

IX. PERSONNEL QUALIFICATIONS

A. POLICIES

1. The State Lead Agency (DMHMRSAS) ensures that Virginia's Personnel Standards include policies and procedures relating to the establishment and maintenance of qualifications to ensure that personnel necessary to carry out Part C are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained.
  - a. "Appropriate professional requirements in Virginia" means entry-level requirements that:
    - (1) Are based on the highest requirement in Virginia applicable to the profession or discipline in which a person provides early intervention supports and services; and
    - (2) Establish suitable qualifications for personnel providing early intervention supports and services under Part C to eligible children and their families who are served by State, local and private agencies. (34 CFR 303.361(a)(1))
    - (3) "Highest requirements in the State applicable to a specific profession or discipline" means the highest entry-level academic degree needed for any State approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to that profession or discipline. (34 CFR 303.361 (a)(2))
  - b. "Profession" or "discipline" as discussed below, means a specific occupational category that:
    - (1) Provides early intervention supports and services to eligible children under Part C and their families;
    - (2) Has been established or designated by the Commonwealth of Virginia; and
    - (3) Has a required scope of responsibilities and degree of supervision. (34 CFR 303.361(a)(3))
  - c. "State-approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration or other comparable requirements" means the requirement that the Virginia legislature has enacted or authorized a state agency to promulgate through rules to establish the entry-level qualifications for employment in a specific profession or discipline in Virginia. (34 CFR 303.361(a)(4))
  - d. In identifying the "highest requirements in the State" for purposes of this section, the requirements of all Virginia statutes and the rules of all State agencies applicable to serving children eligible under Part C and their families have been considered. (34 CFR 303.361(e))
  - e. Virginia allows paraprofessionals and assistants who are appropriately trained and supervised, in accordance with State law, regulations, or written policy, to assist in the provision of early intervention supports and services to eligible children under Part C. (34 CFR 303.361(f))
2. In implementing this section, Virginia has adopted procedures that include making ongoing good-faith efforts to recruit and hire appropriately and adequately trained personnel to provide early intervention supports and services to eligible children, including, in a geographic area of the State where there is a shortage of personnel that meet these qualifications, the most qualified individuals available who are making satisfactory progress toward completing applicable course work necessary to meet the standards described in paragraph (b)(2) of this section. (34 CFR 303.361(g))

B. PROCEDURES

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<#>All personnel serving children with disabilities and meeting a highest standard through licensure, certification, registration, or other comparable requirement will participate in the self-assessment of Indicators of Recommended Practice in accordance with steps outlined below under B (Procedures) # 3. Personnel must participate in two (2) training activities each year based on individual need.¶

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1. All personnel who provide Part C entitled supports and services to children with disabilities in Virginia must meet one of the highest requirements, according to the Part C Personnel Qualifications Table.

**PART C PERSONNEL QUALIFICATIONS TABLE**

NOTE: The disciplines specified in the federal regulations are underlined.

<u>DISCIPLINE OR PROFESSION</u>	<u>HIGHEST REQUIREMENT</u>
a. <u>Audiologist</u>	Master's plus licensure in Audiology by the Board of Audiology and Speech Pathology.
b. Certified Therapeutic Recreation Therapist	Bachelor's plus certification from the National Council on Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC).
c. Counselor	
• Licensed Professional Counselor	Master's and licensure by Board of Professional Counselors.
• School Counselor	Master's plus licensure as a school counselor from the Virginia Department of Education.
d. <u>Early Childhood Special Educator</u> (termed Special Educator in federal regulations)	Bachelor's plus licensure in special education early childhood (birth-5) from the Virginia Department of Education.
e. Educator	Bachelor's plus licensure early/primary education pre-K-3 from the Virginia Department of Education.  Bachelor's plus licensure in Work and Family Studies from the Virginia Department of Education.  Technical Professional License in Work and Family Studies from the Virginia Department of Education.
f. <u>Early Intervention Assistant*</u>	Approval of qualifications from the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services.
g. Educational Interpreter	Certificate from Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf of Virginia, Quality Assurance Screening Level III.
h. Educator of the Hearing Impaired	Bachelor's plus licensure in hearing impairment from the Virginia Department of Education.
i. Educator of the Visually Impaired	Bachelor's plus licensure in visual impairment from the Virginia Department of Education.

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<#>A person may, according to 34 CFR 303.361(g), be employed to serve children with disabilities, but because of a shortage of personnel that meet the qualifications of the Part C Personnel Standards Table, including geographic areas of the State where there is a shortage of personnel, be hired without, at time of hiring, meeting one of the standards. If the individual is the most qualified applicant available and is making satisfactory progress toward completing applicable course work necessary to meet one of the highest standards within three (3) years, then that individual may be employed as an early intervention service provider.¶

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<#>For individuals who are hired and who are working to meet a highest standard as described in 34 CFR 303.361(g), the Lead Agency ensures that the following steps are in place to document existing shortages and steps the individual is taking to complete the necessary work within three (3) years:¶

<#>Areas of personnel shortage by discipline and by geographic region are identified by personnel information obtained by Part C and Part B; { ... [2]

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- j. Family and Consumer Science Professional – only if certification is held and the individual was employed in Virginia’s Part C system prior to July 1, 2007 Bachelor’s plus certification through the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences.
- k. Family Therapist (Marriage and Family Therapist) Marriage and family therapy license by the Board of Professional Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists, and Substance Abuse Professionals.
- l. Music Therapist Bachelor’s degree plus certification by the Certification Board for Music Therapists
- m. Nurse
  - Registered Nurse R.N. plus licensure by the Board of Nursing.
  - Nurse Practitioner R.N. plus licensure by the Board of Nursing plus completion of an approved or accredited program to prepare nurse practitioners, and is licensed as a nurse practitioner by the Boards of Nursing and Medicine.
- n. Occupational Therapist Bachelor's plus certification by the Board of Medicine as Registered Occupational Therapist.
- o. Occupational Therapy Assistant Degree from a two-year accredited program plus pass an examination by the National Occupational Therapy Certification Board.
- p. Orientation and Mobility Specialist Bachelor's plus certificate from the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of Blind and Visually Impaired.
- q. Physical Therapist Bachelor's plus licensure by the Board of Medicine.
- r. Physical Therapy Assistant Two year college-level degree plus licensure by the Board of Medicine.
- s. Physician Doctor of Medicine plus licensure by the Board of Medicine.
- t. Psychologist
  - Clinical Psychologist Doctorate with licensure by the Board of Psychology.
  - School Psychologist Masters in school psychology plus licensure by the Board of Psychology or licensure by the Virginia Department of Education.
  - Applied Psychologist Doctorate in psychology plus licensure by the Board of

**Deleted:** Nutritionist  
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Psychology.

u. Registered Dietician

Bachelor's plus Registered Dietitian by the Commission on Dietetic Registration, American Dietetic Association.

v. Service Coordinator

Approval of qualifications from the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services

w. Social Worker

- Licensed Social Worker

Bachelor's plus licensure by the Board of Social Work; entitles one to practice case management and supportive services.

- Licensed Clinical Social Worker

Master's plus licensure by the Board of Social Work; entitles one to practice independently.

- School Social Worker

Master's plus licensure as school social worker by the Virginia Department of Education; enables one to practice as a social worker within local school divisions.

- Visiting Teacher

Master's plus licensure as a visiting teacher by the Virginia Department of Education.

x. Speech-Language Pathologist

Master's plus licensure in Speech-Language Pathology by the Board of Audiology and Speech Pathology or licensure with an endorsement in Speech-Language Disorders by the Virginia Board of Education.

y. Vision Specialist

- Educator of the Visually Impaired

Bachelor's plus licensure in visual impairment from the Virginia Department of Education.

- Ophthalmologist

Doctor of Medicine plus licensure by the Board of Medicine

- Optometrist

Doctor of Optometry plus licensure by the Board of Optometry

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**\* Early Intervention Assistants**

- The "Early Intervention Assistant" is a qualified provider of paraprofessional status who is appropriately trained and supervised, and who has met the recognized competencies and requirements, having the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to be an early intervention provider.
  - o The responsibilities of an Early Intervention Assistant include the following:
    - Participating in locating, screening, identifying, and referring infants and toddlers for multidisciplinary evaluation and assessment to determine those who are eligible for IDEA, Part C supports and services.

- Presenting and discussing information with the team, including the family, in non-technical language.
- Implementing, in collaboration with the multidisciplinary team, integrated IFSP outcomes within natural environments.
- Working with families and other caregivers in the child's natural environments through modeling, coaching and teaching to promote skill development for participation in everyday routines and activities.
- Identifying, with the family, progress toward meeting IFSP outcomes and goals, through ongoing assessment.
- o The scope of responsibilities excludes the following duties:
  - Determination of initial and continuing eligibility of a child for Part C early intervention supports and services
  - Determination of entitled supports and services under Part C [e.g., initiating new treatment or altering Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs)].
- 2. To ensure that Virginia has adequately trained personnel, there are necessary skills and knowledge that all providers of Part C entitled supports and services must have to serve the needs of children and families in the early intervention system. These skills and knowledge are dependent upon the job duties for which the providers are responsible.

a. All Part C service providers in Virginia must have the following Core Knowledge and Skills:

- (1) Part C Knowledge
  - (a) Basic knowledge of IDEA, Part C
  - (b) Knowledge of eligibility determination
  - (c) Basic knowledge of early intervention process from referral to transition
  - (d) Basic knowledge of Individualized Family Service Plans
  - (e) Understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the service coordinator
- (2) Knowledge of Family Centered Practice
  - (a) Basic knowledge of Federal natural environment requirements
  - (b) Basic understanding of the family's role in early intervention
  - (c) Understanding of strategies that encourage family participation and self-advocacy
  - (d) Understanding of strategies to incorporate learning opportunities in daily activities and routines
- (3) Effective Communication/Collaboration Skills
  - (a) Communicating effectively
  - (b) Working as a member of a team
  - (c) Understanding the collaborative approach to early intervention service delivery
  - (d) Accurately completing necessary paperwork related to Part C service provision
  - (e) Seeking supervision and/or mentoring
- (4) Cultural Competence
  - (a) Working well with families from diverse backgrounds
  - (b) Awareness of own culture
- (5) Knowledge of Financial/Family Cost Participation Requirements
  - (a) Basic knowledge of Virginia's system of payments, including Family Cost

Participation policies and proceduresb. Service Coordinators in Virginia must have all of the Core Knowledge and Skills identified in the Service Provider category plus the following:

- (1) Part C Knowledge
  - (a) Comprehensive knowledge of IDEA, Part C
  - (b) Comprehensive knowledge of early intervention process from referral to transition
  - (c) Comprehensive knowledge of Individualized Family Service Plans
  - (d) Ability to explain all required Part C paperwork, including Procedural Safeguards and Family Rights
- (2) Knowledge of Family Centered Practices
  - (a) Comprehensive understanding of natural environments and natural learning opportunities
  - (b) Comprehensive understanding of family systems/dynamics
  - (c) Ability to encourage family participation and self-advocacy
- (3) Effective Communication/Collaboration Skills
  - (a) Listening effectively
  - (b) Communicating information and ideas clearly
  - (c) Knowledge of available community resources
  - (d) Linking families with needed resources
  - (e) Coordinating the team of early intervention service providers
- (4) Cultural Competence
  - (a) Knowledge of cultural groups present in the community
- (5) Knowledge of Financial/Family Cost Participation Requirements
  - (a) Comprehensive knowledge of Virginia's system of payments, including Family Cost Participation policies and procedures
  - (b) Completing all required Family Cost Participation paperwork
  - (c) Knowledge of available financial resources and methods to access these resources

c. Early Intervention Assistants in Virginia must have all of the Core Knowledge and Skills identified in the Service Provider category plus the following:

- (1) Part C Knowledge
  - (a) Thorough knowledge of early intervention process from referral to transition
  - (b) Comprehensive knowledge of Individualized Family Service Plans
- (2) Knowledge of Family Centered Practices
  - (a) Comprehensive understanding of natural environments and natural learning opportunities
  - (b) Comprehensive understanding of family systems/dynamics
  - (c) Ability to encourage family participation and self-advocacy
- (3) Effective Communication/Collaboration Skills
  - (a) Listening effectively

- (b) Communicating information and ideas clearly
  - (4) Cultural Competence
    - (a) Knowledge of cultural groups present in the community
  - (5) Knowledge of Child Development
    - (a) Basic knowledge of typical child development from birth age three
    - (b) Knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices
    - (c) Knowledge of age-appropriate intervention and learning
    - (d) Teaching and modeling skills for adults with different learning styles
  - (6) Knowledge of Disabilities
    - (a) Basic knowledge of disabilities
    - (b) Knowledge of effective teaching strategies
    - (c) Awareness of learning styles related to disabilities
3. Virginia has developed the following mandatory mechanisms to meet personnel qualifications related to Part C early intervention:
- a. All Part C Service Providers in Virginia are required to:
    - (1) Complete the Orientation to Part C module, passing the competency test with 80% accuracy within two (2) months of hire. For persons providing early intervention supports and services in Virginia's Part C system as of July 1, 2007, the Orientation to Part C module must be completed by December 31, 2007.
    - (2) Attend the entire Virginia Early Intervention Conference, or complete a minimum of ten (10) hours of professional development related to Part C early intervention, annually.
  - b. Service Coordinators are required to:
    - (1) Complete the Orientation to Part C module passing the competency test with 80% accuracy within two (2) months of date of hire. For persons providing early intervention supports and services in Virginia's Part C system as of July 1, 2007, the Orientation to Part C module must be completed by December 31, 2007.
    - (2) Complete Kaleidoscope: New Perspectives in Service Coordination, Level I within 6 months of hire or as soon as feasible, given scheduled location and date.
    - (3) Complete Kaleidoscope: New Perspectives in Service Coordination, Level II as soon as feasible after completion of Level I given scheduled location and date.
    - (4) Attend the entire Virginia Early Intervention Conference, or complete a minimum of ten (10) hours of professional development related to Part C early intervention, annually.
  - c. Early Intervention Assistants are required to:
    - (1) Complete the Orientation to Part C module, passing the competency test with 80% accuracy within two (2) months of date of hire.
    - (2) Complete Kaleidoscope: New Perspectives in Service Coordination, Level I within 6 months of hire or as soon as feasible, given scheduled location and date.
    - (3) Complete the Child Development module within 9 months of hire
    - (4) Complete the Knowledge of Developmental Delays and Disabilities in Early

- Intervention module within 9 months of hire
- (5) Attend the entire Virginia Early Intervention Conference, or complete a minimum of ten (10) hours of professional development related to Part C early intervention, annually.
4. The local lead agency is responsible for ensuring that all providers of early intervention supports and services maintain appropriate documentation of training and dates of training to meet the above requirements.
5. Virginia has developed the following timelines to meet the personnel requirements related to Part C early intervention:
- a. A person who is employed as a “Service Coordinator”, as identified on the Part C Personnel Qualifications Table, may be employed as a “Service Coordinator” under provisional status, for a period of up to twelve (12) months, while completing the requirements and receipt of approval of qualification by the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services.
- b. A person who is employed as an “Early Intervention Assistant (EIA)”, as identified on the Part C Personnel Qualifications Table, may be employed as an “Early Intervention Assistant” under provisional status, for a period of up to eighteen (18) months, while completing the requirements and receipt of approval of qualification by the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services.
6. A person may, according to 34 CFR 303.361(g), be employed to serve children with disabilities, but because of a shortage of personnel that meet the requirements of the Part C Personnel Qualifications Table, including geographic areas of the State where there is a shortage of personnel, be hired without, at time of hiring, meeting one of the qualifications. If the individual is the most qualified applicant available and is making satisfactory progress toward completing applicable course work necessary to meet one of the highest requirements, then that individual may be employed as an early intervention service provider.



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The Lead Agency ensures that the following standards have been *established and will be maintained to ensure that personnel necessary to carry out the purposes of Part C are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained*. These standards are consistent with existing Virginia *approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which a person is providing early intervention services*. *Timelines for retraining or hiring personnel that meet Virginia's requirements* are also noted below. (34 CFR 303.361(b)-(c))

All personnel serving children with disabilities and meeting a highest standard through licensure, certification, registration, or other comparable requirement will participate in the self-assessment of Indicators of Recommended Practice in accordance with steps outlined below under B (Procedures) # 3. Personnel must participate in two (2) training activities each year based on individual need.

The Lead Agency ensures that personnel not licensed, certified, registered, or meeting other comparable requirements who were employed to provide early intervention services prior to September 1993 are classified as Early Intervention Generalists and must pursue discipline-specific training necessary for credentialing within one of the disciplines identified on the listing of highest standards requirements. The Early Intervention Generalist discipline is a measure that will only be in place until the year 2002.

**A person who is employed as an “early intervention assistant”, as identified on the Part C Personnel Standards Table, may be employed as an “early intervention assistant” under provisional status, for a period of up to eighteen (18) months, while completing the application process to seek approval of his or her qualifications by the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services. The “early intervention assistant” is a qualified provider of paraprofessional status who is appropriately trained and supervised, and who has met the recognized competencies, having the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to be an early intervention provider. The “early intervention assistant” is described further in Appendix R.**

**A person may, according to 34 CFR 303.361(g), be employed to serve children with disabilities, but because of a shortage of personnel that meet the qualifications of the Part C Personnel Standards Table, including geographic areas of the State where there is a shortage of personnel, be hired without, at time of hiring, meeting one of the standards. If the individual is the most qualified applicant available and is making satisfactory progress toward completing applicable course work necessary to meet one of the highest standards within three (3) years, then that individual may be employed as an early intervention service provider.**

**For individuals who are hired and who are working to meet a highest standard as described in 34 CFR 303.361(g), the Lead Agency ensures that the following steps are in place to document existing shortages and steps the individual is taking to complete the necessary work within three (3) years:**

Areas of personnel shortage by discipline and by geographic region are identified by personnel information obtained by Part C and Part B; and The local interagency coordinating council (LICCC) will report to the Lead Agency the hiring of the individual at the local level who does not meet a highest standard but who will complete necessary course work to meet one of the standards within three (3) years. On a form supplied by the Lead Agency, the LICCC, in conjunction with the individual's employer, identifies the steps the individual will follow to complete necessary course work within three (3) years. The employer will also describe the steps used in the hiring process to determine that the individual hired was the most qualified person available.

The Part C Personnel Standards Table identifies the "early intervention generalist", which is the personnel category for persons not licensed, certified, registered, or meeting other comparable requirements, and who were employed to provide early intervention services prior to September 1993. Persons classified as Early Intervention Generalists must pursue discipline-specific training necessary to meet one of the highest standards and complete such training by July 1, 2002.

*In identifying the "highest requirements in Virginia", requirements of all state statutes and rules of all state agencies applicable to serving children/families were considered.* Virginia embarked on several personnel studies to determine the status of personnel involved in early intervention programs. A study of personnel standards was conducted by the Commonwealth Institute for Child and Family Studies, Virginia Treatment Center for Children. The document "Personnel Standards for Early Intervention Teams under P.L. 99-457: A Survey of the Commonwealth of Virginia" (August 1989) was prepared for the VICC Personnel Standards Task Force. (34 CFR 303.361)(e)

*The information on the personnel standards for each early intervention professional or discipline listed above is maintained on file in the Lead Agency and is available to the public.* (34 CFR 303.361(d)(2))

The following steps are being taken to bring personnel in Virginia into compliance with the Indicators of Recommended Practice:

The Lead Agency, with the VICC Personnel Training and Development Committee, utilizes a mechanism for documenting participation in the self-assessment of the Indicators of Recommended Practice by personnel providing early intervention services under Part C. Local Interagency Coordinating Councils fully implement policies and procedures to determine mechanisms for obtaining participation in the self-assessment of the Indicators of Recommended Practice by personnel providing early intervention services under Part C. This documentation is completed annually.

Several vehicles exist for obtaining the interdisciplinary child/family competencies. These include:

Completion of course work and supervised experience in an appropriate preservice program which provides the child/family core competencies.  
Completion of coordinated inservice training courses and supervised

**experiences.**

**Completion of a combination of inservice and field experiences provided by institutions of higher education or inservice/technical assistance providers.**

**The Lead Agency annually develops, with advice and assistance from the VICC Personnel Training and Development Committee, a plan to assist all personnel in meeting a highest standard. The plan includes strategies for inservice trainings on a regional and local basis, coordination with institutions of higher education to expand or adapt preservice interdisciplinary training in early intervention competencies, and for offering tuition assistance to personnel pursuing a recognized highest standard.**

**The Lead Agency continues to work closely with the Joint Legislative Subcommittee Studying Early Intervention for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities concerning personnel shortages issues in Virginia. Prioritizing and implementing feasible strategies to address personnel shortages is emphasized.**

**The following procedures will be used annually to notify public agencies and/or other participating agencies/providers and personnel of steps being taken to bring personnel into compliance with the highest standard requirements:**  
**Interagency memoranda to appropriate State agency executives;**  
**Notification through the State Council on Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV) to Institutions of Higher Education;**  
**Memoranda through local interagency coordinating councils to appropriate service agencies; and**  
**Presentations by the Lead Agency to state-level professional organizations.**