

**EARLY INTERVENTION ASSISTANT:
RESPONSIBILITIES, SUPERVISION AND COMPETENCIES**

A. Responsibilities

An Early Intervention Assistant is permitted to perform all early intervention responsibilities within his or her capability and training, as demonstrated by performance of the relevant competencies for an early intervention assistant (which are identified at the end of this document), and as directed by his or her supervisor.

1. The scope of responsibilities *excludes* the following duties:
 - a. Determination of initial eligibility of a child for early intervention services;
 - b. Determination of continuing eligibility; and
 - c. Determination of entitled services under Part C [e.g., initiating new treatment or altering Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs)].
2. The responsibilities of an Early Intervention Assistant *include* the following:
 - a. Participating in locating, screening, identifying, and referring infants and toddlers for multi-disciplinary evaluation and assessment to determine those who are eligible for IDEA, Part C services.
 - b. Presenting and discussing information with the team, including the family, in non-technical language.
 - c. Participating in the implementation of IFSPs, including ongoing assessments.
 - d. Providing activities that promote the child's acquisition of skills in a variety of developmental areas.
 - e. Implementing, in collaboration with the multidisciplinary team, integrated IFSP outcomes within natural environments.
 - f. Working with families and support persons in the child's natural environment to promote the skill development of the child in implementation of the IFSP.
 - g. Identifying, with the family, progress toward meeting IFSP outcomes and goals, through ongoing assessments.
3. Evaluation and assessment are terms defined in Virginia's Policies and Procedures, and defined by federal regulations in IDEA, Part C, as follows:
 - a. Evaluation: The procedures used by appropriate qualified personnel to determine a child's initial and continuing eligibility under this part, consistent with the definition of "infants and

toddlers with disabilities” for participation in early intervention services including determining the status of the child in each of the developmental areas of cognitive, physical, including vision and hearing, communication, social/emotional, adaptive development.

(34CFR 303.322 (b)(1))

- b. Assessment: The ongoing procedures used by appropriate qualified personnel throughout the period of a child's eligibility under Part C for early intervention services to identify:
 - i. the child's unique strengths and needs;
 - ii. resources, priorities and concerns for the family and the supports and services necessary to enhance the family's capacity to meet the developmental needs of the infant or toddler with a disability (34 CFR 303.322 (b)(2)(i-iii)); and
 - iii. the nature and extent of early intervention services that are needed to meet those needs.

B. Supervision

- 1. Supervision of an Early Intervention Assistant is performed by a qualified professional who meets one of the highest standards, as identified in Component IX (Personnel Standards) of Virginia’s Policies and Procedures for Part C of IDEA, excluding the disciplines of physical therapy assistant, occupational therapy assistant, and educational interpreter.
- 2. Direction by the supervisor is interpreted as follows:
 - a. The supervisor conducts supervisory activities related to the responsibilities described above. Supervision includes the following:
 - i. regularly-scheduled contact;
 - ii. review of written plans and reports; and
 - iii. the identification and promotion of activities for professional growth and development.
 - b. The supervisor provides opportunities for an interactive dialogue, reflective interaction, and mutual problem solving.

C. Competencies

The competency areas and competency statements for an Early Intervention Assistant are as follows.

- 1. Competency Area 1: Understanding and Communicating Virginia Policies and Procedures
 - a. Explain the objectives of Part C of IDEA early intervention for infants and toddlers with disabilities.
 - b. Identify characteristics of the Part C early intervention system in Virginia such as:
 - i. name of Lead Agency;
 - ii. system of local interagency coordinating councils (LICCs); and
 - iii. variety of team roles.

- c. Define the roles of service providers, according to Part C of IDEA (e.g., consultants to the family, roles and responsibilities of service coordinator, transition planning).
 - d. Explain procedures that guarantee family rights and confidentiality.
 - e. Identify ways that a child and family enter the local system (e.g., central point of entry).
 - f. Explain the basic components of Virginia's definition of developmental delay and eligibility for services
 - g. Explain the responsibility of the mandated reporter for suspected child abuse or neglect.
2. Competency Area 2: Developing Collaborative and Supportive Relationships with Families
- a. Discuss the importance and value of building and maintaining a rapport/trust relationship with a family.
 - b. Recognize that a family can and does have a variety of roles in the early intervention system and those roles change over time.
 - c. Discuss the importance of sharing complete and unbiased information with a family.
 - d. Listen effectively and recognize a family's concerns, priorities and resources.
 - e. Use language that is respectful, emphasizes capabilities, and is non-discriminatory.
 - f. Communicate information and ideas clearly with a family, orally and in writing, with respect for a family's culture, socioeconomic and educational level, and in the family's preferred mode of communication.
 - g. Demonstrate the ability to work with families from diverse backgrounds, recognizing that culture impacts the family structure and family membership.
3. Competency Area 3: Functioning as a Team
- a. Describe the importance of an integrated and coordinated community team approach.
 - b. Demonstrate ethical behavior.
 - c. Communicate openly, respecting cultural and individual differences.
 - d. Share expertise and problem solve as an equal team member.
 - e. Seek supervisory support (e.g., clarify one's own emotional reactions to job related occurrences such as child illness or death, problematic interactions with team members, cultural differences).

4. Competency Area 4: Understanding Child Development and Health
 - a. Describe basic normal growth and development including range and variability in the areas of:
 - i. physical development including vision and hearing;
 - ii. communication;
 - iii. social/emotional;
 - iv. cognition; and
 - v. adaptive.
 - b. Identify some common exceptionalities/disabilities (e.g., Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome, prematurity, etc.)
 - c. Use and discuss basic health and safety issues that lead to prevention or illness or accident, including universal precautions.
 - d. Recognize how child development and family interaction are affected by the family system, culture, and socioeconomic influences.
5. Competency Area 5: Determining Eligibility and the Infant and Toddler's Developmental Needs
 - a. Discuss the difference between screening, evaluation and assessment.
 - b. Identify strategies (e.g., discussion, parent questionnaires, observations) to gather information about a child with the family.
 - c. Use multiple and continuous opportunities to assess and monitor a child's development.
6. Competency Area 6: Developing and Revising the IFSP with the Family
 - a. Discuss the purpose and basic characteristics of the Individualized Family Service Plan.
 - b. Identify appropriate activities for an infant or toddler.
 - c. Identify learning opportunities that can be used throughout a child's daily routine in the natural environment.
7. Competency Area 7: Implementing the IFSP with the Family
 - a. Recognize when another team member's expertise is needed to help.
 - b. Identify ways of including family members and/or primary care givers in the implementation of activities as specified on the Individualized Family Service Plan.
 - c. Respond appropriately to an infant's or toddler's behavioral cues

- d. Interpret a child's play and behavior in relation to developmental strengths and needs in a way that is meaningful to a family.

INTRODUCTION TO THE EARLY INTERVENTION ASSISTANT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The Early Intervention Assistant (EIA) position is a standard of practice specified in Component IX (Personnel Standards) of Virginia's Policies and Procedures for Part C (Early Intervention with Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which ensures that individuals possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to provide early intervention services in accordance with the responsibilities defined in the preceding section, "Early Intervention Assistant: Responsibilities, Supervision, and Competencies". An application process for potential EIAs assures that early intervention providers are "fully and appropriately qualified to provide early intervention services" as stated in the Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (June 4, 1997) [20 USC 1435 § 635(a)(8)(B)]. Employing persons who meet the Early Intervention Assistant competencies assists Virginia in addressing personnel shortages, the lack of diversity in the work force for persons working with infants and toddlers, and the inconsistency of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of early intervention personnel employed across the Commonwealth in assistant positions.

The following are answers to some frequently asked questions related to the early intervention assistant occupational category.

Why was the Early Intervention Assistant position developed?

The Early Intervention Assistant position was developed to ensure that persons employed as Early Intervention Assistants have knowledge, skills, and abilities to carry out responsibilities in providing early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities, and that such individuals have obtained state approval of their qualifications. The Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act allow the use of paraprofessionals who are "appropriately trained and supervised, in accordance with State law, regulations, or written policy, to assist in the provision of early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities." 20 USC 1435 § 635(a)(9)(B).

In Virginia, after the year 2002, all personnel working as early intervention providers must meet qualified personnel standards. Virginia Policies and Procedures must include, according to the IDEA, "the establishment and maintenance of standards which are consistent with any State-approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements which apply to the area in which such personnel are providing early intervention services." 20 USC 1435 § 635(a)(9)(A).

Virginia's Policies and Procedures, Component IX, Personnel Highest Standards, recognize the following as providers of entitled early intervention services:

- Audiologist
- Certified Therapeutic Recreation Therapist
- Licensed Professional Counselor
- School Counselor
- Early Childhood Educator
- Early Childhood Special Educator

- Early Intervention Generalist (see reference to early intervention generalist below)*
- Educational Interpreter
- Educator of Hearing Impaired
- Educator of Visually Impaired
- Registered Nurse
- Nurse practitioner
- Nutritionist
- Occupational Therapist
- Occupational Therapy Assistant
- Orientation and Mobility Specialist
- Physical Therapist
- Physical Therapy Assistant
- Physician
- Clinical Psychologist
- Psychologist
- School Psychologist
- Social Worker
- Registered Social Worker
- Clinical Social Worker
- School Social Worker
- Visiting Teacher
- Speech-Language Pathologist.

* The aforementioned Early Intervention Generalist category is a temporary, emergency measure which allows persons employed in Virginia's Early Intervention system prior to September 1993, who do not meet another highest standard, to continue their employment until the year 2002. The new EIA category allows individuals currently practicing as Early Intervention Generalists to complete the application process, and upon approval of their qualifications, to be fully recognized providers of early intervention services. Persons who seek and are approved to work in the EIA paraprofessional role have a recognized highest standard.

Why is the Early Intervention Assistant position important?

The Early Intervention Assistant is an entry-level position, and the individual holding the position is recognized by the state as having the required experience and skills to work with infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. This position allows for the recruitment and retention of individuals who do not meet one of the currently existing highest standards (listed above), but who possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform in the role of an Early Intervention Assistant (see "Early Intervention Assistant: Responsibilities, Supervision, and Competencies"). The development of the Early Intervention Assistant position is one strategy that will create opportunities for employment of family members, individuals from diverse backgrounds, and perhaps those persons who are moving from welfare to work. The Early Intervention Assistant position allows persons to gain entry into the field of early intervention without possessing a baccalaureate or master's degree.

What kind of responsibilities will the Early Intervention Assistant have?

The Early Intervention Assistant is a member of the service delivery team; however, when determining eligibility and developing the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), the EIA may not be considered one of the two or more multidisciplinary team members, required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The responsibilities of the EIA as a member of the service delivery team, which includes the family, are as follows:

- 1) participating in locating, screening, identifying, and referring infants and toddlers for multi-disciplinary evaluation and assessment to determine those who are eligible for IDEA, Part C services;
- 2) presenting and discussing information with the team, including the family, in non-technical language;
- 3) participating in the implementation of IFSPs, including ongoing assessments;
- 4) providing activities that promote the child's acquisition of skills in a variety of developmental areas;
- 5) implementing, in collaboration with the multidisciplinary team, integrated IFSP outcomes within natural environments;
- 6) working with families and support persons in the child's natural environment to promote the skill development of the child in implementation of the IFSP; and
- 7) identifying, with the family, progress toward meeting IFSP outcomes and goals, through ongoing assessments.

An Early Intervention Assistant may not perform the following duties:

- 1) determination of initial eligibility of a child for early intervention services;
- 2) determination of continuing eligibility; and
- 3) determination of entitled services under Part C, e.g., initiating new treatment or altering Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs).

The EIA may also perform the duties of a service coordinator, if the person has received appropriate training in the responsibilities of service coordination, and has the necessary knowledge and skills. The competencies for a service coordinator are identified in Virginia Policies and Procedures, Component VII, Individualized Family Service Plans, as follows:

The Lead Agency ensures that service coordinators are qualified employees including either professionals or paraprofessionals who meet all state competencies for service coordination and have demonstrated knowledge and understanding about:

- 1) infants and toddlers who are eligible under this part;
- 2) Part C of the Act and the regulations in this part; and
- 3) the nature and scope of services available under the intervention program, the system of payments for services in Virginia, and other pertinent information. (34 CFR 303.6(d)).

Will the Early Intervention Assistant be supervised?

Yes. The Early Intervention Assistant is supervised by one or more qualified personnel, as identified in Component IX, Personnel Standards. The disciplines of physical therapy assistant, occupational therapy assistant, and educational interpreter are excluded from the list of qualified supervisors. Examples of supervision may be that the coordinator of the infant program, who is a licensed early childhood special educator, supervises the EIA each week in a one-to-one supervisory meeting; or one member of the team, such as a licensed speech-language pathologist, may go on frequent home visits and provide the EIA with feedback regarding intervention strategies.

Direction by the supervisor is interpreted as follows:

- 1) The supervisor conducts supervisory activities related to the responsibilities described above. Supervision includes the following:
 - a) regularly scheduled contact;
 - b) review of written plans and reports; and
 - c) the identification and promotion of activities for professional growth and development.
- 2) The supervisor provides opportunities for an interactive dialogue, reflective interaction, and mutual problem solving.

What must one do to become an Early Intervention Assistant?

A person who chooses to work in Virginia's early intervention system as an EIA must demonstrate that he or she has the required competencies established for an EIA. The person needs to submit an application to the Early Intervention Application Review Panel who determines approval of qualifications for meeting the competencies of the EIA.

What is the minimal degree or experience that one must have to apply for the Early Intervention Assistant?

As part of the application process, the applicant must demonstrate that he/she has the following:

- 1) a GED, high school diploma, or college degree; and
- 2) the skills and competencies of the EIA.

How long does it take to become an Early Intervention Assistant?

The time necessary to acquire skill and obtain evidence of the EIA competencies varies. Once the application is submitted, including all needed documentation, the Early Intervention Application Review Panel determines eligibility for the EIA category.

What if the person has some - but not all - of the competencies?

A person may work in early intervention on provisional status as an EIA while pursuing the necessary competencies to complete his or her application. A person may be employed up to eighteen months, on provisional status, to allow adequate time to acquire on-the-job skills as well as

to obtain the competencies and to acquire approval of his or her qualifications as an EIA.

Do the competencies of the EIA apply to all early intervention providers?

The knowledge, skills, and abilities listed in the competencies for the EIA are competencies that all early intervention providers should have. A specific discipline's course of study may or may not teach all of these skills, and many providers learn skills on-the-job. Persons working in early intervention may want to use a list of competencies like this one to help them identify areas of need and to develop a plan for their own staff development.

What must the application include?

The application must contain a record of the person's education and job-related experiences that provide evidence of his or her knowledge and skills in early intervention. For example, evidence of participation in inservice or course work, samples of home visit plans or reports, supervisory evaluations, or letters of recommendation can be provided. The contents of the application are described in this package in the section "Application Process to Become an Early Intervention Assistant."

Who will review the application?

At least twice a year (quarterly for its first year of existence), the Early Intervention Application Review Panel reviews applications for the EIA. The Panel is made up of qualified early intervention personnel with a high degree of expertise in early intervention services. Panel members may be appointees of the Virginia Interagency Coordinating Council (VICC), members of the VICC committees, or the local interagency coordinating councils, family members, or faculty at institutions of higher education. The application process is further described in the section "Application Process to Become an Early Intervention Assistant."

What if the application is denied?

The reviewers may turn down an application if it does not include adequate evidence of knowledge, skills, and abilities in all of the competency areas. If an application is denied, the applicant is provided with feedback about non-acceptance and suggestions for improving the application or areas of deficit. Those individuals whose applications are denied are able to submit further documentation, based on feedback received from the Review Panel.

[Blank]

APPLICATION PROCESS TO BECOME AN EARLY INTERVENTION ASSISTANT

Review Process

An Early Intervention Application Review Panel is established by the Personnel Training and Development Committee of the Virginia Interagency Coordinating Council (VICC) reviews the materials submitted by each applicant. The members of the Early Intervention Application Review Panel evaluates whether or not an individual has met the competencies required to become an early intervention assistant, through his or her education and experience.

The selection and training of the Early Intervention Application Review Panel is completed through an application process. Applications are distributed to individuals inviting their participation on the Early Intervention Application Review Panel. Members of the Virginia Interagency Coordinating Council (VICC), the VICC committees, the local interagency coordinating councils, faculty at institutions of higher education, and family members are invited to submit applications. The Personnel Training and Development Committee of the VICC will select persons to serve on the Review Panel, and names of the panel members are submitted to the Early Intervention Office. The membership is determined with consideration for specific constituencies and geographic, agency, and discipline affiliation.

Reviewers use a tested, reliable process for approving applications. The Panel members receive orientation material that includes the rationale for the application process and description of the scope of responsibilities of the Early Intervention Assistant. Sample application packets of varying quality are provided. The members participate in a training activity. They review sample applications to develop reliability across raters. For example, reviewers independently rate an application, compute their level of agreement, then discuss ratings to achieve consensus. The reviewers monitor their level of agreement by recording decisions on randomly selected applications. If there is disagreement regarding the recommendation to approve the qualifications of the applicant, the raters discuss discrepancies and reach consensus.

Submission of Application Packet

A person wishing to become an early intervention assistant must submit an application packet to the Early Intervention Application Review Panel. The Early Intervention Assistant application packet documents a sampling of an individual's expertise related to the following specific competency areas:

1. Understanding and Communicating Virginia Policies and Procedures
2. Developing Collaborative and Supportive Relationships with Families
3. Functioning as a Team
4. Understanding Child Development and Health
5. Determining Eligibility and the Infant and Toddler's Developmental Needs
6. Developing and Revising the IFSP with the Family
7. Implementing the IFSP with the Family

The applicant must also include a copy of the highest degree obtained, e.g., GED, high school diploma, college degree.

Approval of the Qualifications of the Early Intervention Assistant

The Early Intervention Application Review Panel meets quarterly for the first year and then at least twice a year to ensure timely review and feedback to persons requesting approval of their qualifications to become an early intervention assistant. The Panel submits their decisions regarding whether or not to approve the applicant's qualifications to the Virginia Early Intervention Office. The Early Intervention Office informs persons of their status, within thirty days of the decision, as to whether or not their qualifications have been approved. A summary completed by the Panel is available upon request, for those persons who are approved as early intervention assistants. Application materials are not returned for those persons who receive the approval. Applicants are encouraged to retain copies of all application materials. Applications not meeting the acceptable standard are returned, with substantive feedback, for re-submission. Deferred applicants are encouraged to resubmit their application when all requirements requested by the Review Panel are met.

Once the applicant acquires the Early Intervention Assistant designation, the Early Intervention Assistant engages in the established personnel development system of self-assessment, using the Indicators of Recommended Practice, and participates in a minimum of two training activities each year.

Evaluation of the Review Process

Feedback about the early intervention assistant application review process is gathered. Questionnaires are distributed to review board members and applicants to determine efficiency, effectiveness, and satisfaction with the process.