



Tips for Educators: Working with Part C Providers

Tips for Educators is a series of practical guides that education staff can use in early learning settings. Each guide is based on research evidence and professional knowledge.



Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal grant program that helps states operate early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and developmental delays, aged birth to 3, and their families. States often have their own name for this program.

Part C early intervention services address the outcomes, or goals, set for a child and family in their Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). While each IFSP is unique to the child it serves, the law determines the basic components that must be included. As a team, the child's family, disabilities service coordinator, therapists, early childhood educators, and any other relevant support specialists create an IFSP which addresses the individual child's needs. The team checks in on progress toward the set outcomes every six months and, if needed, revises the IFSP. The IFSP is reviewed annually.

Supports and services are optimized when the family and providers work together to support the child across settings. Early intervention services are provided in "natural environments," which IDEA defines as "settings that are natural or normal for the child's age peers who have no disabilities." These environments include the child's home, play groups, and early childhood education settings, including Early Head Start programs. Children may be dually enrolled in Part C and in community-based programs such as Early Head Start programs.

Tips for Educators

- Identify your State agency and Part C coordinator using the [Early Childhood Technical Assistance \(ECTA\) Center](#) website.
- Request a copy of the child's IFSP, especially if the Early Head Start program is a service setting.
- Ask to participate in, or receive the notes from, IFSP meetings.
- Become familiar with the role of each IFSP team member.
- Ask about and share information needed to document progress toward IFSP outcomes.
- Help Part C providers understand the Early Head Start services available to children and families, and highlight the ways that families are actively involved.
- Introduce Early Head Start and Part C service providers from each program, and help them to clarify responsibilities. Partner with providers and communicate regularly.
- Learn about the child's specialized interventions by observing and asking questions.
- Understand how Early Head Start education staff can support the child between visits from specialists.
- Coordinate home visits. Sometimes a family has both Part C and Early Head Start home visitors — some or all visits may occur at the same time.
- Invite Part C providers to visit and provide their services in the Early Head Start setting.
- Invite Part C providers to special events, and include them on mailing lists.



- Learn about the age 3 transition process. In almost every state, children with IFSPs must be determined eligible for continuing special education and related services at age 3. If eligible, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be developed in place of the IFSP before the child's 3rd birthday in order for services to continue.

Reflection

Consider the following questions to reflect and form a plan for furthering your partnerships with the Part C Providers who work with the children and families that you serve:

- What do your current relationships with Part C Providers look like? What are the strengths of those relationships? How could they be improved?
- How do you currently initiate partnerships with Part C Providers? What new approaches could you try?
- How do you communicate with Part C Providers about the services that you each give to individual children and families? Would communication be clearer or more effective if you had a system in place? What forms of communication would work best, and how often would you like to communicate?
- What information or skills do you hope to learn from the Part C Providers on children's intervention teams? What information or skills would you like to share with them? What situations or collaborative opportunities would allow you to share these ideas?

Resources

- [Early Childhood Technical Assistance \(ECTA\) Center – State Part C Coordinators Database](#)
- [PACER Center – Early Intervention Resources](#)
- [Division for Early Childhood \(DEC\) of the Council for Exceptional Children – Resources](#)
- [Center for Parent Information and Resources – Parent Support Center Database](#)