

# Rhode Island Early Intervention Certification Standards Policies and Procedures

## I. Introduction

### Overview of the Rhode Island Early Intervention System:

Early Intervention is a federal program defined in the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** section 34 CFR Part 303 (Part C). These regulations pertain specifically to infants and toddlers, birth to three. The Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services is the lead agency for Part C.

### Purpose

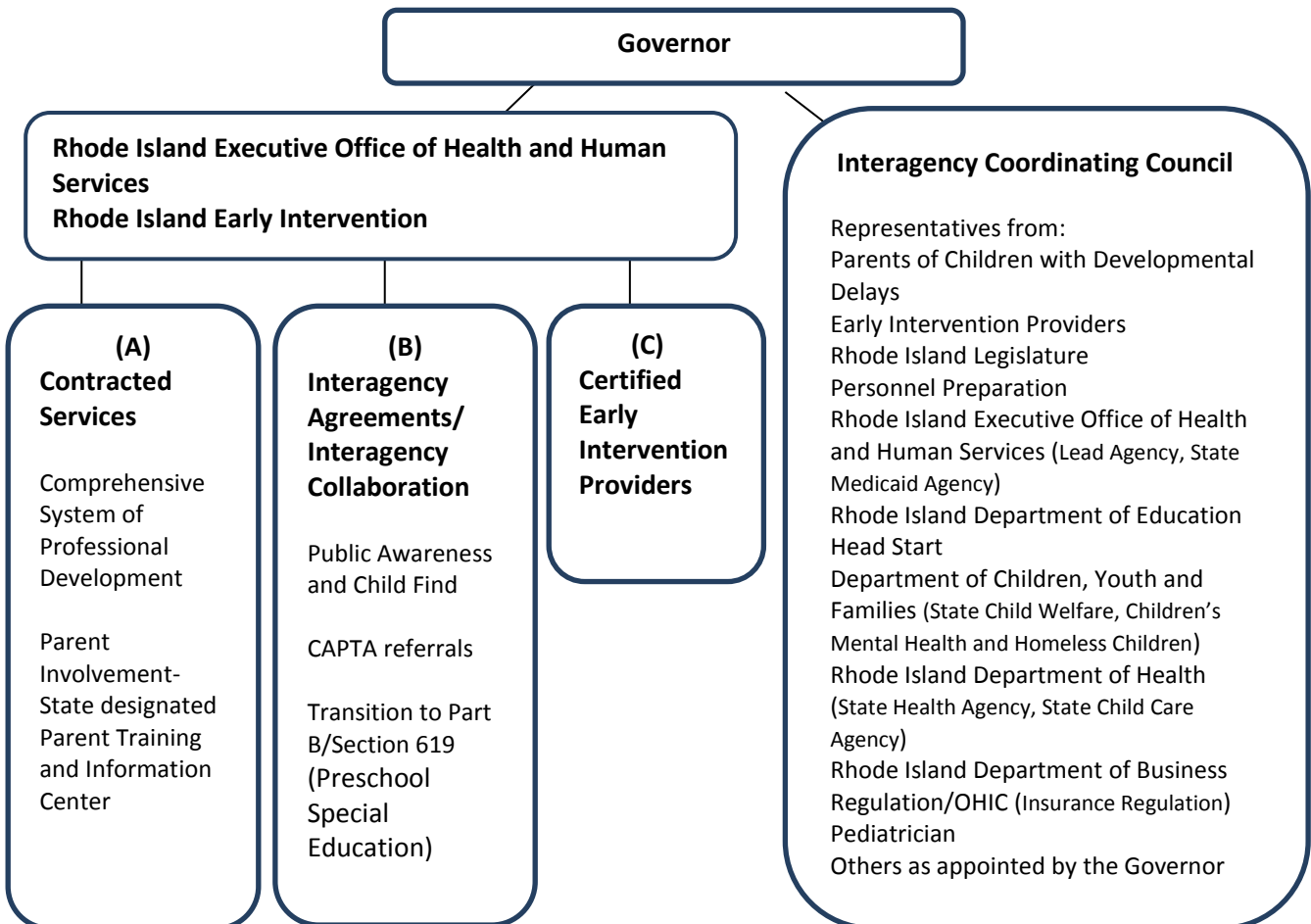
Early Intervention is a comprehensive and coordinated system of home and community based services and supports for families of infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities or delays. The purpose of Early Intervention is to:

- 1) enhance the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their infant or toddler and
- 2) enhance the developmental functioning of infants and toddlers with special needs

### Rhode Island Early Intervention State Infrastructure

The Governor of Rhode Island has designated the Executive Office of Health and Human Services as the Lead Agency responsible for ensuring that a statewide system of early intervention services for eligible infants and toddlers and their families is established and maintained in the state.

The Rhode Island Early Intervention system is structured as follows:



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### Components of the Rhode Island Early Intervention System

#### Executive Office of Health and Human Services

##### General administration and supervision responsibilities

- Promulgation of regulations
- Development and implementation of Early Intervention Certification Standards including the following policies and procedures:
  - Early Intervention Principles and Practices
  - Personnel (including qualification standards)
  - Referral and Intake
  - Multidisciplinary Evaluation and Assessment (including ongoing assessment procedures)
  - Eligibility-including a rigorous definition of the term 'developmental delay'
  - Individualized Family Service Plan( including service coordination and contracting for services)
  - Services on the Individualized Family Service Plan
  - Transition
  - Procedural Safeguards (including State complaint resolution procedures)
  - Child and Family Outcomes
  - System of Payment
  - Administration (including Fiscal, Data Collection and Quality Improvement)
  - General Supervision
  
- Establishment of a State Part C Budget
- Provision of a central directory of Early Intervention providers, resources, and research and demonstration projects
- Provision of Monitoring, Supervision and Technical Assistance
- Certification of Early Intervention Providers

#### A. Executive Office of Health and Human Services Contracted Services

The lead agency administers two components of Early Intervention through a competitive RFP process. These are:

- Comprehensive System of Personnel Development-In accordance with federal regulations Rhode Island Early Intervention provides a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development. Important functions of the Rhode Island Comprehensive System of Personnel Development which include:
  - Recruitment and retention of qualified staff
  - Increased workforce capacity
  - Professional development and technical assistance for the current workforce
  - Implementation of evidence based practices
  - Leadership development across the Rhode Island Early Intervention system

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- Parent Involvement-State Designated Parent Training and Information Center. Rhode Island Early Intervention includes a parent support component. Important functions include:
  - Recruitment, training, and support of parent consultants to work in each of the certified Early Intervention Programs:
  - Administration, collection, and reporting data regarding the annual Family Outcome Survey
  - Development and provision of family workshops and trainings

### B. Interagency Collaboration, Interagency Agreements

It is the responsibility of the lead agency to identify and coordinate all available resources in the state including developing formal interagency agreements, assigning financial responsibility to the appropriate agencies and developing procedures for securing timely reimbursement of funds. Additional responsibilities include resolving intra- and interagency disputes and developing procedures to ensure that services are provided in a timely manner pending resolution of any disputes.

The lead agency has developed the following formal interagency agreements:

- **Department of Children Youth and Families-** Through an interagency agreement, the Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF), and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) ensure that the lead agency's child find system includes referral procedures that are in accordance with the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) which includes requiring the referral of a child under three who is the subject of a substantiated case of abuse and neglect or who is identified as directly affected by illegal substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug use.

This agreement also ensures the rights of a child are protected when no parent can be identified, located, or the child is a ward of the state.

- **Department of Health-**Through an interagency agreement, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the Rhode Island Department of Health establishes a comprehensive child find and referral system including public awareness focusing on early identification of infants and toddlers with disabilities and providing information to parents of infants and toddlers through primary referral sources via Department of Health programs. This agreement ensures that infants and toddlers potentially eligible for Early

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Intervention are identified and referred as soon as possible.

- **Rhode Island Department of Education:** Though an interagency agreement, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) collaborate in the development and implementation of a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary, and interagency service delivery system for children with disabilities and developmental delays ages birth through five years and their families. Specifically this agreement ensures a successful transition for children and their families exiting the IDEA Part C system and entering the IDEA Part B system.

### C. Certified Early Intervention Providers

#### **Executive Office of Health and Human Services Certification Standards**

Early Intervention Services are carried out by certified Early Intervention Providers. The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) has defined a set of standards to ensure compliance with federal and state regulations and to ensure the provision of quality services and supports to eligible families of infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities and delays in Rhode Island.

- The certification process and the issuance of the Rhode Island Certification Standards provide the basis for EOHHS' determination of providers eligible to participate in and receive payment for the provision of Early Intervention services.
- The Rhode Island Early Intervention Certification Standards establish the policies and procedures required of an Early Intervention program in Rhode Island.
- Full compliance of the Rhode Island Early Intervention Certification Standards is required of all certified Early Intervention programs.
- EOHHS is responsible for the oversight and monitoring of compliance to these standards.
- Changes to the standards may be made by EOHHS to comply with federal or State regulations and/or to ensure funding, with reasonable notice to providers. Substantial changes to the standards will require certified providers to submit revised or new program policies and an agreement to comply with any changes.

#### **Initial Application and On-going Certification:**

- The State reserves the right to determine the number of applicants needed to provide Early Intervention services in

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accordance with IDEA regulations. Factors reviewed to ensure that Rhode Island has the capacity to meet the need for Early Intervention include changes in population, performance indicators, or in the number of certified providers.

- The State reserves the right to determine the structure of the Rhode Island Early Intervention system and to make changes as needed.
- To be eligible for reimbursement for Early Intervention services and supports, provider agencies must be granted “Early Intervention Certification” by EOHHS.
- Organizations must submit notice of intent to apply for certification status to EOHHS. An Implementation Plan must be submitted which includes at a minimum:
  - Evidence of understanding RI Early Intervention Principles and Practices
  - Evidence of understanding and the ability to comply with all state and federal requirements and RI Certification Standards
  - Initial Staffing and Supervision Plan
  - Initial Budget
  - Initial Organizational Plan including how Early Intervention fits into the agency structure
- Early Intervention Certification is valid and renewed annually, contingent upon continuing compliance with federal and state regulations and the Rhode Island Early Intervention Certification Standards.
- Organizations must submit any change to program policies and procedures or organizational changes (impacting Early Intervention) to EOHHS.
- Any changes to the standards made by EOHHS will require certified providers to agree and comply with the changes.

The State will continually monitor compliance with Rhode Island Early Intervention Certification Standards. Technical assistance is always available. The State reserves the right to apply sanctions for non-compliance which may include but is not limited to:

- Corrective action plans/Performance Improvement Plans
- Mandatory technical assistance
- Additional reporting requirements
- Suspension of new referrals
- Recoupment of funds
- Provisional certification status, suspension or termination of certification

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### Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)

The Rhode Island Interagency Coordinating Council includes a variety of stakeholders that advise and assist the lead agency in administering the Early Intervention system. The Council is comprised of parents of children with disabilities, early intervention service providers, health care professionals, state agency representatives, and other early intervention stakeholders. Core functions of the ICC:

- provide a forum for public input from families, service providers, and other stakeholders regarding federal and state policies for the Early Intervention Program
- promote Inter-agency collaboration and coordination
- prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and the Secretary of the US Department of Education on the status of Early Intervention programs in the state in coordination with EOHHS
- make formal recommendations to EOHHS on the statewide system of early intervention services for eligible infants, toddlers and their families