



POSITION STATEMENT

ADOPTED: DECEMBER 1993

Personnel Standards for Early Education and Early Intervention

Individuals working with or on behalf of young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities and their families represent diverse disciplines and assume varying responsibilities across a variety of settings. These individuals include, but are not limited to, early interventionists, early childhood special educators, general early childhood educators, service coordinators, psychologists, therapists (e.g., speech-language, occupational, and physical), health care professionals, social workers, paraprofessionals, and childcare providers.

Personnel preparation includes the education of professionals before initial employment (preservice) and during employment (in-service). Preparation should be based on evidence-based practices and professionally endorsed standards. It should also include collaborative agreements with other professional organizations. In addition, preparation should equip personnel with the knowledge and skills to meet the continuum of abilities and needs demonstrated by young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities, and their families. Individuals working with or on behalf of these children and their families also should be recognized as change agents in the development and refinement of systems to benefit children and families.

Key concepts guiding the preparation of professionals working with young children and their families:

Personnel preparation programs should use standards that are based on key concepts. These concepts are grounded in (a) contemporary theoretical constructs that anchor the field of early childhood and (b) evidence-based practices. Personnel preparation programs should prepare individuals who:

- View each child and family as unique, recognizing that each child and family also is part of a broader social ecology.

- Offer services and supports that enhance each child's and each family's informal and formal support networks, and address their concerns, priorities, and needs.
- Support and partner with family members and other caregivers to enhance children's growth and development.
- Ensure that family members become key decision makers about their child's developmental and educational services.
- Use language that is respectful and unbiased when communicating about children and families.
- Affirm the right and opportunity for each child to receive services and supports with their peers in natural or inclusive environments, recognizing a continuum of services and supports based on child need.
- Include young children with developmental delays and disabilities in environments, where services and supports are individualized and appropriate for the children's developmental status and chronological age, and with opportunities for developing ongoing relationships with their peers.
- Facilitate a continuum of collaborative services and supports for young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities and their families as they enter kindergarten and other community-based service systems.
- Honor and respect the diverse backgrounds and needs of young children and their families, demonstrating socio-cultural competence.
- Maintain ethical conduct in all professional activities.
- Serve as change agents in advocating for young children and their families.

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- Collaborate with other professionals, paraprofessionals, families, and community agency personnel to meet the individualized needs of young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities.

For personnel preparation programs to be successful we recognize that:

- Personnel standards must be developed within a collaborative framework including representation of key stakeholders and representatives of professional organizations (e.g., DEC, CEC, NAEYC, ATE, Zero to Three, ACEI, ASHA, NASP, AOTA, ITCA, APTA), policymakers, and families.
- Early childhood intervention addresses the needs of children from birth through eight years of age and their families. The first eight years of life comprise three relatively unique developmental and experiential phases: birth–three years, three–five years, and five–eight years. Personnel certification/licensure for these phases should represent the distinctions among them.
- Clear and direct linkages should exist among personnel standards, recommended practices, and evidence-based practices.
- Multiple pathways should be used to prepare personnel for positions that support the development and education of young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities and their families. For example, an early childhood paraprofessional and a speech-language pathologist who are employed in their disciplines might pursue competencies in early intervention for infants and toddlers with disabilities together in an interdisciplinary program. Alternatively, a student in speech-language pathology might pursue competencies in early intervention that are embedded in the student’s preservice degree program.
- Personnel should be prepared in the multiple settings that exist in which the development and education of young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities and their families, are supported. These settings include, but are not limited to home, childcare, school, community, and other settings.

Structure and Content of State Licensure

Many states have developed models for certification/licensure, including blended programs and common core

competency programs. Blended programs incorporate knowledge and skills from early childhood special education and early childhood education. Common core competency approaches emphasize a set of core competencies, which are common across disciplines. These models are recommended as effective for preparing professionals to work with young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities and their families.

The content of state licensure should:

- Reflect current recommended practices that are empirically based;
- Use standards that embed contemporary philosophical orientations about young children and families;
- Include the key concepts and successful strategies recommended for personnel preparation programs;
- Represent state and federal legislative expectations;
- Be based on a career ladder that builds on previous knowledge and skills to enhance and expand the quality of the workforce in early childhood; and
- Evaluate competence utilizing performance- and outcome-based measures.

Although certification/licensure is an important step in professional development, initial certification/licensure reflects entry-level competence. Other factors, including program of study, experience, knowledge and skills related to collaboration, critical thinking, leadership, professional ethics, attitudes/beliefs, and mastery motivation, enhance and expand an individual’s self-efficacy and perceived competence.

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