Early ACCESS Procedures Manual

Section 22: Interagency Collaboration

Introduction

This section describes the requirements for collaboration according to the *Iowa Administrative Rules for Early ACCESS* and the Memorandum of Agreement between Signatory Agencies.

Examples of documents and procedures that may facilitate interagency collaboration have been included.

**Required integrated system**

*Iowa Administrative Rules for Early ACCESS* clearly delineate requirements of a statewide, integrated system of interagency services and supports.

Early ACCESS is the statewide comprehensive, interagency system of integrated early intervention services that supports eligible children and their families. Early ACCESS is part of a larger early care, health, and education system. Services are provided by public and private agencies in partnership with families. The purpose of Early ACCESS is to work together in identifying, coordinating, and providing needed services and resources, including informal supports provided by communities, that will help families assist their infants or toddlers to grow and develop [120.100].

Purpose

Collaboration between agencies is intended to create a flexible system of services, supports and resources for children and families and to promote a high level of quality and consistency throughout the state while minimizing duplication of services between agencies.

Lead agency role

As the Lead Agency, the Department of Education is responsible for the development of policies and procedures to meet federal requirements for implementation of IDEA-Part C, 2004.

Reauthorization of the federal law requires development or revision of new policies and procedures at the state and regional level. The Early ACCESS Executive Committee and the Iowa Council for Early ACCESS review updated policies and procedures in their advice and assist role to the Lead Agency. Membership of the Executive Committee is comprised of individuals representing the four Signatory Agencies, Council leadership and families.

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Signatory agency roles

The Departments of Education, Public Health, and Human Services and the Child Health Specialty Clinics have entered into an Interagency Memorandum of Agreement to formalize their joint commitments to the establishment and ongoing implementation and evaluation of a comprehensive, integrated, interagency Early ACCESS system.

The Iowa Department of Education is responsible for providing education programs and services for preschool and school-age students, including children with disabilities, from birth through 21 years of age.

The Iowa Department of Human Services administers social service programs in order to help and empower individuals and families to become increasingly self-sufficient and productive.

The Iowa Department of Public Health administers public health programs in order to promote and protect the health of Iowans.

Child Health Specialty Clinics are the statewide public health program for children with special health care needs, as designated by the legislature [120.801(2)].

Regional grantees, the AEA

As Regional Grantees, AEAs have the fiscal and legal obligation for ensuring that the Early ACCESS system is carried out regionally [120.804(1)].

AEA personnel collaborate with local representatives of Signatory Agencies, community partners, and families in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies and procedures required in the Iowa Administrative Rules for Early ACCESS [120.804(1)c].

Collaboration activities include developing and implementing interagency agreements and interagency systems of service coordination and personnel development. Building respectful and open relationships that are solution-focused is essential for an integrated system that meets child and family needs.

Note: In order to have a collaborative interagency system, a contract or interagency agreement may be beneficial.

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Community partners

Community partners are local providers of Signatory Agencies, as well as other public or private community programs or agencies, including Early Head Start, childcare providers, Early Childhood Iowa areas, and health programs, that work with Early ACCESS [120.804(2)].

In some cases, community partners provide services that families need such as medical or family support. In other cases, community partners, such as Early Childhood Iowa, can be a source of financial support.

The Iowa Department of Education administers the School Ready state funds allocated to the numerous Early Childhood Iowa Area Boards for support of comprehensive early care, health and education services for children, families and early childhood professionals. These local funds may support general education aspects of the Early ACCESS system of services including: parent training of child development or Positive Behavior Intervention Supports, professional development for training referral sources, etc.

Collaboration with community partners

To maximize efficiency and reduce redundancy of services provided by various community partners, AEA and Signatory Agency staff promotes awareness of Early ACCESS procedures and support professional development related to Early ACCESS for community partners.

In addition, AEA and Signatory Agency leadership and staff contribute to collaboration in the following ways:

- Participate on local Early Childhood Iowa Boards/Committees.
- Serve on grant review committees.
- Share information about available resources.
- Collaborate on professional development opportunities.

Interagency system of service coordination

The Signatory Agencies and community partners work with families to support an effective system of service coordination.

In addition, all Signatory Agencies have agreed to implement IFSP procedures developed in conjunction with the Lead Agency. The IFSP is used to document ongoing planning between families and providers across all agencies providing early intervention services or resources to meet identified needs [120.802].
The Signatory Agencies support and implement an interagency comprehensive system of personnel development to ensure that there will be sufficient numbers of qualified and skilled providers of Early ACCESS supports and services.

The system provides for pre-service and in-service training conducted on an interdisciplinary basis, to the extent appropriate. It also provides professional development for a variety of personnel needed to meet the needs of eligible children, including

- public and private providers,
- primary referral sources,
- paraprofessionals, and
- persons who will serve as service coordinators.

AEAs and Signatory Agencies collaborate with partners to develop and conduct trainings that are available to practitioners across a variety of agencies and disciplines (120.118).

There are six components in the training process of all new Early ACCESS Service Coordinators (SC), including: 1) shadowing experienced SCs, 2) learning essential content online, 3) completing and turning-in five activities from the online modules, 4) one face-to-face workshop, and four one-hour webinars 5) mentoring, and 6) being observed and receiving feedback on a home visit.

The training program includes different training formats to reflect the background and knowledge of trainees, including those persons who are state-licensed professionals whose scope of practice includes service coordination [120.34(5)].

The online modules constitute a competency-based training program with content related to knowledge and understanding of eligible children, Part C Administrative Rules, the nature and scope of Early ACCESS services in the state, and service coordination responsibilities and strategies [120.34(5)]. The purpose of the face-to-face workshop and webinars is to apply the content learned in the online modules to case examples and scenarios.

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**Service coordinator competency training (continued)**

To access the online modules, go to: http://www.earlyaccesstraining.com

Service providers and others who would like to utilize the modules as a resource, but are not required to complete the quizzes should log-in using the following username: EAprovider@gmail.com; and password: EarlyACCESS.

There are two guidance documents available for this training - one that overviews all six components and one that is specific to facilitators of the face-to-face workshops. To get a copy of the guidance documents, contact melissa.schnurr@iowa.gov.

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**Resource directory**

A State Resource Directory of interagency resources and services for young children with and without special needs and families is available at www.iafamilysupportnetwork.org

The resources and services in the directory meet both the typical and unique needs of children who have or are at-risk for development delays and their families (e.g. housing; disability-related groups). This tool is helpful to families and other IFSP team members when exploring available services and funding sources to meet the identified needs of children and their families.