

MARYLAND PERSONNEL STANDARDS

For Early Intervention Service Providers

Resource Document

*Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services
MARYLAND INFANTS AND TODDLERS PROGRAM
200 West Baltimore Street, 9th Fl.
Baltimore, MD 21201*

MARYLAND INFANTS AND TODDLERS PROGRAM

Personnel Standards for Early Intervention Service Providers

Resource Document

Introduction

The Maryland State Department of Education/Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program (MSDE/MITP) is required to establish and maintain personnel standards to assure that early intervention services are provided by qualified personnel. The purpose of this document is to assist:

- Local Infants and Toddlers Programs in implementing policies and procedures related to personnel standards;
- Early intervention personnel in meeting personnel standards; and
- Institutions of higher education in reviewing curricula for consistency with personnel standards.

What are Maryland's Personnel Standards for Early Intervention Service Providers?

The Maryland State Department of Education/Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program (MSDE/MITP) has established the following policies relating to the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards pursuant to *Proposed* COMAR 13A.13.02 and 34 CFR §303.119:

1. Personnel providing early intervention services to eligible children and their families shall meet highest requirements in the State that apply to the profession or discipline in which a person is providing early intervention services.
2. Personnel providing early intervention services under this part to eligible children and their families in excess of 15 percent of employment hours shall meet:
 - a. Highest requirements in the State that apply to the profession or discipline in which a person is providing early intervention services; and
 - b. Suitable qualifications.

What are the highest requirements in the State?

Each state is required to compare the entry-level academic degree requirements stipulated by all State agencies that promulgate personnel standards applicable to professions and disciplines in which personnel provide early intervention services. If there is a difference between the requirements, the highest academic degree must be designated as the entry-level degree for early intervention practitioners.

In Maryland, the State Boards of Examiners and the State Board of Education promulgate personnel standards applicable to early intervention service providers. Currently, entry-level academic degree requirements are consistent between the two promulgating agencies.

Profession/Discipline	Highest Entry-Level Academic Degree in Discipline
Audiology	Master's, or equivalent
Medicine	Doctor of Medicine
Nursing	Degree or diploma from registered program
Nutrition/Dietetics	Bachelor's
Occupational Therapy	Bachelors
Orientation and Mobility Physical Therapy	* Bachelor's
Professional Counseling	Master's
Psychology (Clinical)	Doctoral
Psychology (School)	Masters
Social Work	Bachelor's
Special Education**	Bachelor's
Speech-Language Pathology	Master's or equivalent

*The State of Maryland currently does not promulgate professional standards for orientation and mobility specialists. Local jurisdictions, however, require that personnel employed as orientation and mobility specialists meet certification standards set by the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired.

**Special Education includes infant/ primary special education, education of the hearing impaired, and education of the visually impaired.

What are suitable qualifications?

Suitable qualifications refers to requirements for personnel employed by State, local, and private agencies who provide early intervention services to eligible children and their families in excess of 15% of their employment hours. Requirements include a minimum of 120 contact hours of documented pre-service and/or in-service training, as well as on-site consultation, in nine competency areas. Identified competency areas include cross-disciplinary topics that are considered essential to providing family-centered early intervention services.

What are the nine competency areas and the minimum contact hours required?

• Infant and toddler development (typical)	30
• Infant and toddler development (atypical)	15
• Infant and toddler assessment (instruments)	3
• Infant and toddler assessment (procedures)	12
• Family assessment (identification of resources, priorities, and concerns)	3
• Early intervention service options and strategies	45
• Family systems issues	6
• Team process	3
• Service coordination (case management)	3
	120

What is a contact hour?

A contact hour is the unit awarded to individuals for completing training activities, based on the following equivalents:

• 1 semester hour	15CH
• 2 approved inservice hours	1 CH
• 2 approved on-site consultation hours	1CH

Semester hours are earned through formal study at accredited post-secondary programs.

Approved in-service includes conferences, workshops, seminars, and other similar activities sponsored by national, state, and/or local professional organizations, State and local agencies, and other training initiatives.

Approved on-site consultation includes on-site training in specific competencies, through a written plan outlining goals and objectives. A maximum of sixty (60) contact hours may be earned through approved on-site consultation.

On-site consultation must be provided by an early intervention practitioner who currently meets personnel standards, has a minimum of three years professional experience in service delivery to the eligible population, and has current responsibilities for the eligible population as an administrator or service provider.

To whom do personnel standards apply?

Personnel standards apply to all practitioners providing early intervention services in professions or disciplines for which the State promulgates standards. Personnel who provide early intervention services to eligible children and their families 15% or less of their employment hours must meet the highest entry-level academic degree requirement for their discipline. Personnel who provide early intervention services to eligible children and their families in excess of 15% of their employment hours must also meet the suitable qualifications requirement.

Do personnel standards apply to service coordinators?

Personnel standards apply only to disciplines and professions for which the State promulgates standards. Since Maryland currently does not promulgate standards for service coordinators, individuals who provide service coordination are required to meet the qualifications specified in 34 CFR §303.34 and 34 CFR §303.118, which states that service coordinators must have demonstrated knowledge and understanding about:

- Infants and toddlers who are eligible under Part C of IDEA;
- Part C of IDEA and the regulations in 34 CFR; and
- The nature and scope of services available under the State's early intervention program, the system of payments for services in the State, and other pertinent information.

Service coordination that is to be reimbursed by Medical Assistance must be provided by individuals who meet the requirements specified in COMAR 10.09.40, Early Intervention Services Case Management.

To ensure that service coordinators meet required qualifications, they are included in the State and local Comprehensive Systems for Personnel Development.

Do personnel standards apply to individuals employed temporarily (i.e., in a substitute capacity or to ensure the provision of year-round services)?

Personnel who provide early intervention services on a temporary basis must meet highest entry-level academic degree requirements but are not required to meet suitable qualifications. However, individuals who repeatedly provide early intervention services on a temporary basis (e.g., each summer or during regular staff vacations) or who would like a permanent position are encouraged to participate in training activities that lead to meeting suitable qualifications.

When must these standards be met?

As of July 1, 1991, all personnel providing early intervention services to eligible children and their families were required to meet the highest entry-level academic degree requirements in the State that apply to the profession or discipline in which a person is providing early intervention services.

Personnel employed on or before October 1, 1994 who provide early intervention services to eligible children and their families in excess of 15% of employment hours must have met suitable qualifications by October 1, 1995.

Personnel employed after October 1, 1994 who provides early intervention services to eligible children and their families in excess of 15% of employment hours, but who do not meet suitable qualifications at the time of employment must do so **within one year from date of employment**. The local Infants and Toddlers Program will develop a training plan to be approved by MSDE/MITP to assure that appropriate professional

requirements are met within that time period.

What will happen if a person who is currently providing early intervention services in excess of 15% of their employment hours did not meet suitable qualifications by October 1, 1995?

The MSDE/MITP annually reviews the status of early intervention personnel who are required to meet suitable qualifications. Directors of local Infants and Toddlers Programs should notify MSDE/MITP of any personnel who have not met suitable qualifications so an appropriate training plan can be developed and implemented in a timely manner.

How does one verify that personnel standards are met?

Local Infants and Toddlers Program Directors are asked to maintain a list of all personnel providing early intervention services within the jurisdiction, identifying individuals by name, employing agency, profession or discipline, highest academic degree earned in that profession or discipline, and the approximate percentage of employment hours in which early intervention services are provided. They are also asked to verify that each provider meets the appropriate highest entry-level academic degree requirement and to indicate which individuals have met suitable qualifications, those that have not, and the competency areas needed. Local Program Directors are asked to submit this information annually with their Early Intervention Personnel Count report.

Personnel who provide early intervention services to eligible children and their families in excess of 15% of their employment hours must complete a Verification of Suitable Qualifications Form, which may be obtained from the local Infants and Toddlers Program Director. The director forwards completed forms to the MSDE/MITP for review by the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Coordinator, who will generate an individual status report. Applicants and local program directors should keep a copy of the application. When the suitable qualifications requirement is met, a Certificate of Suitable Qualifications Verification will be issued by mail directly to the applicant.

The Suitable Qualifications Coordinator provides periodic status reports for all personnel to the local program director. Status reports are also available upon request.

How is the Verification of Suitable Qualifications Form completed?

General descriptions of the nine competency areas, examples of course and in-service titles associated with each area, and a completed sample Verification of Suitable Qualifications Form are attached to each blank form to assist early intervention personnel in documenting pre-service and in-service training. When assigning courses and in-service topics to competency areas, applicants will need to determine what portion of courses or in-service trainings pertain to early intervention. Unless otherwise indicated on the application, general courses are assumed to cover a broader age-range than early intervention and will prorated when assigning contact hours. Additional assistance may be requested from the local Infants and Toddlers Program Director.

Pre-service training refers to formal study at accredited post-secondary programs that results in earning semester credit hours. One course may have content relevant to several competency areas. If so, credit hours may be divided among the competency areas. Copies of

transcripts from institutions of higher education that were attended may be useful in documenting pre-service training.

In-service training refers to continuing education and staff development activities that are not part of a formal course of study and typically result in earning continuing education units. In-service activities include conferences, workshops, seminars, and other training initiatives sponsored by national, state, and/or local professional organizations and agencies. Conference brochures, catalog descriptions, and workshop handouts and agendas may be helpful in deciding appropriate competency area designations.

On-site consultation refers to on-the-job training that addresses specific competency areas through a written plan of goals and objectives. A maximum of sixty (60) contact hours may be earned through approved on-site consultation, which must be provided by an early intervention practitioner who currently meets personnel standards **1** has a minimum of three years professional experience in service delivery to the eligible population, and has current responsibilities for the eligible population as an administrator or service provider.

After personnel standards have been met, what happens next?

Early intervention personnel who have met standards and received their Certificate of Suitable Qualifications Verification do not need to submit documentation of additional training. Since some professions and disciplines require continuing education for recertification or licensure, however, personnel are encouraged to retain training verification forms for their personal records.

How are contact hours obtained for in-service training?

The sponsoring organization, agency, or training initiative is requested to submit the agenda, outline, and/or training plan, the date(s) of the training, and the total program length in dock hours to the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Coordinator at the MSDE/MITP no later than two weeks prior to the training activity.

Upon receipt of the information, the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Coordinator determines the number of contact hours to be awarded/ as well as the competency area(s) to which the contact hours are to be designated. A Training Verification form is sent to the individual conducting the training activity for duplication in sufficient quantity for distribution to each participant. At the conclusion of the in-service, trainers are asked to verify attendance by signing each form in the designated space, and returning it to the participant.

How are contact hours obtained for pre-service or accredited semester hours?

Accredited post-secondary institutions may request the MSDE/MITP to review curricula relevant to the field of early childhood so that students will be informed about how specific coursework applies to meeting the suitable qualifications requirement. Information submitted to the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Coordinator should include course titles and syllabi, term dates, and academic credit hours.

Upon receipt of the information, the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Coordinator determines the number of contact hours to be awarded, as well as the

competency area(s) to which the contact hours are to be designated. Some institutions of higher education include this information in course descriptions.

A Training Verification form is sent to the instructor of each course for duplication in sufficient quantity for distribution to students. At the conclusion of the course, instructors are asked to verify completed forms by signing each form in the designated space, and returning it to the student.

How are contact hours obtained for on-site consultation?

In most instances, on-site consultation is arranged after review of a completed Verification of Suitable Qualifications form indicates that an individual needs additional contact hours in one or more competency areas in order to meet suitable qualifications within a particular time period. Personnel who want to schedule on-site consultation should request assistance from their Local Infants and Toddlers Program Director and the MSDE/MITP Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Coordinator to develop training plan and Training Verification form. When the training plan has been implemented, the consultant will verify successful completion by signing the Training Verification form in the designated space. The signed Training Verification form should be submitted to the Local Program Director.

Competency Area Descriptions

The following general descriptions of the nine competency areas are provided to assist individuals in completing the Verification of Suitable Qualifications form. Descriptions are intended as guides rather than strict standards. When including courses or in-service topics that include but are not limited to children's growth and development from birth to age three, only that portion of the course or in-service topic that is applicable to this age range should be recorded (e.g. that portion of a course in Child Development which applies to children birth to three). Courses or in-service topics that apply equally to all ages may be applied in their entirety (e.g. a course in communicating with families). Local Infants and Toddlers Program Directors may be contacted for technical assistance in assigning pre-service courses and in-service topics to specific competency areas.

***Infant and Toddler Development (Typical)**

Infant and toddler development (typical) refers to children's growth and development from conception to age three. Pre-service courses and in-service topics that include, but are not limited to, development in this age range is applicable and should be recorded. Examples of course titles or in-service topics that may be relevant to this competency area include:

- Human Growth and Development
- Embryology
- Introduction to Child Development
- Physical Development
 - Including topics such as developmental anatomy, reflex development, gross motor development, fine motor development, sensory-motor development, and development of auditory and visual skills
- Cognitive Development

- Including topics such as conceptual development, problem-solving, memory, and creativity in young children
- Social-Emotional Development
 - Including topics such as attachment, self-concept, sex roles, regression, peer relations, and moral development
- Communication Development
 - Including topics such as preverbal skills, language acquisition, phonological development, pragmatics of language
- Child Psychology

Infant and Toddler Development (Atypical)

Infant and toddler development (atypical) refers to children's growth and development, which is not within normal limits from conception to age three. Pre-service courses and in-service topics that include, but are not limited to atypical development in this age range are applicable and should be recorded. Examples of course titles or in-service topics include:

- Genetics: Hereditary Syndromes and Educational Implications
- Signs of Risk: Birth to Five Years
- High Risk/Disabling Medical Conditions
- Characteristics of Exceptional Children
- Language Disorders: Infancy through Early Childhood
- Cortical Visual Insufficiency and Retinopathy Associated with Prematurity
- Impact of Recurrent Otitis Media on Language Development in Infants and Toddlers
- Long-term Outcome of Extreme Prematurity and Low Birth weight

** Courses and in-service topics that address both typical and atypical aspects of infant and toddler development may be recorded in both sections, dividing the contact hours between the two.*

****Infant and Toddler Assessment (Instruments)**

Infant and Toddler Assessment (Instruments) refer to specific measures used to identify developmental status, as well as developmental strengths and needs in young children. Examples of relevant course titles or in-service topics include:

- Assessment of Young Children with Special Needs
- Multidisciplinary Evaluation and Assessment: Tools of the Trade
- Play-Based Assessment Instruments
- Screening Tools for Identifying Children with Sensory Integration Problems
- Selection and Fitting of Hearing Aids

****Infant and Toddler Assessment (Procedures)**

Infant and Toddler Assessment (procedures) refer to the administration and interpretation of assessment instruments, as well as the use of observation and clinical opinion regarding the development of young children. Examples of relevant course titles or in-service topics include:

- Current Trends in Assessment of Infants and Toddlers
- Child Outcomes Summary (COS)
- Diagnostic Procedures
- Trouble-Shooting in Evaluations
- Transdisciplinary Play-Based Assessment
- Assessment Practicum
- Evaluation and Assessment Report Writing

*** Courses and in-service topics that address both assessment instruments and procedures may be recorded in both sections, dividing the contact hours between the two.*

Family-Directed Assessment

Family-Directed Assessment refers to the process by which families identify their resources, concerns, and priorities, as well as the supports and services that are necessary to enhance the family's capacity to meet the developmental needs of their infant or toddler with a disability. Examples of relevant course titles or in-service topics include:

- Essential Elements of a Family-Directed Assessment- What are they?
- Identifying Family Resources, Concerns, and Priorities within the IFSP Process
- The Role of the Family on the Evaluation Team
- Family-centered Communication Skills
- Interview Strategies that Promote Parent-Professional Partnerships

Family Systems Issues

Family Systems Issues refers to the characteristics, functions, culture, and life cycle aspects of families that can affect how families and professionals interact within the early intervention process. Examples of relevant course titles or in-service topics include:

- Diversity: Face-to-Face with Families
- Family-Professional Partnerships
- Developmental Stages of Families
- Family Functions that Affect Early Intervention Service Planning
- Adolescent Parents

Early Intervention Service Options and Strategies

Early Intervention Service Options and Strategies refer to various aspects of service delivery, including curricula, intervention methods, and current best practices.

- Curriculum for Children with Special Needs at the Infant/Preschool Level
- Home-Based Intervention: Embedding Outcomes into Play and Daily Routines
- Pervasive Developmental Disabilities: Current Approaches
- Treatment Issues in Cerebral Palsy
- Practicum with Young Children with Disabilities
- Augmentative Communication Strategies for Infants and Toddlers with Special Needs
- Underutilized Early Intervention Services

Team Process

Team process refers to the dynamics of a group of individuals working together for a specific reason and the means by which they function. Examples of relevant course titles or in-service topics include:

- Collaboration Strategies: New Techniques for Sharing Information with Families and Professionals
- Working Together: Effective Strategies for Team Building
- Getting Teams Unstuck
- Team Dynamics: What Defines a Team, What are the Issues that Drive a Team, and How is the Issues Relevant to Early Intervention Practices?
- Attitudes and Responsibilities of Team Members
- Team Building: Developing Effective Team Behaviors

Service Coordination (Case Management)

Service Coordination or case management refers to the activities carried out by an individual designated to assist and enable an eligible child and the child's family to receive the rights, procedural safeguards, and services that are authorized to be provided under the State's system of early intervention services. Examples of relevant course titles or in-service topics include:

- Roles and Responsibilities of the Service Coordinator in the IFSP Process
- Models of Service Coordination for Drug-Exposed and HIV-Affected Infants and Toddlers and Their Families
- How to Assist Families to Obtain SSI Benefits for Their Children
- Documentation for Medical Assistance Case Management
- What to Do When- Transition Planning and Other IFSP Issues
- Identifying and Utilizing Community Resources