DEC
Recommended Practices

DEC Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education

Administrator's Essentials:

Creating Policies and Procedures That Support Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE)

Barbara J. Smith ● December 2000

There is a link between program quality and child outcomes. Therefore, programs that employ best practices will positively impact the outcomes of children and families they serve.

Implementing recommended practices in services for young children with disabilities and their families requires administrative policies, procedures, and structures that will support such practice. For instance, providing family-based resources and supports or child-focused services in natural settings requires flexible personnel job descriptions and hours of work that promote service provision in the home or community setting during hours convenient for the family or community program. Recommended practices also require cutting-edge knowledge and skills through on-going, job-related training and technical assistance supports. This richness of policies, procedures, and supports will occur only if administrators (a) are knowledgeable of recommended practice in EI/ECSE, (b) share resources with other programs and agencies, and (c) engage in systems change and planning.

This checklist contains relevant recommended practices from the seven strands of the *DEC Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education* (Sandall, McLean, & Smith, 2000) that give specific direction to administrators. Most of these recommendations are found in the Policies, Procedures, and Systems Change chapter of the DEC Recommended Practices. This checklist of selected practices can be used by administrators to reflect on their policies. However, administrators are encouraged to become familiar with all of the practices in *DEC Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education* (Sandall, McLean, & Smith, 2000) in order to appropriately serve young children with disabilities and their families.

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Administrators, other professionals, and families shape policy at the national, state, and local levels that promote the use of recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education.

Examples/Notes:

Is this practice evident in policy/procedure? ❑ Yes ❑ Emerging ❑ No

Administrators ensure that they and their staff have the knowledge, training, and credentials necessary to implement the DEC Recommended Practices in early intervention/early childhood special education.

- Program coordinators/supervisors have training in early childhood education, early intervention, early childhood special education, and supervision.

Examples/Notes:

Is this practice evident in policy/procedure? ❑ Yes ❑ Emerging ❑ No

- Administrators are affiliated with professional early childhood/early childhood special education organizations and encourage staff to maintain their affiliations. Continuing education such as staff attendance at meetings and conferences to enhance professional growth is supported.

Examples/Notes:

Is this practice evident in policy/procedure? ❑ Yes ❑ Emerging ❑ No

- Program policies provide clear job descriptions and provide for personnel competencies and on-going staff development, technical assistance, supervision, and evaluation to inform and improve the skills of practitioners and administrators.

Examples/Notes:

Is this practice evident in policy/procedure? ❑ Yes ❑ Emerging ❑ No

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Program policies and administration promote families as partners in the planning and delivery of services, supports, and resources.

- When creating program policies and procedures, strategies are employed to capture family and community voices and to support the active and meaningful participation of families and community groups including those that are traditionally underrepresented.

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure?   ❑ Yes   ❑ Emerging   ❑ No

- Program policies create a participatory decision-making process of all stakeholders including individuals with disabilities. Training in teaming is provided as needed.

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure?   ❑ Yes   ❑ Emerging   ❑ No

- Program policies ensure that families understand their rights including conflict resolution, confidentiality, and other matters.

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure?   ❑ Yes   ❑ Emerging   ❑ No

- Program policies are examined and revised as needed to ensure that they reflect and respect the diversity of children, families, and personnel.

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure?   ❑ Yes   ❑ Emerging   ❑ No

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- Program policies are provided in sufficient detail and formats so that all stakeholders understand what the policy means.

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure? ❑ Yes ❑ Emerging ❑ No

- Program policies require a family-centered approach in all decisions and phases of service delivery (system entry, assessment procedures, Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)/Individualized Education Program (IEP), intervention, transition, etc.) including presenting families with flexible and individualized options for the location, timing, and types of services, supports, and resources that are not disruptive of family life.

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure? ❑ Yes ❑ Emerging ❑ No

- Program policies provide for the dissemination of information about program initiatives and outcomes to stakeholders.

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure? ❑ Yes ❑ Emerging ❑ No

Program policies and administration promote the use of DEC's and other recommended practices.

- Program policies reflect recommended practices including personnel standards, child-staff ratios, group size, case loads, safety, assistive technology, and EI/ECSE services and practices. Incentives, training, and technical assistance to promote the use of recommended practices in all settings are provided.

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure? ❑ Yes ❑ Emerging ❑ No

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- Program policies establish accountability systems that provide resources, supports, and clear action steps to ensure compliance with regulations and to ensure that recommended practices are adopted, utilized, maintained, and evaluated resulting in high quality services.

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure?   ❑ Yes   ❑ Emerging   ❑ No

- Program policies support the provision of services in inclusive or natural learning environments (places in which typical children participate such as the home or community settings, public and private preschools, child care, recreation groups, etc.). Strategies are used to overcome challenges to inclusion.

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure?   ❑ Yes   ❑ Emerging   ❑ No

- Program policies ensure that the IFSP/IEP is used on a regular and frequent basis to determine the type and amounts of services, the location of services and desired outcomes.

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure?   ❑ Yes   ❑ Emerging   ❑ No

- Program policies ensure that family supports, service coordination, transitions, and other practices occur in response to child and family needs rather than being determined by the age of the child (e.g., b-2, 3-5).

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure?   ❑ Yes   ❑ Emerging   ❑ No

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- Program policies ensure that multiple instructional models are available to meet the individual needs of children (e.g., less structure to more structure; child-driven to teacher-driven; peer-mediated to teacher-mediated, etc.).

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure? ❏ Yes ❏ Emerging ❏ No

- Administrators provide for a supportive work environment (e.g., hiring and retention policies, compensation and benefits, safety, workspace, etc.).

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure? ❏ Yes ❏ Emerging ❏ No

Program policies and administration promote interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration.

- Program policies include structures and mechanisms such as job descriptions, planning time, training, and resources for teaming resulting in meaningful participation for on-going coordination among professionals, families, and programs related to service delivery including transition.

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure? ❏ Yes ❏ Emerging ❏ No

- Program policies facilitate and provide for comprehensive and coordinated systems of services through interagency collaboration by clearly delineating the components, activities, and responsibilities of all agencies (e.g., joint policies across agencies; collaborative planning on a system, child, and family basis; shared forms and plans; etc.).

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure? ❏ Yes ❏ Emerging ❏ No

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- Program policies result in families and professionals from different disciplines working as a team developing and implementing IFSPs/IEPs that integrate their expertise into common goals.

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure?   ❑ Yes   ❑ Emerging   ❑ No

Program policies, administration, and leadership promote program evaluation and systems change efforts at the community level.

- A shared vision (of all stakeholders), clear values/beliefs, and an understanding of the culture and context to be changed guide efforts to restructure and reform systems. Decisions about what to change result from regular analysis and evaluation of discrepancies among the vision, beliefs, knowledge, and current practices.

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure?   ❑ Yes   ❑ Emerging   ❑ No

- Assessment of the interests, issues, and priorities of constituent groups guides the selection and direction of leadership and systems change strategies.

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure?   ❑ Yes   ❑ Emerging   ❑ No

- Leadership and systems change efforts produce positive outcomes for children, families, and communities that are responsive to their needs. Evaluation data are used to ensure: (a) service utilization, (b) more efficient and effective supports for children, families, and staff, and (c) appropriate systems change leadership and strategies.

  Examples/Notes:

  Is this practice evident in policy/procedure?   ❑ Yes   ❑ Emerging   ❑ No

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• Leadership capacity, risk taking, and shared decision-making among professionals and families at all levels of the organization are cultivated.

Examples/Notes:

Is this practice evident in policy/procedure?   ❑ Yes   ❑ Emerging   ❑ No

• Leadership and systems change efforts include attention to: timely job-embedded professional development, funding, program evaluation, accountability, governance, program accreditation, curriculum and naturalistic instruction/supports.

Examples/Notes:

Is this practice evident in policy/procedure?   ❑ Yes   ❑ Emerging   ❑ No

• Leadership and systems change efforts rely on strong relationships and collaboration within and across systems: between consumer and system, across systems that deal with children and families, among components within a system, and among professionals from diverse disciplines.

Examples/Notes:

Is this practice evident in policy/procedure?   ❑ Yes   ❑ Emerging   ❑ No

• Leadership is committed and willing to change organizational structures (staffing, schedules, teaming) to be responsive to individual needs.

Examples/Notes:

Is this practice evident in policy/procedure?   ❑ Yes   ❑ Emerging   ❑ No

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• Change is institutionalized through the development of coordinated management and accountability systems.

Examples/Notes:

Is this practice evident in policy/procedure? ❑ Yes ❑ Emerging ❑ No

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• Resources are provided for program evaluation that occurs along established time points, incorporating appropriate measurable indicators of progress including child and family outcomes and preferences.

Examples/Notes:

Is this practice evident in policy/procedure? ❑ Yes ❑ Emerging ❑ No

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• Program evaluation is comprehensive, is multi-dimensional, and incorporates a variety of methods for assessing the progress and outcomes of change. Evaluation efforts take into account differing cultural, contextual, demographic, and experiential perspectives including those of parents and of individuals with disabilities.

Examples/Notes:

Is this practice evident in policy/procedure? ❑ Yes ❑ Emerging ❑ No

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• Program policies delineate all components of service delivery and provide for tracking and evaluation of all components, including child and family outcomes, to ensure that recommended practices are implemented as intended.

Examples/Notes:

Is this practice evident in policy/procedure? ❑ Yes ❑ Emerging ❑ No

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Reference

Sandall, S., McLean, M.E., & Smith, B.J. (2000). *DEC Recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education.* Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Note

This checklist is also available free of charge from the DEC website: www.dec-sped.org

For more information on *DEC Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education*:

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