

## Early Childhood Intervention

### Rational, Components, Principles

#### Principles

Early childhood intervention (ECI) supports families as they help their children with developmental delays, disabilities, atypical behaviors, malnutrition, or chronic illnesses to achieve their developmental potential and ensure their good health, nutrition and safety.

ECI services also support families to keep their children at home and ensure that they and their children fully participate in community life. ECI services assist families to help their children participate in activities and routines that they would like to or are expected to participate in and interact with peers, family members, and others creating friendships and a social network.

Early childhood intervention provides essential family support and guidance and critical services to young children helping to prevent unnecessary institutionalization of children with developmental delays or disabilities. ECI services also support families whose children have been de-institutionalized or foster families of children who previously lived in an institution. ECI services support families to develop strong, loving relationships in support of their child's development.

#### Why Early Childhood Intervention

Services provided to young children and their families are based on a comprehensive integrated system of support that builds the capacity of the family to support and foster their child's own development. The first three years of a child's life are crucial for child development. Families flourish when they are supported, engaged in their community,

- Evidence based interventions provided in the early years have a life long positive effect on outcomes for individuals (Campbell, et al 2014)
- The optimum time for building a firm foundation for on-going cognitive, language, motor, and social-emotional development is in the first 3 years of life . (Helen Neville Ph.D. et al, *Changing Brains*, <http://bdl.uoregon.edu/dvd.php>)
- Providing early childhood intervention and support in the first years of life is cost effective and reduces the need for more expensive interventions throughout a person's life (Nores, Barnett, 2010)
- Persistent difficulties such as extreme poverty, abuse, neglect, and institutionalization can negatively affect the developing brain, leading to lifelong limitations in learning, behavior, physical and mental health, problem solving, empathy and other executive functions. Center on the developing Child at Harvard University, 2010)
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- Positive early experiences, especially stable relationships with caring and responsive adults, safe and supportive environments, and appropriate nutrition strengthen brain development and have been shown to ensure good health, development, academic achievement, social-emotional adjustment, employment, and income, as well as fewer institutionalizations and incarcerations (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2005/2014, Center on the developing Child at Harvard University, 2010)
- Cognition, language, personality, social behavior and achievement are influenced by early relationships and social emotional support. , Center on the developing Child at Harvard University, 2010)
- High quality early childhood intervention can influence a child's developmental trajectory and improve outcomes for children, families, and communities. National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2005/2014), David Olds et al., 1997, Schweinhart et al 2005

### **Key Components of Early Childhood Intervention**

Based on the research there are four key **components** that provide the foundation of an effective early childhood intervention system of supports and services.

1. Services to young **children** with disabilities or delays focus on the strengths of the child and are individualized to meet specific needs of the child, building on the child's strengths, interests, and motivations.
2. **Family** centered services build on the unique strengths of the family, its culture and intergenerational relationships.
3. The **context** of where and when a skill will be performed is a critical variable in intervention planning and implementation.
4. **Strategies** used to meet the functional outcomes are based on the highest quality of evidence available and require a coordinated, comprehensive approach to implementation.

### **Early Childhood Principles :**

#### **Child**

- **Individualized**

*Services and supports to children and their families are individualized. Services build on the strengths and interests of the child within the context of everyday activities. Each child and family is unique and benefits from choices and flexibility. This individualized process is strength based and designed to meet each child's unique and evolving developmental needs.*



## **Services**

- **Developmentally supportive and relationship based**

*Developmental change occurs through a complex transactional model that is influenced by: formal and informal practices, cultural, physical, and socio-economic contexts, biology, genetics, and by local professional attitudes, interventions and skills. We develop positive and rewarding relationships with families and children participating in ECI programs that support their relationship which in turn fosters development.*

- **Comprehensive, coordinated, team based**

*Collaboration and teaming with other professionals and families is used to solve problems and make decisions. Team dynamics are direct, honest and supportive of each individual team member. Team members support each other and learning from each other. Supervision and support is provided through a reflective process supporting continuous review and professional development.*

- **Based on the highest quality of evidence available**

*High-quality services are provided by well-trained professionals and paraprofessionals who use evidence-based strategies to provide effective services. Professionals are dynamic, creative, passionate, determined, experienced, compassionate and committed to continuous improvement. ECI programs monitor, evaluate, track and report data to inform decision-making and continuous quality improvement.*

- **Outcome driven**

*ECI services and supports accomplish outcomes that increase the child ability to participate in age appropriate activities and routines. Outcomes are based on the families' needs and priorities, the child's interests and strengths, and naturally occurring learning opportunities.*

- **Strengths based**

*The child's interest and strengths are used to design an effective intervention plan. This increases the likelihood of success by building on a child's strengths to help them meet challenges.*

- **Ensures child and parental rights and responsibilities**

*Parents are ultimately responsible for making decisions about their child including the right to consent to referrals and sharing of private information concerning themselves and their children.*

## **Family**

- **Family centered**

*Children are a part of a family and their families provide them opportunities and experiences that help them grow, develop, and thrive. Early Intervention service providers build relationships with families through compassion, empathy, caring, encouragement and acceptance. Early intervention providers share their hopes and possibilities and listen to and acknowledge their ideas, wishes and plans.*

- **Culturally responsive**

*All families are treated with honor and respect and the diversity of cultural practices, primary language, customs, religion, family type, social and economic status and education are celebrated. Families know what works and what does not work in the context of their family and culture.*

### **Context**

- **Community based, resource oriented**

*Early childhood intervention coordinates with health, social, and other family support programs ensuring that services are responsive, efficient, and inclusive. The community has easy to access and comprehensive services and supports. Early interventionists help identify gaps in needed community services and supports.*

- **Promote children's participation in the natural environment**

*Infants and toddlers learn best through their everyday experiences and interactions with familiar people in familiar contexts. Early intervention services are embedded in typical activities with typical peers and daily routines providing opportunities for learning and practice which results in the mastery of skills. Early interventionists build on children's interests, motivations, and strengths; they reward their achievements; and encourage them to explore their natural environments of their home and community.*

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