



IDEA

INFANT & TODDLER

COORDINATORS ASSOCIATION

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

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The IDEA Infant and Toddler Coordinators Association is organized as a not-for-profit corporation to promote mutual assistance, cooperation and exchange of information and ideas in the administration of Part C and to provide support to state and territory Part C coordinators.

Wow!....what a summer. I know most, if not all, of you have been extremely busy over the Spring and Summer months. While in the old days there might have been time for a little summer breather, that doesn't seem to be the case any longer. I also know most of you have continued to work diligently in operating your state systems while being responsive to the SPP/APR demands. I want to sincerely thank all of you for your thoughtful responses (written and verbal) to the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) issued by the Office of Special Education Programs this summer.

The ITCA Board and contracted Staff were extremely busy in preparing remarks on your collective behalf and trust that we made you proud. Also, it is very important that we recognize the truly outstanding contributions made by Maureen Greer

and Sharon Walsh, ITCA contracted staff, which went well beyond the call of duty or level of reimbursement.

While, the ITCA Board strove to provide an open and participatory process for comments to be submitted regarding the NPRM it also attempted to provide a forum for concerns regarding the state determination process. While the ITCA recognizes the importance of on-going communication regarding compliance with IDEA Part C and the determination process, several member states, during ITCA sponsored August conference calls, raised concerns regarding the timing of determinations, timelines for corrections and what penalties/sanctions might ensue if corrections were not made in a timely manner. In response to these concerns, the ITCA has formally requested that OSEP communicate with states through a format

which would indicate their present status year and also articulate the types of penalties/sanctions states might face if corrections are not made, despite best efforts, in a timely manner.

The ITCA Board has also heard from you the need for additional technical assistance and other resources. A major issue articulated by you on the ITCA Determination Calls was personnel capacity. The ITCA Board discussed with OSEP at the recent Baltimore meeting that all efforts in helping address workforce issues would be of great benefit to the national Part C system.

As a Board we also articulated that states need additional funding opportunities for data system enhancement. Finally, on your behalf we urged OSEP's consideration that quality intervention on some compliance indicators will take long than a year to resolve and that

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Setting the Stage for Meaningful Family Involvement: Conference Participation by Family Leaders Benefits State Part C Programs

December may seem far away, but now is the ideal time to begin laying the groundwork for getting your family leaders to the OSEP National Early Childhood Conference. As family leaders, we are eternally grateful to our Part C coordinators who laid the early groundwork to enable our participation at this importance conference. Like any good production, there is a lot of behind the scene's work that is essential to making sure this event is a success. Here are some successful practices that we hope you can use to ensure that your family leaders can gain the most from this important conference.

Outreach & Advertising—all successful productions focus on out-reaching to the community. Family leaders may not be aware of the dates for the OSEP conference, providing them with the Save the Date information is essential for planning ahead. It can also be helpful to share copies of a previous year's session brochure so family leaders can get a sense of the content. It is important that family leaders be provided with the opportunity to express an

interest in attending upcoming conferences. If you can only send a handful of your family leaders you may want to set a deadline for expressing interest in attending a particular conference. Have a set protocol on how participants will be chosen and stick to it. States have used simple means such as picking names from a hat, agreeing that new ICC members get priority, that a participant must have 6 months of prior involvement or asking that the family leaders create their own framework for choosing who attends which conference.

Production Costs—having a financial plan and budget is fundamental for ensuring family leaders can attend conferences. This means you may have to put it in contract language or find the place for the budget to work. Using the state's travel bureau or a non-profit parent organization to purchase airfare can usually result in lower costs and will make certain that a parent does not incur interest charges while awaiting reimbursement for travel. If state assistance for travel is not

available, be creative. Beyond utilizing the assistance of a partner non-profit, family members may be able to apply for training grant funds through other organizations or local disability councils. Some states ask that their family members room together; this may mean more parents can attend and provides them with a partner at the conference. It is also important to explain that hotels typically require a credit card to cover the cost of incidentals and a debit card is not advised. Using a debit card can result in significant sums being placed on hold in their checking account throughout the duration of their stay. Keep in mind, some families do not have credit cards and arrangements should be made on how to pay for hotel, travel and an advance for meals. Some states pay for the hotel through their PTI or other non-profit. Other states negotiate with hotels to avoid the incidental charges and remind parents that this means no minibar, movie or internet access during their stay. Discussing finances can be a delicate matter, but being honest and upfront is always the best strategy.

Most conferences provide some meals as part of the registration fee. Families need to know which meals will be provided and if they will receive per diem reimbursements or not. Some states provide this money to parents up front and require them to provide receipts at the end of the conference. All parents should be informed of the need to request receipts. EIFA can provide you with a template to assist families in keeping appropriate documentation required by the state. Remember, some parents may have extensive business travel experience, while for other families this may be their first experience; be sure that each parent knows what is expected of them.

Company Manager—taking the show on the road requires careful planning. Families need to think about who will care for their children at home and whether they will incur costs for additional childcare expenses. State partners need to share with families whether they have the ability to provide additional monies for these expenses or if stipends are expected to

Conference Participation by Family Leaders

cover this cost. Consider accessing state respite programs to assist families with their child care needs; as long as this does not affect their total allotted respite time. A "leave at home" sheet that can be filled in with flight numbers and times, hotel address, phone numbers or web address and the general timelines for the conference can be a godsend. EIFA has a sample information packet for attendees for those who are interested. In addition, the amenities of the hotel or the web address of the hotel can be very helpful for families to plan their stay.

Production Director – You have identified family leaders to attend, found funding assistance and have prepared them to leave home; but what about when they get there? Some states employ family leaders who provide support to family representatives, this family leader can ensure that new parents are provided with information prior to the conference and can orient them to the conference. In other states the Part C Coordinator takes on the role of orienting parents to the conference. Using a mentor model

has also been successful, having a family member who has attended previously help prepare new attendees. A brief orientation or refresher about IDEA Part C and Part B relationships, Part C on a national level, Federal regulations and State implementation is needed. It is also helpful to share who else attends, how to network and outreach to family members from other states, what happens to meals off-site, etc. It is important to inform family members that most conference participants will be dressed in business casual attire, and that comfortable layered clothes are essential to help account for unpredictable hotel room temperatures. No matter who is responsible for this, it is imperative that parents are fully aware of the details and what to expect for the 'flow' of the conference.

On with the Show – maintain meaningful involvement throughout the conference. Once you have arrived be sure to remind family members to fill out any forms and gather receipts they will need for reim-

bursment. It is essential to discuss the state's expectations with regard to conference attendance with families. Are there required sessions they must attend (i.e. ICC national meeting)? Do not assume that family members know when they can take 'down time'. Will they be required to submit a written summary of their activities, share session information with a larger group, present at an ICC meeting? Is there an expectation that certain information be acquired on other state's practices? Families should be informed that they need not stay with their state team throughout the duration of the conference, as discussing conference presentations with folks from other states can give families new insights. There are many opportunities for learning and sharing, be confident that your family leaders are taking advantage of them by preparing them.

Bravo: Closing Curtain – there are positive after effects and benefits of prepared and informed family leaders. Empowered, knowledgeable family leaders are the cornerstone for quality EI programs. With careful planning your state can reap many

benefits by sending family leaders to conferences. Informed family leaders are your essential allies when developing and implementing Part C policies. They will come back with increased passion for the ICC and the importance of early intervention. They will have increased awareness of the national issues that relate to your state and their role in shaping state and local policies. The opportunity to network with other Part C professionals, ICC members and family leaders will inspire them to partner for more years to come. Allow family participants to share their ideas, what they have learned and their vision for the future.

To keep apprised of EIFA efforts, to receive updates and membership information send an email to info@eifamilyalliance.org. EIFA looks forward to collaborating with other concerned partners in the early intervention community.

Occupational Therapy in Community-Based Early Intervention Settings

Sandra Scheffkind, MS,
OTR

Occupational therapy intervention for infants and toddlers promotes their participation in their natural environments (i.e., home, child care, playground). Therapists address the performance skills and demands required for both caregiver and child to engage in their daily routines and activities together. Occupational Therapists are committed to looking at the personal and contextual factors affecting a child's engagement in meaningful occupations.

The key to providing effective occupational therapy services to very young children is to collaborate with family members to select meaningful occupations that will support the physical, cognitive, and psychosocial dimensions of a young child's play, self-care, and interaction as a family member and playmate (AOTA, 2007). The primary areas of occupation for this population are: (a) activities of daily living (ADL) such as feeding, functional mobility, and toileting; (b) play exploration and participation; (c) education; and (d) social participation (AOTA, 2002 a).

Guiding Principles for Occupational Therapy Intervention

Five core family-centered principles guide occupational therapy practitioners in providing effective services as part of an early intervention team

Principle 1: The family is the core of an early intervention team.

Occupational therapy services are family-centered and are respectful of each family, along with their unique hopes, dreams, values, and priorities (Turnbull, Turbiville, & Turnbull 2000). Occupational therapists recognize that parents' expertise concerning their child and family life is a critical component throughout the evaluation and intervention process and that a partnership must be developed in order to establish successful and meaningful outcomes. Families are entitled to be involved in all aspects of their child's intervention plan, including phases of development, assessment, implementation, review, and during the phase of transition to other services and/or programs when appropriate (IDEA Final Regulations, 2004). Families also have the right to decline

any early intervention service, or to modify services to accommodate their work and family responsibilities (IDEA, 2004).

Principle 2: Families function as unique systems within social and cultural systems. Each family is unique and interacts within cultural and social systems at home and in their community, providing natural learning opportunities for a child (Dunst et al., 2001). By encouraging family involvement, occupational therapists help to identify activities that are both meaningful and appropriate for their child within the family's natural social and cultural context.

Principle 3: All team members should support each other's roles and should select outcomes and strategies together. In order to best meet the child's needs, the therapist provides options and choices; the family is encouraged to express individual preferences. The input and collaboration of all IFSP team members is essential for determining the best strategies to help family members facilitate their child's growth and learning. Gathering the perspectives of all service personnel is necessary when considering all areas of a child's development

as well as understanding the full impact of challenges on his/her access, participation and progress in meaningful activity.

Principle 4: Team members must understand each family's story and expectations for early intervention. Occupational therapists and other early intervention team members must engage in a dialogue with family members regarding their needs in caring for a very young child (Hanft & Feinberg, 1997; Hirshberg, 1996). A picture of a child's interests, personality, abilities, and challenges emerges, and supportive interventions can be identified. By truly listening to the family's needs, the occupational therapist considers the family's current level of functional performance, and, in collaboration with other team members, meaningful intervention strategies can be identified.

Principle 5: Team members must foster positive relationships between children and their primary caregivers. Children need responsive, nurturing, and interactive relationships with their primary caregivers in order to

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grow and develop. Current research in early childhood confirms that these relationships organize all of early development (Commission on Children at Risk, 2003; National Research Council, 2000; Weston, Ivins, Heffron, & Sweet, 1997). Occupational therapists, like other members of an early intervention team, are responsible for fostering the "goodness of fit" between a child and his or her key caregivers by providing family supports and sharing information, as desired by family members.

Intervention

Following a child's evaluation, an occupational therapist and other team members decide with a family if and when occupational therapy services are needed to reach their desired outcomes. These outcomes are identified on a child's IFSP, which summarizes all the early intervention services and supports for a child and family. If occupational therapy intervention can help a child reach a specific outcome, the occupational therapist discusses with the parents about how the child's strengths and challenges (i.e., their performance patterns/skills

And client factors) affect his or her participation in specific areas of occupation.

The following are examples of intervention approaches:

Establish/restore: Play oral-motor games to establish more mature tongue movement so that a child can transport the food bolus to the side for chewing and enjoy some of her family's favorite foods .

Adapt/modify: Modify a child's high chair for proper head, neck, shoulder, trunk, and pelvis alignment to help a boy play with his sister .

Alter: Assist a child care provider to incorporate calming and altering sensory activities

throughout a child's day to improve her attention to the task at hand .

Create: Work with staff at a community pool to adapt the toddler pool, ensuring access for children with various mobility patterns .

There are many different methods in which occupational therapists provide services in community-based early intervention settings. These methods include working with children and families and caregivers during individual sessions in homes, co-leading small groups in child care centers, consulting with early intervention teams, and providing in-services for child care providers.

For an IFSP to be individualized for each child and family, all team members must collaborate so the process is an interactive and flexible one. A family's desires for their child should guide the discussions and decisions. Occupational therapists can participate in initial planning discussions with families, conduct eligibility evaluations, evaluate how a child's abilities and challenges affect participation in family-selected activities, and assist families in choosing specific child-centered outcomes to guide the provision of family supports and services.

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PARENT LEADERSHIP AWARDS

The ITCA will make *Parent Leadership Awards* in each of the Regional Resource Center (RRC) regions. Additionally, the National Parent leadership award will be chosen from the top regional awards, and from other individuals nominated specifically for the national award for leadership efforts on behalf of infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families at a national level. Parent nominees can be biological/adoptive parents, foster parents or grandparents of children with special needs who have participated in a Part C program. Nominees can represent a variety of different leadership roles that contribute to the Part C program. Nomination forms will be sent shortly.

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any sanctions respond accordingly.

The ITCA also requested that the presentation materials related to fiscal verification be disseminated to all Part C Coordinators as several of you were not able to attend the Baltimore meeting. Also, since many Part C Coordinators are not primarily responsible within their

lead agency for financial management of Part C funds, ITCA requested these materials be sent to the Commissioner and/or the principal financial contact of your lead agency. More generally, ITCA made a broader request that OSEP conference materials be shared electronically with Part C Coordinators following all national meetings in order that all states and

territories have consistent information.

In closing, I want to thank you for the opportunity to serve as your President for this calendar year. It has been a very interesting and, I believe, productive year. As an organization we have shown our ability to respond timely and thoughtfully. Much work remains to be done but your efforts over the

past several months have shown your true colors and commitment.

Thanks again for your efforts, those of the Board and our terrific contract staff, Maureen and Sharon.



Ron Benham, President

ITCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS ANNUAL ELECTIONS

The Association Board of Directors is seeking nominations of Association members to fill vacant positions on the Board of Directors. This year, the Board is seeking nominations to fill two vacant positions. Only Part C Coordinators from member states may be nominated. In making nominations for the positions on the Board of Directors, the bylaws require that nominees "represent an appropriate geographical, state size and Lead Agency mix." Self nominations are encouraged. Please share pertinent information about the nominee in order for the Association membership to be fully informed about the individual and his/her contributions as part of the election process.

This year ITCA is seeking nominees for the positions of Vice President and Member at Large. Molly Dries Bright (AZ) is chair of the nominating committee. If you are interested in running for the Board, please contact Molly at mdries@azdes.gov

National Summit on America's Children

In May, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi sponsored what was called a summit to discuss what's happening to America's youngest children. The summit was co-chaired by her House colleagues George Miller (D-CA), Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), and Chaka Fattah (D-PA).

There were four panels

1. The Science of Early Childhood Development;
2. Early Learning;
3. Health and Mental Health; and
4. Income and Family Support.

The panelists represented the very best researchers in the country in the areas of neurobiology, pharmacology, developmental pediatrics, poverty,

nutrition, and other topics affecting young children. The thread tying all of these presentations together was the fact that all of these areas are highly impacted by federal policy. For example, one presentation on the effects of food insecurity in families was then directly tied to provisions of the Farm Aid bill which is up for reauthorization. The care of very young children is tied to attempts to pass a paid family leave act.

As Jack Shonkoff said in addressing the policy implications, "no single program is best."

Part C was not forgotten, since one of the Early Learning panelists was Donna Davidson, from the Easter Seals of North Georgia, a Part C provider in that state. She asked Congress to keep "full funding for Part C" in mind.

The keynote address, "Investing in Disadvantaged Young Children is Good Economics and Good Public Policy" was by Dr. James Heckman from the University of Chicago.

The point of the summit was establish a research basis for the 110th Congress's legislative priorities that address the needs of young children.

around early learning, health and mental health, and family and income support.

For copies of all of the presentations and archived webcasts of each panel, go to www.speaker.gov and scroll to the bottom under "issues" where you'll see a link for the National Summit on America's Children. You may find some of the materials helpful in supporting efforts in your own state on behalf of young children.

— Linda Goodman, CT

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