

## Lead Agency

### Introduction

The Part C Lead Agency is the North Carolina Infant-Toddler Program (ITP). The ITP is located in the Division of Public Health within the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. Lead Agency responsibilities are performed on two levels.

At the state level, the Early Intervention Branch of the Women's and Children's Health Section, in the Division of Public Health, administers, supervises, and monitors programs and activities of the Infant-Toddler Program. The North Carolina Interagency Coordinating Council serves as the designated planning partner for the Early Intervention Branch and the Division of Public Health advising and assisting them in such substantive activities as child find and public awareness, system needs assessment, system monitoring and evaluation, and professional development. On the local level, the Children's Developmental Services Agencies (CDSA) administer, supervise, and monitor programs and activities of the ITP.

### Responsibilities of the Lead Agency

The North Carolina Infant-Toddler Program (ITP) is responsible for the:

1. General administration and supervision of programs and activities administered by agencies, institutions, organizations, and early intervention service (EIS) providers receiving assistance under Part C;
2. Monitoring of programs and activities used to ensure compliance with Part C requirements, including:
  - a. monitoring agencies, institutions, organizations, and EIS providers used by the ITP to carry out Part C activities;
  - b. enforcing any obligations imposed on those agencies, institutions, organizations, and EIS providers under Part C regulations;
  - c. providing technical assistance to those agencies, institutions, organizations, and EIS providers; and
  - d. correcting any noncompliance identified through monitoring as soon as possible and in no case later than one year after the ITP's identification of the noncompliance.
3. Identification and coordination of all available resources for early intervention services within the State, including those from federal, state, local, and private sources;
4. Assignment of financial responsibility in accordance with Part C requirements;
5. Development of procedures to ensure that early intervention services are provided to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families in a timely manner, pending the resolution of any disputes among public agencies or EIS providers;
6. Resolution of intra- and interagency disputes;
7. Entry into formal interagency agreements or other written methods of establishing financial responsibility, that define the financial responsibility of each agency for paying for early intervention services (consistent with state law) and procedures for resolving disputes and that include all additional components necessary to ensure meaningful cooperation and coordination.

**Public Participation Responsibilities**

1. At least 60 days prior to being submitted to the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education, the ITP Application for Part C funding (including any policies, procedures, descriptions, methods, certifications, assurances and other information required in the application) must be published in a manner that will ensure circulation throughout the State for at least a 60-day period, with an opportunity for public comment on the application for at least 30 days during that period.
2. Before adopting any new policy or procedure (including any revision to an existing policy or procedure) needed to comply with Part C, the ITP will:
  - a. hold public hearings on the new policy or procedure (including any revision to an existing policy or procedure);
  - b. provide notice of the hearings held at least 30 days before the hearings are conducted to
  - c. enable public participation; and
  - d. provide an opportunity for the general public, including individuals with disabilities, parents of infants and toddlers with disabilities, EIS providers, and the members of the Interagency Coordinating Council, to comment for at least 30 days on the new policy or procedure (including any revision to an existing policy or procedure) needed to comply with Part C.

**Involving Traditionally Underserved Groups**

The ITP ensures that policies and practices have been adopted to ensure that:

1. Traditionally underserved groups, including minority, low-income, homeless, and rural families and children with disabilities who are wards of the State, are meaningfully involved in the planning and implementation of all the requirements of this part; and
2. These families have access to culturally competent services within their local geographical areas.

**Collaboration with Head Start**

The ITP has an ongoing collaborative relationship with Early/Head Start. At the state level, ITP is represented on several interagency committees that address child find, transition, funding, and policy development. At the local levels, ITP representatives convene Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICC). Each LICC mimics the state Interagency Coordinating Council in membership. The LICCs typically conduct joint child find activities with Early/Head Start and other community agencies. Many LICCs are ad-hoc or subcommittees of larger Early Childhood Community Councils whose focus is on coordinated systems of early care and education.

**General Education Provision Act Statement**

The North Carolina Early Intervention Branch (EI Branch) is the state lead agency for the North Carolina Infant Toddler Program and is the lead agency for the federal Part C Program. This program services a culturally, and socio-economically diverse population of infants and toddlers with disabilities under the age of three who have developmental delays or established health conditions that lead to developmental delay and their families. The EI Branch is strongly committed to equal access and treatment for all infants and toddlers and their families who are referred to and served in EI program as well as to the early intervention service providers and the public. If a community-based service provider is unable to provide services to a child, the local lead agency, Children's Developmental Services Agency (CDSAs) must provide the early intervention service. The EI Branch is advised by its advisory council, the North Carolina Interagency Coordinating Council and its Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICC) to identify and address any barriers. The EI Branch ensures that the North Carolina Infant Toddler

Programs are a part of a Statewide system of early intervention services and provides an environment free from discrimination and harassment based upon gender, race, national origin, color, disability or age.

### **Interagency Coordinating Council**

1. The North Carolina Interagency Coordinating Council is legislated by the North Carolina General Assembly as required by Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The North Carolina Interagency Coordinating Council advises and assists the lead agency, the Division of Public Health in the role as lead agency for services for children, ages birth to aged three, with special needs and their families. The Interagency Coordinating Council collaborates with the Public Schools of North Carolina in their role as lead agency for preschool services for children with special needs and their families.
2. The Governor of North Carolina appoints members and must ensure that the membership of the Council reasonably represents the population of the State. The Council is required to designate a chairperson and this person must not be a representative of the lead agency.
3. The Council must be composed as follows:
  - at least twenty percent (20%) of the members must be parents, including minority parents, of infants and toddlers with disabilities or children with disabilities aged birth through twelve years and who have knowledge of, or experience with programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities;
  - one parent must have a child aged birth through six years with a disability;
  - twenty percent (20%) must be representatives of public or private providers of early intervention services;
  - a person involved in personnel preparation;
  - a member from each of the following state agencies: Department of Health and Human Services and the Public Schools of North Carolina;
  - a member from the Public Schools of North Carolina responsible for preschool services to children with disabilities;
  - a member from the agency responsible for regulating child care;
  - a member from the agency responsible for the state regulation of health insurance;
  - a member from the Division of Medical Assistance;
  - a member from the Office of the Coordination of Education of Homeless Children and Youth;
  - a member from the Division of Social Services;
  - a member from the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services;
  - a member from a Head Start or Early Head Start Agency, and
  - other members as appointed by the Governor, including a representative from the Bureau of Indian Affairs or where there is no Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Health Service or the tribe or tribal council.

In addition, North Carolina has reserved four (4) seats for Legislators, to include two Senate and two House representatives.

4. Subject to the approval by the Governor, the Council may use funds to:
  - Conduct hearings and forums;
  - Reimburse members of the Council for reasonable and necessary expenses for attending Council meetings and performing Council duties (including child care for parent representatives);
  - Pay compensation to a member of the Council if the member is not employed or must forfeit wages from other employment when performing official Council business;
  - Hire staff; and
  - Obtain the services of professional, technical, and clerical personnel as may be necessary to carry out the performance of its functions.

Except for conditions in the above paragraph, Council members must serve without compensation from funds available under Part C.
5. The overall purposes of the North Carolina Interagency Coordinating Council are to ensure the development and implementation of a coordinated interagency service system for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with disabilities or developmental delays and their families and to serve as the major state level advisory board for the lead agency. The Council must advise and assist the lead agency in the performance of its responsibilities including—
  - a. Identification of sources of fiscal and other support for services for early intervention service programs;
  - b. Assignment of financial responsibility to the appropriate agency
  - c. Promotion of methods (including use of intra-agency and interagency agreements) for intra-agency and interagency collaboration regarding child find, monitoring, financial responsibility and provision of early intervention services and transition
  - d. Preparation of applications and amendments to those applications.
    - i. Advising and assisting on transition. The Council must advise and assist the State Education Agency and the lead agency regarding the transition of toddlers with disabilities to preschool and other appropriate services.
    - ii. Annual report to the Governor and to the Secretary.
6. The Council must—
  - a. Prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and to the Secretary on the status of early intervention service programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families under part C of the Act operated within the State; and
  - b. Submit the report to the Secretary by a date that the Secretary establishes.
7. Each annual report must contain the information required by the Secretary for the year for which the report is made.
8. No member of the Council may cast a vote on any matter that is likely to provide a direct financial benefit to that member or otherwise give the appearance of a conflict of interest under state law.
9. The North Carolina Interagency Coordinating Council meets on a quarterly basis in public meetings. As needed, the Council provides for interpreters for persons who are deaf as well as other necessary services for Council members and participants.

**Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)**

The North Carolina ITP assures that persons who serve children enrolled in early intervention services are adequately prepared and continue their professional development throughout their careers. The CSPD includes:

1. Training paraprofessionals and primary referral sources with respect to the basic components of early intervention services available in the state;
2. Training personnel to implement innovative strategies and activities for the recruitment and retention of EIS providers;
3. Promoting the preparation of EIS providers who are fully and appropriately qualified to provide early intervention services;
4. Training personnel to support families in participating fully in the development and implementation of the child's and family's IFSP; and
5. Training personnel to coordinate transition services for infants and toddlers with disabilities who are transitioning from an early intervention service program to a preschool program or another appropriate program.

**Personnel Certification**

The Infant-Toddler Program (ITP) administers a credentialing program required for all CDSA staff who provide direct services and contract ITP service providers of special instruction, regardless of level of education, professional license or certification. Certification reviewers at local programs (CDSA) examine the skills of service providers through review of coursework and observation and recommend staff for the appropriate certificate. The document entitled *North Carolina Infant-Toddler Program: Guidance for Personnel Certification* provides instruction for acquiring the certification. Continuing renewal is required. Each local program (CDSA) is responsible for ensuring that Infant-Toddler Program service providers demonstrate thorough knowledge, education, background, and skill-appropriate training as mandated and required by the Infant-Toddler Program. For more information about personnel certification, contact North Carolina Infant-Toddler Program, Early Intervention Branch, Division of Public Health, 1916 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1916, Telephone: (919) 707-5520.