

The UPDATE

News and Information for Massachusetts EI Providers

June 2016



Important Dates...Mark your Calendar!

June 28, 2016; 10am—11am: Monthly DPH Webinar: Transportation Update and Changes to Provisional Certification Process

September 29, 2016; 9am—4pm: ICC Retreat; Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel, Marlborough



Resources & Trainings: [Personnel Policy Changes 2016](#); [MDPH Early Intervention Certification Tracking Form](#); [EIOS Nutritionist/Music Therapist 2016](#); [CWP Account Request Form](#); [Guidance Document: Providing Timely Information about Service Options for Children with Hearing Loss](#)



DPH Updates

Program Certificates

DPH will be mailing program certificates by the end of the week. These certificates document that your program meets the requirements of the IDEA and the MA EI Operational Standards as a MA Community EI Program. Any questions please contact your Regional Specialist.

EI Program Director Session

Thank you for your participation in the EI Program Director Session on June 1, 2016, regarding embedding the SSIP activities into the IFSP process. We look forward to partnering with local EI programs to support the embedding of an evidence based practice to improve child outcomes.

The MA EI TA Framework is a systemic approach to support programs in effectively implementing research-based best practices through clear, consistent, continuous and reciprocal communication to promote a confident and highly effective/ competent workforce.

The DPH staff will continue to work on developing the framework for individualized support and will be provide opportunities for Program Directors, Supervisors and PIWI Champions to learn more about the PIWI prior to local program training.

Provisional Certification & Personnel Standards

The Department of Public Health has developed a Universal [MDPH Early Intervention Certification Tracking Form](#) for all individuals working in the MA EI System and has added two disciplines in the area of Nutrition and Music Therapy. This change was shared and discussed with the Standards Committee of the ICC for input and feedback prior to implementation. Please see the attached [Policy Memo](#) and [Discipline Definitions](#) effective July 1, 2016.

Additional information regarding this change will be shared on the June 28, 2016 webinar.

Transportation Update

The Human Services Transportation (HST) staff has been working with MassHealth's Customer Service Center staff; EI providers can now complete the online PT-1s effective immediately. The HST will provide the following information on the June 28, 2016 webinar:

- Directions for providers to access the Customer Web Portal for online PT-1s (i.e., how to enroll as a provider for online services)
- Direction for online PT-1 completions

HST staffs are also creating a database of EI providers that request transportation services through the HST brokers. **Please complete the attached form** and return it to HST Office (information is at the bottom of the form), so HST staff can better assist programs when needed.

Please forward any questions that you would like addressed on the webinar to my attention, patti.fougere@state.ma.us.

Institute for Health & Recovery (IHR) Update: Second-hand Smoke Training

The Institute for Health and Recovery offers a free online training on the issue of second-hand smoke. There is no charge for this Smoke-Free Families training that was developed by IHR for staff in home visiting programs such as Early Intervention, Healthy Families and F.O.R. Families. www.healthrecovery.org/trainings/sff/

Karen Welling (karenwelling@healthrecovery.org) and Karen Gould (karengould@healthrecovery.org) continue to welcome requests for training and technical assistance.

Data Manager Updates

Timely Notification to LEA & SEA Federal Indicator

One of the federal compliancy indicators reported annually to OSEP by Massachusetts Early Intervention is:

The percentage of toddlers with disabilities exiting Part C with timely transition planning for whom the Lead Agency has notified (consistent with any opt-out policy adopted by the State) the SEA and the LEA where the toddler resides at least 90 days prior to the toddler's third birthday for toddlers potentially eligible for Part B preschool services

Note: In Massachusetts the State Educational Agency (SEA) is the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

Massachusetts has a separate process for notifying DESE of children referred to an LEA. LEA referral data is entered into a program's Transition Survey System (TSS) and transmitted to DPH. Each week DPH identifies new LEA referred children entered into the TSS and transmits this information to DESE.

Massachusetts' fiscal year percentage for this indicator was 89.20%. Although our LEA referral percentage was higher at 99.97% we are required to use the lower percent of either the LEA referral or SEA notification for federal reporting. Therefore, it is important that your TSS data be transmitted to DPH according to Linda's Rule of Thumb: "Enter data today, transmit tonight." This is especially true for children deemed to be "almost late EI referrals" (a referral where the IFSP is signed when the child is between 30 and 32 months of age).

Monthly Error Reports

In addition to the monthly Error reports sent out to programs, Linda Mosesso makes phone calls or sends Secure Mail emails to individual EI programs that have errors with date logic. Because so many of these errors are repeated by programs over and over again we have decided to include some of them as part of the monthly reports starting in fiscal year 2017 so that program directors can identify processes that may need to be improved. Some of the new validations to be added to these reports include the following:

- Date of Notification comes before or after another service date (e.g., 1st IFSP Meeting Date)
- Date Deemed Inactive comes before another service date (e.g., Evaluation Date)
- Child is over 3 and still receiving services



EITC Update

Universal MDPH Early Intervention Certification Tracking Form

The Department has created a Universal [MDPH Early Intervention Certification Tracking Form](#) for all levels of certification for individuals working in the Massachusetts EI System and has added two disciplines in the area of Nutrition and Music Therapy.

Effective July 1, 2016 Early Intervention programs and DPH approved Specialty Services will need to submit all certification tracking forms to Susan Breen via email at susan.breen@state.ma.us with the appropriate documentation.

Attached is the revised Certification Tracking Form, Instructions for use, and a TIPS page.

Final versions of this form will be distributed prior to the DPH webinar on June 28, 2016 and will be discussed on the webinar. Please review the documents and send along any questions to Susan Breen prior to the webinar.

Specialty Services Updates

Clarification of Eligibility for Early Intervention for Children with Hearing Loss

As defined in the Early Intervention Operational Standards, children are eligible under the established condition category for early intervention if they have a **“permanent hearing loss of any degree.”**

There is no need to demonstrate that the child has a developmental delay as measured by the Battelle Developmental Inventory as hearing loss is a diagnosed medical condition with an expectation for developmental delay and is listed on the Massachusetts diagnosed condition list July '12.

An EI Program should proceed with the timely development of an IFSP for any child referred with a documented permanent hearing loss. There have been recent concerns raised by diagnosing audiologists that some EIPs have determined that children with hearing loss are not eligible for EI because they do not have a 30% delay in language skills, which reflects lack of understanding of the relevant Operational Standard conferring eligibility for a child with a permanent hearing loss of any degree. Some families report to their audiologists that the EIP has told them that children with hearing loss are not in need of intervention until they are over 18 months of age and beginning to use language. This indicates that some EI staff may be unaware of the necessity of establishing early communication and listening skills because important neural tracks for language acquisition are laid down in the first year of life. It underlies the need for early referral to Specialty Service programs for infants/toddlers with hearing loss. Information about how to create an enriched language environment (either spoken and/or manual) should be provided to families very early on. This is not the same as generic language stimulation – the approaches for children with hearing loss are quite different.

Please address any specific questions you may have to Darla Gundler, Specialty Services Coordinator for hearing loss: darla.gundler@state.ma.us

[“Guidance Document: Providing Timely Information about Service Options for Children with Hearing Loss”](#)

New Center-based Group Program

One year ago, the DPH was approached by the May Institute in Randolph to consider a center-based group to address social skills development for children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and receiving services through Early Intervention. The concept behind this is to target those skills needed for transition and inclusion in pre-school settings once children have turned three years old. The program includes regular assessment of core skills and an activity based group curriculum that includes but is not limited to building skills as joint attention, following directions, responding to peers, cooperative play. This inclusive group, attended by peer models as well as children receiving Specialty Services, provides a one to one staff ratio for the child and complies with Early Intervention Operational Standards. The May Institute has spent the past year compiling the appropriate documentation identified in the EI Operational Standards regarding Health and Safety and Program Administration. The group plans to commence in July. DPH is in the process of developing an application for any other Specialty Service Providers that might be interested in providing a similar group. Look for more information coming in the next few months.

Certification Tracking Form Changes

As the new Certification Tracking Form changes, Specialty Service Providers will have an opportunity to attend a webinar to review the new form and ask questions. This form will be different than the one that has been in use. The webinar will be held on Tuesday, June 28 from 11:30am to 12:30pm. Instructions to link to the webinar will be sent out via email a day or two before the session. It may be helpful to have the individual from your agency that submits certifications to attend this as well. A tip sheet has been developed to provide some technical assistance. We realize that this is short notice for this meeting, but the new form will be effective July 1, 2016. If you or someone from your agency is unable to attend the webinar, technical assistance can be provided on an individual basis. Please contact Joan Rafferty (joan.rafferty@state.ma.us) and Darla Gundler (darla.gundler@state.ma.us) with any questions.

Comments, contributions or feedback, please contact:

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TO: Early Intervention Providers and Agency Representatives
FROM: Patti Fougere, Assistant Director, Early Intervention
DATE: June 13, 2016
RE: New Personnel Definitions – Change to EI Operational Standards

The Department of Public Health EI staff have been working internally to streamline the process for granting Provisional Certification. A Certification Tracking Form and all required documentation is submitted to DPH prior to date of hire for all direct care staff working at a certified EI program or DPH approved Specialty Service Provider program.

The Department has created a Universal MDPH Early Intervention Certification Tracking Form for entry level provisional certification for individuals working in the Massachusetts EI System and has added two disciplines in the area of Nutrition and Music Therapy.

Effective July 1, 2016 Early Intervention programs will need to submit all certification tracking forms for general EI and DPH approved Specialty Services to Susan Breen via email at susan.breen@state.ma.us with the appropriate documentation.

The attached new definitions of minimum credentials for Registered Dietitians/Nutritionists and Music Therapists will become effective July 1, 2016. Please add these new definitions to your EI Operational Standards. Any individuals currently working in the Massachusetts EI system who has been approved as a Specialty Provider in the field of Nutrition or Music Therapy will be grandfathered and will not need to be reclassified in the personnel data base.

In addition to the additional disciplines the following policy changes will also go into effect on July 1, 2016:

- EI Specialty Service Provider's (SSP's) employed directly by a certified EI program (vs. a DPH approved Specialty Service Program): If candidates are working more than 20 hours or more in EI they are required to complete mandatory DPH orientation within first year of hire, and are exempt from CEIS requirement. If they wish to service coordinate or receive CEIS they will need to meet as an EI discipline qualified to service coordinate (exclude SSP, and therapy assistants).
- Changes to EI SSP criteria for individuals employed directly by certified EI Programs:
 - Any SSP who meets the criteria as another approved EI discipline will be provisionally certified in that discipline

- Nutritionists and Music Therapists are no longer considered SSP's and can function as service coordinators.
- Music therapists who meet as another EI discipline will no longer be certified as SSP's. Board certified music therapists are a recognized discipline able to service coordinate effective July 1, 2016.
- SSPs are limited to working with children having a low incidence condition or children with unique developmental characteristics.
- Behavior specialists providing intensive services working in EI will need to be a licensed BCBA. The rationale of this new requirement is to meet the supervision and billing requirements established by the Board of Registration of Allied Mental Health & Human Services Professionals Board under the supervision of the Division of Professional Licensure that BCBA's be licensed
- Staff that meet requirements in more than one discipline will be awarded provisional certification in a primary discipline and will hold the credentials needed to meet as a second discipline. These providers can and should identify as both disciplines when working with families, making sure that all families are aware of both disciplines present. When conducting services that require the use of a multidisciplinary team, a discipline different from the two that the dual discipline provider holds must be present.

It is important that programs maintain a staffing distribution that meets the needs of enrolled children and families and maintain an appropriate distribution of disciplines. Please feel free to contact your Regional Specialist with any questions regarding these new definitions.