal.

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

Infant Toddler EI leaders are responsible for:

- Ensuring the EI Provider Registry is properly set up and used by all staff, including providers and SCs.
- Verifying that all providers and SCs meet regulatory requirements to provide services and establish a regular process to ensure all necessary qualifications are current and training requirements are met.
- Using available reports and conducting periodic reviews to monitor ongoing training hours, qualifications, clearances, and licenses, to help with oversight, ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements and support the verification and local determination processes.
- Sharing and communicating the process and resources when contracting with new providers, which will ensure that all incoming provider information is entered efficiently and keep data accurate.
- Periodically reviewing the EI Provider Registry reports.

Local Program Monitoring

Local Program Determination

OSEP requires that each state measure and report program performance based on key indicators identified in IDEA, 20 U.S.C. § 1416(a)(1)(C)(i), and accompanying regulations at 34 CFR § 300.602 (Part B) and 34 CFR § 303.702 (Part C). The determination process ensures that all children and families in Pennsylvania who may need EI are evaluated and served in a timely, effective manner.

BEISFS is required to issue determinations on the performance of local EI programs based on compliance measures submitted in an Annual Performance Report (APR) to OSEP, as well as other measures identified by the BEISFS. More information about Pennsylvania's local determination process can be found in **OCDEL Announcement EI-18 #2:** *Local Determination Process***.**

The following are just a few examples of data that are used in a local EI program's determination report:

- Family survey data
- PELICAN-EI data
- Records of staff qualifications and clearances
- Numbers of complaints, mediations, and due processes
- Early Childhood Outcome (ECO) data

A Determination Report is issued annually to each local Infant Toddler and Preschool EI program. The report outlines the outcomes assessed and data elements used for the EI program's determination levels.

Following the issuance of the Determination Report, Infant Toddler and Preschool EI programs must address all noncompliance identified and any quality improvement activities for indicators that received a level below meets requirements. This information is documented in the EI program's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP).

Verification

Verification is the process through which EI programs are monitored and areas for continuous quality improvement are determined. Each EI program participates in a verification process every four years. Seven areas are reviewed during the verification, covering compliance, the implementation of policies and procedures, program management and improving outcomes for children and families. Verification activities include data reviews, review of procedures, individual child record reviews, interviews, and observations of service delivery, evaluations, and plan meetings. Verification teams are utilized throughout the process and include EI advisors, EITA staff, and a peer reviewer.

Once verification is completed, an EI Verification Report is issued. Each EI program develops a QEP that focuses on the correction of noncompliance, as well as activities to enhance program quality. Validation of any non-compliance identified during the verification is conducted by BEISFS staff each year to ensure all areas of non-compliance are corrected within the required timelines.

The verification process is designed to provide differentiated levels of support to EI programs, allowing BEISFS to use resources more effectively and efficiently to have the greatest impact on program practices.

Additional verification activities may occur at the discretion of BEISFS staff if, during the verification cycle, there is a significant decrease in program performance, or individual or systematic concerns arise.

Home » OCDEL » Bureau of Early Intervention Services » Infant Toddler & Preschool General Information » 3. Verification Documents

https://hhsdoc.dhs.pa.gov/docushare/dsweb/View/Collection-162373

Bureau of Early Intervention Services » Infant Toddler & Preschool General Information » County Name/Preschool Program » Verification Data » FY___

The verification tools are also available on the Verification Documents page of the PDE website.

Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

The QEP is a fluid document focused on correcting noncompliance and the development of quality improvement activities. All updates to the QEP should be sent to the BEISFS advisor and EITA consultant. This information should be reviewed regularly to stay familiar with the goals that have been created and to update progress throughout the year. The EI advisor and EITA consultant may meet with EI leaders at times throughout the year to discuss progress.

The QEP form is comprised of two sections:

- QEP Determination – completed in response to determination findings and local priorities.
- QEP Verification Process – completed in response to verification findings.

Additional information on QEP activities can be found in the annotated QEP document and the Verification Protocol that can be found in DocuShare following the menu path above and on the Verification Documents page of the PDE website.

Monitoring Providers

Infant Toddler and Preschool EI programs are required to demonstrate oversight over local contracted providers and Infant Toddler Service Coordination. Monitoring items include oversight of critical assurances in the following areas: personnel qualifications, health and safety (all personnel have required clearances and preservice/annual training), fiscal oversight (provider claim submissions), and correction of noncompliance. Following the monitoring process of each entity by the EI program, an improvement plan may be required to correct non-compliance or to identify recommended improvements. The plan must be developed within thirty (30) days of issuance of the monitoring results letter.

Home » OCDEL » Bureau of Early Intervention Services » Infant Toddler & Preschool General Information » Provider Monitoring

Home » OCDEL » Bureau of Early Intervention Services » Infant Toddler & Preschool General Information » Service Coordination Monitoring

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

EI leaders are responsible for:

- Ensuring compliance with state and federal requirements, and preparing for the local determination and verification process, which utilizes data from various sources such as family survey results and PELICAN-EI data.
- Correcting areas of noncompliance and addressing areas of improvement identified by the determination process through the development and implementation of the QEP.
- Participating in the verification process, which may include assisting their EI advisor and verification team in the process by ensuring all components of the verification process are available for review and observations are effectively coordinated.
- Developing a QEP in response to the verification report, which should address areas of non-compliance and areas of improvement.
- Keeping the QEP updated and ensuring the involvement of their EI advisor and EITA consultant in regular discussions regarding its implementation.
- Completing monitoring tasks for all providers every fiscal year, maintaining compliance, and developing improvement activities if needed. To support these efforts, EI leaders should be knowledgeable of the monitoring resources and requirements that are housed within DocuShare.

The Early Intervention Special Education Plan

Preschool EI programs are responsible for submitting an EI special education plan to BEISFS annually, as specified in 22 Pa. Code § 14.104.e. This plan includes a variety of information that ensures the full range of services and programs are available for eligible young children.

Please note that school districts and intermediate units are responsible for submitting a similar special education plan to the Bureau of Special Education every three years, whereas Preschool EI programs must submit their plans on an annual basis, as prompted by BEISFS.

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

Preschool EI leaders are responsible for:

- Submitting the special education plan annually, no later than June 30 of each year. EI leaders may need to collaborate with their local special education, human resources, and business departments in the development of projected staffing and planned expenditures for the entire special education EI budget, including leases, staff salaries, and materials/supplies. EI leaders are encouraged to use their data from the previous fiscal year to inform their development of the special education plan.
- Submitting revisions to the special education plan, including relocations of already existing classrooms, must be submitted by EI leaders according to **OCDEL Announcement EI 25-01: *Revision to the Early Intervention Special Education Plan Revision Notice (SEPRN)***. The EI SEPRN must be submitted thirty days prior to any anticipated changes.

Deaf-Blind Child Count

Annually, OSEP mandates that the Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project conduct the National Deaf-Blind Child Count, previously known as the National Deaf-Blind Census. This count tracks the number of infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and students with dual sensory impairments, or those at risk of developing such impairments, who are enrolled in EI or special education programs.

Accurate data from the Deaf-Blind Child Count is important as it directly influences the funding allocated for technical assistance, training, and research for children with dual sensory impairments, both within the

commonwealth and across the nation. Participation from each EI program and LEA is essential in ensuring a comprehensive count. The annual count takes place in February, with all information verified by the end of the month. More information can be found on the PaTTAN website.

EI Leaders' Local Program Responsibilities

EI leaders are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all children who meet the criteria are entered into the Deaf-Blind Child Count by the deadline.
- Reviewing the guidance that is disseminated each year in early January that provides specific directions for successfully completing the Deaf-Blind Child Count.

Qualifications and Training Requirements

Infant Toddler Early Intervention

Qualifications

Infant Toddler service coordinators and Early Interventionists must meet the minimum qualifications as specified in regulations 55 Pa. Code § 4226.53 (service coordinators) and 55 Pa. Code § 4226.55 (early interventionists). Qualifications for both groups include a combination of college credits in early intervention or a related field and experience working with children, families, or individuals with disabilities. Licensed professionals (speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, etc.) must meet the professional standards required by the appropriate state board/licensing entity. For specific requirements for Speech-Language Pathology Services, see **OCDEL Announcement EI 09-17:** *Qualifications for Individuals to Provide Speech-Language Pathology Services in Early Intervention and the Requirements for Billing.*

Training Requirements

All Infant Toddler EI personnel who work directly with children, including personnel hired through contract, are required to meet specific preservice and annual training requirements as shown in the chart below.

Preservice Training	Annual Training
Before working alone with children and families: • Orientation to EI • EI Regulations • Duties & Responsibilities • Family Centered Approaches • Interrelated social, emotional, health, development and educational needs of children • Natural Environments • Fiscal Operations & Funding Sources Within 120 days of hire: • Fire Safety • Emergency Evacuation • First Aid • Child CPR	24 hours of annual training including, but not limited to, the following topics: • Cultural Competence • Mediation • Procedural Safeguards • Universal Health Procedures • Mandated Reporting • Transition • Fire Safety • Emergency Evacuation • First Aid • Child CPR

EI Leaders' Local Responsibility

Infant Toddler EI leaders are responsible for:

- Developing local processes to ensure all EI personnel meet the preservice and annual training requirements. Providers are required to upload their information into the EI Provider Registry annually by June 30th so that EI leaders can pull reports to ensure all requirements are met.

- Utilizing the EI Provider Registry to monitor provider qualifications, clearances, and training hours to ensure providers are compliant with the requirements. Compliance with these requirements is measured annually through the determination process.

Preschool Early Intervention

Qualifications

All Pennsylvania educators (including Instructional I and II, Educational Specialist I and II, Administrative, Supervisory, Letters of Eligibility, and all vocational certificates) must meet the qualifications associated with holding Pennsylvania public school certification. Details of these requirements can be found on the PA Department of Education's website.

As stated in 22 Pa. Code § 14.105(a)(1), an instructional paraprofessional is a school employee who works under the direction of a certified staff member to support and assist in providing instructional programs and services to eligible young children. Services may be provided in a special education class, regular education class, or other instructional setting as provided in the child's IEP. As detailed in **OCDEL Announcement EI 10-07: *Paraprofessional Qualifications***, instructional paraprofessionals must have completed at least two years of postsecondary study, possess an associate degree or higher, and/or meet a rigorous standard of quality as demonstrated through a state or local assessment.

Training Requirements

As specified in 22 Pa. Code § 14.105, instructional paraprofessionals must complete at least 20 hours of staff development activities related to their assignment each school year.

Act 48 of 1999 requires all Pennsylvania educators holding Pennsylvania public school certification (including Instructional I and II, Educational Specialist I and II, Administrative, Supervisory, Letters of Eligibility, and all vocational certificates) to participate in ongoing professional education. All EI professionals who fall under this category must complete these requirements as monitored by the PA Department of Education. Please note, it is the responsibility of each educator to monitor their record of credits or hours in the Professional Education Record Management System (PERMS).

EI Leaders' Local Responsibilities

Preschool EI leaders are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all EI staff meet the applicable qualification and training requirements. EI leaders should work with their human resources department to monitor compliance and assist staff in obtaining required professional development hours. While Intermediate Unit and School District human resources staff often track Act 48 requirements for all applicable staff and typically notify EI leaders if staff are at risk of becoming out of compliance, EI leaders should check with the local school district or Intermediate Unit for specific procedures.

EITA Professional Development

Online Courses and Job Aids

EITA offers a variety of asynchronous courses that can be taken at a user's own pace through the EITA training site.

Courses are focused on a topic that is more involved and complex. They may include assignments or coursework that is submitted and/or graded. Courses eligible for Act 48 credit are a minimum of one hour in length.

Job aids are designed to improve skill and knowledge on a specific topic. They are shorter than courses, often less than 20 minutes in length. While no training credit hours are issued by EITA after completing a job aid, a certificate of completion is provided, and EI leaders can issue credit at their discretion.

EITA online courses and job aids can be found on the [Professional Development page of the EITA Portal](). Once on the Professional Development page, users can select whether to view pre-registration courses or self-enrollment courses and job aids. The search tool on the left-hand side of the page can be used to filter by topic, credit offered, or audience.

For steps on how to create an EITA training account, as well as further information on the types of professional development tools and resources available, please see [Appendix D: Online Professional Development Tools and Resources]().

Synchronous Training Opportunities

EITA offers live training opportunities, both virtual and in-person. Virtual training opportunities, such as webinars, are offered throughout the year and focus on a wide range of topics. In-person training opportunities are offered statewide and locally. Local trainings are coordinated between an EI program and their assigned EITA Consultant, often delivered in response to an area of need as specified in the QEP.

Information on statewide training opportunities and events can be found on the homepage of the [EITA Portal]() under "Highlighted Trainings and Events" and on the [PaTTAN Training Calendar](). EITA informs EI leaders and other interested parties when new training courses are available through the EITA Training Announcements list serv, which can be found under "Subscribe to our Newsletters" at the bottom of the [EITA Portal]() homepage.

EI Leaders' Local Responsibilities

EI leaders are responsible for:

- Sharing EITA Portal resources, including the [EITA Portal Professional Development page](), to assist staff in finding relevant educational opportunities.

Key Partnerships

OCDEL staff work closely with the other program offices and bureaus in each Department to best serve Pennsylvania's children and families. Refer to Appendix A. The Departments of Human Services, Education, and Health for more information about these state-level partners.

EI programs also develop partnerships at the local level to maintain a comprehensive system of EI services and support for children and families. Many of these partnerships are similar to state-level partnerships. For example, as OCDEL works with OMHSAS and ODP, local EI programs work with the county-level agencies to coordinate services and supports.

An avenue for bringing together these local partners is the Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC).

Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICCs)

Pennsylvania Act 212 provides for the establishment and maintenance of LICCS, which are groups of EI leaders, parents, and professionals who work together across counties to ensure that all children and families needing EI services are identified and receive the necessary services. LICCs provide opportunities for community organizations, service providers, parents, and any interested party to collaborate in ensuring that children and families receive high-quality, timely EI services.

In 2024, BEISFS released updated LICC Guidelines. The LICC Guidelines provide direction to LICCs on roles and responsibilities, as well as some parameters to consider for membership composition and meeting structures.

Key partners within the LICC, beyond the Infant Toddler and Preschool EI programs, include:

Local Department of Health

The Local Department of Health is a governmental agency responsible for protecting and promoting public health within a specific geographic area. The Local Department of Health's primary functions and responsibilities include disease prevention and control, health promotion, environmental health, maternal and child health, emergency preparedness and response, health services, community health assessment and planning, and regulatory functions. The Local Department of Health is a required signatory and participant in the LICC, as per the Interagency Agreement Checklist required in verification, which is based on requirements outlined in 1990 PA Act 212 §104.

Head Start/Early Head Start

Head Start programs support children's growth from birth to age five through services centered around early learning and development, health, and family well-being. Head Start services are available at no cost to children ages birth to five in eligible families, including Head Start preschool classrooms and Early Head Start classrooms or home visiting services. Strong partnerships with Head Start leaders will support the inclusion of all children within Head Start classrooms, regardless of their unique abilities or needs. Per Head Start Performance Standards outlined in 45 C.F.R. § 1302 and (IDEA: 20 U.S.C. § 1400(c)(1), Head Start/Early Head Start programs have Memorandums of Understanding/Agreements with EI programs.

Evidence-Based Home Visiting and Family Support Programs

Evidence-Based Home Visiting (EBHV) programs and Family Centers provide services to families of infants and young children to support positive parenting skills, promote early learning, and help families become stronger, healthier, better educated, and more self-sufficient. EBHV programs must have Memorandums of

Understanding/Agreements with the EI programs in their community, as per **OCDEL Announcement ELS/MIECHV- 15 #13; ELS/NFP-15 #13:** *Coordination with Early Intervention Agencies.*

School Districts

Partnerships between Preschool EI and school districts in PA are essential for ensuring a coordinated, comprehensive, and effective approach to supporting young children as they transition from EI to school age. For more information on partnering with school districts to support the transition process, review the Transition section of the guide.

Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs)

The ELRCs provide a single point of contact for families, early learning service providers, and communities to gain information and access services that support high-quality child care and early learning programs. ELRCs administer the Child Care Works subsidized child care program. ELRC Leadership Council meetings provide information for early learning services that help and support child development. EI leaders may be invited to these meetings as a source of collaboration.

County Assistance Office

The County Assistance Office (CAO) provides a range of social services and public assistance programs to residents within a specific county. The primary function of a CAO is to assist eligible individuals and families in accessing and managing these public aid programs, ensuring they receive the necessary resources to meet their basic needs and improve their quality of life. EI staff should be aware of CAO services so that they are able to refer potentially eligible families. Infant Toddler Service Coordinators will work with CAO staff regarding Infant Toddler waiver eligibility.

Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities Office

The Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities Office (MH/ID Office) provides services and supports to individuals with mental health conditions and/or intellectual/developmental disabilities. This office aims to enhance the quality of life for individuals, enabling them to live more independent and fulfilling lives within the community. Local EI programs collaborate with local MH/ID offices to support early identification of children who may be eligible for MH/ID services to meet their developmental and/or emotional needs. For more information, please refer to **OCDEL Announcement: ODP 00-22-04:** *Referring Children to the County Intellectual Disability and Autism Programs.*

Children, Youth, and Families Office

The local Children and Youth Services (CYS) is a government agency responsible for ensuring the safety, well-being, and development of children and adolescents within a specific county. Local CYS programs strive to protect children, support families, and ensure that every child has a safe, stable, and nurturing home environment. EI programs have interagency agreements with their local CYS offices, as per verification requirements. Collaboration with local CYS facilitates comprehensive and coordinated support for children and families and access to additional resources.

Local Housing Authority

The Local Housing Authority (LHA) is a government agency responsible for managing affordable housing programs within a specific locality, such as a city or county. LHAs also focus on developing and rehabilitating affordable housing units, determining eligibility for housing programs, ensuring compliance with housing regulations, and collaborating with community organizations and stakeholders to address local housing needs.

EI Leaders' Local Responsibilities

EI Leaders are responsible for:

- Utilizing the LICC Guidelines for the development and maintenance of the local Interagency Coordinating Council in their geographic area.
- Developing an LICC interagency agreement annually to delineate this collaboration at the local level. The process of drafting, approving and implementing the plan locally is the responsibility of the local Infant Toddler EI Program, the local Preschool EI program, and the Department of Health in conjunction with the Co-Chairs of the Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC).
- Familiarizing themselves with each of the programs within their communities and referring families to the other programs for which they may qualify and benefit, to provide cohesive services to children and families. For example, EI leaders would work with local MH/ID agencies to refer children who may qualify for services from these organizations or work with Local Housing Authorities on issues of housing instability.

Infant Toddler EI Leaders are responsible for:

- Working with the County Children and Youth agency on Plans of Safe Care and the County Assistance Office on waiver eligibility.

Preschool EI Leaders are responsible for:

- Working with local school districts on transition to kindergarten.
- Training their staff in other available resources and programs so that these resources can be shared with families.

Appendices

Last Update 03.28.2025

Appendix A: The Departments of Human Services, Education, and Health

Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE)

PDE oversees 500 public school districts, more than 170 public charter schools, public cyber charter schools, Career and Technology Centers/Vocational Technical schools, public Intermediate Units, the education of youth in State Juvenile Correctional Institutions, Head Start State Supplemental Program and publicly funded preschools, migrant education, family literacy, Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) and community colleges. PDE also oversees policies related to public, academic, and school libraries, and the State Library of Pennsylvania.

Bureau of Special Education (BSE)

Within PDE, the BSE works with educators, schools, agencies, and other stakeholders across Pennsylvania to ensure students have access to quality and meaningful education supports, services, and opportunities. The BEISFS works collaboratively with the BSE on issues specific to EI as preschool children transition to school-age programs.

Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS)

DHS has seven program offices that administer services to provide care and support to Pennsylvania's most vulnerable individuals and families.

Office of Medical Assistance Programs (OMAP)

OMAP is responsible for purchasing health care for more than 2.3 million Pennsylvanians and enrolling Medical Assistance providers who administer the care. Generally, most children who are eligible for EI are eligible for Medical Assistance.

Office of Developmental Programs (ODP)

ODP provides intellectual and developmental disability services to children and adults, through four Medicaid Home and Community Based Waivers: the Adult Autism Waiver, the Consolidated Waiver, the Person/Family Directed Support (P/FDS) Waiver, and Community Living Waivers. Each waiver has its own unique set of eligibility requirements and services.

Referrals for intellectual and developmental disability services are made to the county Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities program. Following an eligibility determination, children and adults may receive services and supports through a choice of willing and qualified providers. Funding availability is based on urgency of need.

Office of Children, Youth, and Families (OCYF)

OCYF serves children and families through a nationally recognized child support enforcement program, oversees adoption and foster care services, and works with counties on child abuse prevention and juvenile justice issues. EI leaders should be familiar with their local OCYF, as they may receive referrals from OCYF or work with them on Plans of Safe Care.

OIM serves low-income Pennsylvanians through cash assistance programs such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF); employment and training programs; the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); home heating assistance; and assistance programs for refugees and the homeless.

Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS)

Within OMHSAS, the Children's Bureau is responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive plan for serving children and adolescents with behavioral health needs in the Commonwealth. This includes program development, policy development, service monitoring, and working with the OMHSAS Children's Advisory Committee, family and youth advocates, as well as state and local child-serving systems.

Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH)

The mission of DOH is to promote healthy behaviors, prevent injury and disease, and ensure the safe delivery of quality health care for all people in Pennsylvania. Through community-based strategies, DOH has successfully reduced the number of serious illnesses, injuries and deaths due to major health threats, tobacco-related diseases, infectious disease, and accidental injuries.

Within DOH, the Bureau of Family Health, Division of Newborn Screening and Genetics administers the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) federal grant. The BEISFS works collaboratively with this bureau on newborn hearing screening, diagnosis of children who are deaf or hard of hearing as well as children diagnosed with elevated lead levels and neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS).

OCDEL is currently partnering with DOH on the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Health Integration Prenatal-to-Three grant, awarded to Pennsylvania by Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), part of the US Department of Health and Human Services. These funds will advance cross-sector collaborations and partnerships, health system improvements, state-level policy and fiscal innovation, equity, and family leadership to promote early developmental health and family well-being among prenatal to three-year-old (P-3) populations.

Appendix B: OCDEL's Bureaus and Business Partners

Beyond the Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Supports, OCDEL has four other Bureaus through which the work of the Office is accomplished.

Bureau of Early Learning Policy and Professional Development

Through Pennsylvania's quality rating improvement system (QRIS), Keystone STARS, the Bureau of Early Learning Policy and Professional Development develops and implements standards for early learning programs and professionals to improve the quality of early learning for our young children. It provides financial support and technical assistance for programs and professionals. The Bureau of Early Learning Policy and Professional Development is also responsible for establishing and maintaining the rules, regulations, and procedures for the subsidized child care program, Child Care Works. Both the Keystone STARS and Child Care Works programs are managed at the regional level through grantees known as the Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs). Additionally, the Bureau develops the Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood, and provides supports, resources, and professional development to support the use of the learning standards across all OCDEL programs. The Bureau of Early Learning Policy and Professional Development also provides oversight for Infant Toddler Contracted Slots program, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, and the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program, as well as coordinates professional development across bureaus.

Bureau of Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) Operations and Monitoring

The Bureau of ELRC Operations and Monitoring provides direct support to ELRCs managing Child Care Works and Keystone STARS through program coaching and instruction on fiscal, programmatic, and system requirements.

Bureau of Certification Services

The Bureau of Certification Services has the responsibility to certify (license) all the Pennsylvania child care centers, group child care homes, and family child care homes. Certification staff are based in five regional offices, as well as the headquarters staff who work in Harrisburg. The Bureau ensures that all child care providers comply with the statutes and regulations for operating a child care program. The Bureau investigates complaints of regulatory violations at certified child care programs and investigates complaints of illegally operating facilities. The Bureau also provides information to providers about the requirements and process for opening a child care program.

Bureau of Finance, Administration, and Planning

The Bureau of Finance, Administration, and Planning staff oversee budget, data, and research in support of OCDEL'S programs. OCDEL oversees a budget of approximately $2 billion dollars in state and federal resources combined to serve children, families, and programs.

In addition to EITA, OCDEL has another business partner:

The Pennsylvania Key

The Pennsylvania Key works with OCDEL to provide statewide leadership in the development of an integrated and coordinated system of program quality improvements and professional development supports for early childhood education programs. The Pennsylvania Key manages statewide professional development initiatives, coordinates the Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Program, manages

Environmental Rating Scale assessments, administers the Head Start State Collaboration office, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts grants, and supporting websites, including the PA Promise for Children.

The Pennsylvania Key also publishes various newsletters, including:

- *PA Early Ed News:* A monthly e-newsletter to inform early learning professionals, the early childhood community, policymakers, and more on developments in early childhood education and care in Pennsylvania
- *Kindergarten, Here I Come:* A monthly e-newsletter with tips and information for families to use in preparing their preschoolers for kindergarten.
- *Kindergarten, Here I Am!:* A monthly e-newsletter with resources, activity, and book recommendations for kindergarteners.
- *Learning is Everywhere:* A monthly e-newsletter with early learning activities, book recommendations, resources, and more.

Additional newsletters cover topics such as Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health, coaching, and professional development. Learn more about and subscribe to all or some of the Pennsylvania Key's e-newsletters. The Pennsylvania Key is administered through the Berks County Intermediate Unit 14.

Appendix C: A Deeper Look at Pennsylvania Evidence-Based Home Visiting (EBHV) and Family Support Programs

Evidence-Based Home Visiting (EBHV) Programs

EBHV programs offer voluntary, family-focused services to pregnant and parenting families. Trained professionals meet regularly in the homes or an agreed upon location, to support families by teaching positive parenting skills and parent-child interactions; promoting early learning; and providing information and guidance on topics such as breastfeeding, safe sleep practices, injury prevention, and nutrition. Additionally, professionals working with EBHV programs conduct screenings and provide referrals (and follow up) to address issues such as depression, substance use disorders and intimate partner violence. They also screen children for developmental delays and refer to EI and connect families to other resources.

Depending on the EBHV model, the home visitor may be a parent educator, nurse, or a master level clinician, but all receive training in the model they are delivering to ensure fidelity.

The following models are available in Pennsylvania, though not necessarily in every county:

- Early Head Start (EHS)
- Family Check-Up for Children (FCU)
- Healthy Families America (HFA)
- Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)
- Parents as Teachers (PAT)
- SafeCare Augmented
- Child First
- Family Connects

Learn more about the effectiveness of home visiting models by visiting the Administration for Children and Families website.

Family Centers

Pennsylvania's Family Centers provide community services to help families become stronger, healthier, better educated, and more self-sufficient. These centers help parents and caregivers:

- Learn about their child's development.
- Engage in parent education and child development activities.
- Access health care information, as well as assistance regarding health care services and insurance.
- Access education, training, and employment information.
- Receive information on and assistance with other community resources, such as well-baby care, immunizations, and Early Intervention services.

Each Family Center takes a unique approach to meeting its community's needs. As a result, services and supports will vary from community to community. Some activities and resources that may be available include:

Last Update 03.28.2025

- Evidence Based Home Visiting (EBHV) programs, which can be found by visiting [the Administration for Children and Families website](#)
- Parent support groups
- Positive parenting skills programs
- Child health and development screenings
- Promoting responsible fatherhood program
- Early learning programs
- Child abuse and neglect prevention programs
- Language and literacy programs
- Adult education
- Job training and placement
- Family activities
- Toy and book lending libraries
- Summer activities and after-school activities

Funding for Evidence-Based Home Visiting (EBHV) and Family Centers

Funding for Family Support programs, that include EBHV programs and community-based Family Centers comes from a variety of federal and state grants, including:

- Family strengthening and support programs
- Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)
- Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)
- Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP)
- Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF)
- Health Enterprise Zone (HEZ)

For further questions or inquiries, please contact ra-pwpahomevisiting@pa.gov.

Appendix D: Online Professional Development Tools and Resources

EITA offers two types of online professional development: courses and job aids.

What Are Courses?

Courses refer to online training that focuses on more involved and complex topics. Typically, courses include multiple components, such as assignments and/or coursework that is sometimes graded. These courses are longer, often taking a few hours to complete. Courses eligible for Act 48 credit are, at a minimum, one hour long.

Courses are available through the EITA Professional Development page for self-enrollment and will award Infant Toddler clock hours upon completion.

Once a course has been completed, it can be revisited at any time.

What Are Job Aids?

Job Aids are designed to improve skill and knowledge on specific topics. They are short, typically under 20 minutes in length. While no training credit hours are issued by EITA after completing a job aid, a certificate of completion is provided. Job aids can be accessed and revisited at any time.

EITA offers two ways to enroll in courses: pre-registration and self-enrollment. Many courses are available for both pre-registration and self-enrollment. Although the content is the same in both versions, the type of credit offered differs. Regardless of the enrollment type, each course may only be taken once for a certificate of completion.

What is Pre-Registration?

Act 48 credit, the type of training hours needed by those with teaching certificates in Pennsylvania, is only offered through pre-registration on the PaTTAN training calendar.

EITA pre-registration courses are open on the PaTTAN Training Calendar for three months at a time. Users register and complete the online course at any point during the quarter. Within 24 hours of registering, the user receives an email confirmation and is enrolled in the course on the EITA Training Site. Approximately 10 days prior to the end of each quarter, registration closes, and no one is able to register for the course until the new quarter begins.

Users who complete courses are awarded Act 48 credits at the end of each quarter. The credits are dated with the last day of that quarter. It may take up to 30 days from the end of the quarter for users to see their Act 48 credits in the Professional Education Record Management System (PERMS).

What is Self-Enrollment?

Self-enrollment courses meet the needs of non-certified professionals. Following the completion of the course, a certificate is issued that shows the awarded training hours. When taking a self-enrollment course, there is no waiting required to begin. You simply select the course you wish to take, log into the EITA training site, and enroll.

If you have never been to the EITA training site to take a course or job aid, and would like to do so, you will need to create an account. Additionally, if your staff have never been to the EITA training site to take a course or job aid, they will also need to create their own accounts.

Steps to Create an Account on the EITA Training Site

If you have never been to the EITA training site to take a course or job aid, and you would like to do so, you will need to create an account. Additionally, if your staff have never been to the EITA training site to take a course or job aid, they will also need to create their own accounts.

1. After clicking on the "Get Started" button under the desired course or job aid on the PD page, you will be directed to the EITA Training Site
2. Scroll to the bottom of the page and select "create new account."
3. Fill out the New Account form with your details.
4. Select "Create my new account."
5. An email will be sent to the email address that you provided.
6. Click on the web link in the email to confirm your account.
7. You may now log in with your new account and may begin viewing the course or job aid.

If you do not receive an email as indicated in Step 5 within a reasonable amount of time, please do not try to create another account. Submit a Help Desk ticket and the Help Desk will manually confirm your account.

Once your account has been confirmed, please use the username and password to log into the site when taking any courses or job aids.

If you or your staff experience any technical difficulties while taking a course or job aid, please submit a Help Desk ticket.