



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

## Early Support for Infants & Toddlers (ESIT) Guidance Memo #2020-02

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Guidance Related to COVID-19 for Early Intervention Providers

### ESIT Guidance Memo #2020-02

Dear ESIT Early Intervention Providers and Partners:

The Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) State Leadership Team is inspired by both the strong commitment to families and creative responsiveness on the part of ESIT staff at all levels of our service delivery system and across the state. This effective combination of commitment and responsiveness has ensured stability by maintaining effective communication within and across work teams and sustaining relationships with families and primary caregivers during this very stressful time.

Due to the ongoing need for physical distancing, the **temporary suspension of in-person services is extended through June 30, 2020**. The ESIT State Leadership Team has reviewed an extensive number of options based on state and federal guidance documents and is providing the following guidance related to temporary modifications available for local consideration regarding key areas of IDEA Part C service delivery requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on this guidance, leaders within Early Intervention Provider Agencies are encouraged to exercise latitude in referral follow-up, eligibility determination, IFSPs and early childhood transition requirements.

#### Referrals

The ESIT state office is distributing information regarding services currently available via telepractice to primary referral sources at the state level. Early intervention providers are encouraged to reach out to local and regional referral sources to advise them of any changes to the referral process that have been instituted during this time-limited moratorium on in-person services.

Procedural Safeguards can be reviewed with families over the phone or via teleconference and then a copy emailed, mailed or using a pre-planned *stop, drop and exchange* approach dropping off paperwork for signatures at a safe distance (e.g. the family's doorstep or other agreed upon location with the provider representative waiting and retrieving the signed documents).

Enrollment forms that require parent signature can be reviewed over the phone or via teleconference with the use of e-signatures or mailings for written consent. Obtaining verbal approval with documentation when e-signatures or mailings are problematic is a short-term solution. As the length of physical distancing is extended, it makes sense to use a *stop, drop and exchange* approach as described above to obtain written consent.

#### Eligibility Determination

It is important to ensure that evaluation and assessment tools used via telepractice are designed to incorporate parent interviews. Please refer to the administration and scoring guidance for specific tools being used. The following tools are recommended as appropriate for parent interviews. Tools listed in the table below under eligibility evaluation instruments can be used to determine eligibility based on developmental delay.

#### Parent Interview Evaluation and Assessment Tools

Eligibility Evaluation Instruments	Curriculum-based Assessments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developmental Assessment of Young Children (DAYC-2)</li> <li><a href="#">Battelle Developmental Inventory (BDI)</a> *see attached guidance from publisher</li> <li>Receptive Expressive Emergent Language Test (REEL)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP)</li> <li>The Carolina Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers with Special Needs (The Carolina)</li> <li>The Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System for Infants and Toddlers (AEPS)</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Infant Motor Scale (AIMS)</li> <li>• Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Infants and Toddlers (DECA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Start Denver Model (ESDM)</li> </ul>
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Children determined eligible based on *diagnosed conditions* can be enrolled without an eligibility evaluation. For more detailed information on eligibility based on diagnosed conditions, please refer to ESIT's [Qualifying Diagnosis List Guidance Document](#).

The use of *informed clinical opinion* is also encouraged as a mechanism for supporting a child's eligibility. In accordance with 34CFR§303.321(a)3(ii) "...informed clinical opinion may be used as an independent basis to establish a child's eligibility under this part even when other instruments do not establish eligibility." For more information on how to use informed clinical opinion for eligibility, please refer to ESIT's [Informed Clinical Opinion Practice Guide](#).

**Initial and ongoing Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs)**

If feasible, providers should first attempt to obtain parent signatures electronically or by mailing a copy of the IFSP document with an extra signature page to be returned to the provider agency. If this is not possible, service providers may obtain verbal consent to provide equal access to services during this state of emergency. Documentation of verbal consent must include service provider initials and date consent was obtained. Parents can then sign and date the IFSP when in-person services resume, or through a *stop, drop and exchange* procedure as referenced previously in this memo.

**Early Childhood Transitions**

Early Intervention Provider Agencies (EIPAs) are encouraged to communicate with individual families and with their local school districts regarding the feasibility of a virtual transition conference and how best to approach required transition activities. Potential options for transition meetings may include virtual methods to include conference phone calls or videoconferencing during periods of school closures. Existing early childhood transition personnel and their respective contact information remain the same during the period of school closure. School districts have local protocols in place to respond to emails. After decisions related to early childhood transition options are jointly determined, written communication with families should be prioritized. For assistance troubleshooting specific circumstances, please contact Val Arnold, ESIT Strategic Innovations Advisor, at [valerie.arnold@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:valerie.arnold@dcyf.wa.gov) or 360-485-7773.

**Important information is being shared regularly** through the [DCYF COVID-19 Web Page](#) and in the **ESIT Weekly** ([subscribe here](#)). Please take advantage of reviewing these as they are distributed and updated regularly as the situation changes and new questions come in. When we receive additional state and federal guidance and clarification, we will communicate changes or additions through these key forums.

Thank you, once again, for your ongoing commitment to ensuring that infants, toddlers and their families continue to have access to the high-quality services you provide. If you have further questions or need additional information, please contact the ESIT Program Administrator, Laurie Thomas, at [laurie.thomas@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:laurie.thomas@dcyf.wa.gov) or 360-789-5705.

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