



Division for  
Early  
Childhood

Recommended Practices



Early Childhood  
Technical Assistance Center

## DEC Recommended Practices: A Quick Overview

The DEC Recommended Practices (DEC RPs), available at: <http://www.dec-spced.org/dec-recommended-practices>, were developed by the DEC Recommended Practices Commission with support from the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA), funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. DEC published three versions of the DEC RPs in 1993, 2000 and 2014.

The RPs can be used by individuals providing services to young children who have or at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities. The updated set of practices consists of eight domains:

- Assessment
- Environment
- Family
- Instruction
- Interaction
- Leadership
- Teaming
- Transition

### What is the purpose of the DEC Recommended Practices?

The DEC RPs provide guidance to practitioners and families about ways to improve learning outcomes and promote development of children (0-5) who have or are at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities. The DEC RPs help bridge the gap between research and practice by highlighting practices that have been shown to result in better outcomes for children, their families, and the personnel who serve them.

### How do we know the evidence behind the practices?

The original set of practices (1993) was developed by DEC workgroups and field experts through a nomination process and a field validation study. The second set of practices (2000) included input from experts, practitioners, family members and administrators to identify the practices, an extensive review of research evidence in support of the practices, and a field validation survey.<sup>1</sup>

The current practices were developed through an iterative process. The process included: a conceptual framework of focus areas for organizing practices, identified workgroups for the focus areas to nominate practices and provide supporting research evidence, a review of the 2000 set of practices and empirical evidence for these practices, reviews and edits to the nominated practices, and final validation of the revised practices by the DEC membership. Relevant research studies from the literature database established for the 2000 RPs were aligned with the nominated practices for the revised version. Research evidence nominated by the workgroups was reviewed and

gaps were identified. A field validation survey was conducted to validate the practices (Snyder, & Ayankoya, 2015).<sup>2</sup>

### How will the practices be kept current over time?

The DEC Recommended Practices Commission is developing a plan for continually updating the practices to ensure that they are supported by current research. The Commission created an Evidence Synthesis Group (ESG) to develop a system for identifying and summarizing the status of the best-available evidence in support of the 2014 practices. This system will inform updates or revisions to the practices. Evidence will be posted on the DEC website.

### What resources are available to help with implementation of the DEC RPs?

The ECTA Center<sup>3</sup>, funded by OSEP, has developed a suite of resources available free to support practitioners, families, and professional development providers in the use of the DEC RPs. Key TA products available from <http://ectacenter.org/decpr> include:

- Performance Checklists for practitioners
- Practice Guides for practitioners
- Practice Guides for families
- Guidelines for Selecting Checklists and Practice Guides
- Resources for Professional Development Providers

The ECTA Center has developed resources to support state capacity building around implementing and scaling up evidence-based practices to improve child outcomes. Resources available at <http://ectacenter.org/implementation> for state leaders and state teams include:

- Guide to Statewide Implementation and Scale-up of Recommended Practices
- State Leadership Team Benchmarks of Quality
- Benchmarks of Quality for Classroom-Based Programs and Home-Visiting Programs
- Reaching Potentials through Recommended Practices Observation Scales

ECTA Center is developing online training modules <http://rpm.fpg.unc.edu> to support early care and education, early intervention, and early childhood special education faculty and professional development providers.

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, B.J., McLean, M.E., Sandall, S., Snyder, P. and Ramsey, A. (2005). DEC Recommended Practices: The procedures and evidence base used to establish them. In S. Sandall, M.L. Hemmeter, B.J. Smith & M.E. McLean, DEC Recommended Practices: A comprehensive guide for practical application in early intervention/early childhood special education. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

<sup>2</sup> Snyder, P. & Ayankoya, B. (2015). Revising the Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices: When, Who and How. In Division for Early Childhood, DEC recommended practices: Enhancing services for young children with disabilities and their families (DEC Recommended Practices Monograph Series No.1). Los Angeles, CA: Author.

<sup>3</sup> The ECTA Center is a program of the FPG Child Development Institute of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, funded through cooperative agreement number H326P170001 from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education.