

Infant-Toddler Interdisciplinary Child Care Consultation Guidelines

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Introduction

The Department of Early Learning (DEL), Thrive by Five Washington (Thrive), and consultants from Organizational Research Services (ORS) have partnered with 10 infant-toddler regions across the state in a participatory and inclusive planning process so that 1) Regions develop an interdisciplinary infant-toddler child care consultation plan reflective of regional needs and strengths and 2) Regions work to align and coordinate all the systems and services that support infants and toddlers and their families.

As one part of their overall efforts to support infants and toddlers and their families, all 10 Regions will soon begin to deliver child care consultation to licensed providers serving infants and toddlers, with the intent of improving the quality of care for very young children. DEL will support infant-toddler Interdisciplinary Child Care Consultation with funds from the Federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). These funds and consultation efforts are intended to improve the quality of care for infants and toddlers in licensed family home and licensed child care center settings.

DEL, Thrive, ORS and the 10 regions are working to develop a cohesive, statewide framework for delivering high quality interdisciplinary child care consultation that builds upon regional strengths, reflects regional priorities and is guided by both regional and statewide perspectives. As part of this effort, DEL, regions and a work group of consultants developed guidelines for infant and toddler child care consultation.

The goals for writing these guidelines include: Increasing a common understanding of best practices, effective roles and essential skills of infant-toddler child care consultants, and developing language, approaches and service provision across the state that are aligned with those best practices, effective roles and essential skills. The content of the guidelines was informed by, best practice literature, resources as documented in the bibliography, strategies identified in the 10 Regional Planning Templates, input from the Interdisciplinary Consultation Guidelines workgroup, and input from the 10 Infant- Toddler Regional Leads.

Interdisciplinary infant-toddler child care consultation is part of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Professional Development continuum of learning for child care providers. The goals of ECE professional development include improvements in the knowledge, skills, and practices of providers that ultimately lead to improved quality of care and better outcomes for children. The following pages include guidelines that set parameters for:

- 1) WHO CAN BE INFANT & TODDLER CHILD CARE CONSULTANTS (RECOMMENDED SKILLS & QUALIFICATIONS)**
- 2) WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE CONSIDERED INFANT & TODDLER CHILD CARE CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES, AND**
- 3) WHAT ARE COORDINATING ACTIVITIES AND HOW DOES COORDINATION SUPPORT AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH**

Guidelines Overview

1) WHO ARE INFANT AND TODDLER INTERDISCIPLINARY CHILD CARE CONSULTANTS?

Infant-Toddler Child Care Consultants (I/T CC Consultants) demonstrate core competencies, skills and knowledge as well as have expertise and credentials related to a specific content area. The guidelines regarding infant-toddler Child Care Consultants describe the range of possible consultants for each region's consulting pool.

All I/T CC Consultants should:

- Demonstrate competency in relationship-based professional development (e.g., ability to build relationships and demonstrate specific interpersonal skills).
- Have specific skills for relationship-based professional development and child care consultation (e.g., developing action plans, observing and assessing the child care environment).
- Be familiar with Child Care Minimum Licensing Requirements, have basic knowledge in relevant content areas, and understand best practice and be knowledgeable of the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) standards

(See Table 1 below for more details about these competencies, skills and knowledge for all Infant and Toddler Child Care Consultants.)

All I/T CC Consultants are individuals with expertise and qualifications in at least one of three related fields:

- Infant-Toddler Caregiving and Education
- Infant-Toddler Social-Emotional Development/Behavioral Health
- Infant-Toddler Child Care Health

(See Tables 2, 3 and 4 below for details about the expertise and qualifications associated with each of these content areas.)

Infant-Toddler Child Care Content Specialists (I-TCC Content Specialists) are individuals with in-depth specialized expertise in a particular field or area but do not **necessarily** have the breadth of knowledge required of the I/T CC Consultants. (I/T CC Consultants may also serve as Content Specialists.) I/T CC Content Specialists can engage with providers and/or I/T CC Consultants when provider or child circumstances indicate a need for that very specific and specialized expertise. The guidelines regarding infant-toddler Child Care Content Specialists describe some *examples* of specialized expertise and the circumstances that would call for an I/T CC Content Specialist. *(See Table 5 below for details about the expertise and qualifications associated with Content Specialists.)*

2) WHAT ARE INFANT/ TODDLER CHILD CARE CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES?

Interdisciplinary Consultation is 1) The delivery of relationship-based professional development activities delivered on-site at a child care setting and 2) A formal structure for communication and coordination between consultants for sharing information and discussing individual outcomes across disciplines. Both aspects of the model are of equal importance.

Infant-Toddler Child Care Consultation relationship-based professional development activities include:

Consultation: a collaborative process between an individual or program and an external consultant with specific expertise which is focused on problem-solving specific issues pertaining to individuals, clients or programs and is time and task focused

Mentoring: an ongoing, iterative process with a more-experienced individual providing guidance and/or example to the less-experienced mentee

Coaching: a one-on-one process led by an expert and focused on specific skill development or performance-based outcome

(See Table 6 below for more details on consultation activities.)

3) WHAT ARE COORDINATING ACTIVITIES AND HOW DOES COORDINATION SUPPORT INTERDISCIPLINARY NATURE?

Coordination is a combination of a formal structure and specific activities designed to support a pool of highly qualified consultants, focus funds and services on regional priorities, and deliver infant/ toddler child care consultant services in an organized and efficient manner. Key activities specific to the consultant pool are; communication, coordination for cross-referral and problem solving; recruitment, intake, assessment and referrals.

(See Table 7 below for more details on coordinating activities.)

Table 1: infant-toddler Child Care Consultant (I/T CC) Competencies, Skills and Knowledge		
<p>Relationship Based Professional Development Competencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships with child care providers, directors and families over time • Utilize a strengths-based approach • Engage in effective communication including two-way learning methods and active listening • Facilitate change processes • Demonstrate specific interpersonal skills, including warmth, listening and communicating care. Empathy: the ability to convey the consultant’s understanding of staff’s subjective experience • Respect: The ability to suspend judgment and communicate staff are valued • Unconditional positive regard • Healthy professional boundaries 	<p>Child Care Consultation Skill Set</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and group facilitation • Advocacy • Knowledge of and how to link to community resources • Parent support, engagement and facilitation with parents & providers • Understanding of adult learning principles, including learning styles • Caregiver/child observation and assessment practices and tools • Observing and assessing environments • Observing, listening, interviewing and assessing individuals and interactions between individuals • Problem-solving techniques • Developing action plans, monitoring of progress, evaluating and communicating results • Knowledge and ability to address barriers to accessing services including cultural differences • Understanding of the child care environment; the ability to make reasonable recommendations based on what is possible in the setting 	<p>Proficient working knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infant-Toddler Growth and Development as described in the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines • Minimum Licensing Requirements • QRIS Standards

Table 2: I/T CC Consultant: Education/Caregiving/Teaching Field

<p>Credentials & Qualifications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masters Degree in Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Special Education or related field; or • Bachelors Degree in Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Special Education or related field; and • 2-5 years applied experience as child care professional in an Infant-Toddler care setting
<p>Skills & Knowledge</p>	<p><i>All of the skills, competencies & knowledge described in Table 1 as well as</i></p> <p>Interest in and knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines • Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals • Early Learning Professional Development System Report and Recommendations • Washington’s QRIS Standards • Three Environment Rating Scales (ERS) Identified in Seeds to Success: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) 2. Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale- Revised (ITERS-R) 3. Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale- Revised (FCCERS-R) • Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS); Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre • Best Practices of Accreditation Facilitation Projects: A Framework for Program Quality Improvement Using NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria (2010); National Association for the Education of Young Children • 0-3 Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA), Devereux Early Childhood Initiative • Early Learning and Development Curricula

Table 3: I/T CC Consultant: Social Emotional Development/Behavioral Health¹ Field	
Credentials & Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed Mental Health Professional e.g. Licensed psychologist, LICSW, LMHC OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal training in Mental Health field e.g. Certified Infant Mental Health Specialist
Skills & Knowledge	<p><i>All of the skills, competencies & knowledge described in Table 1 as well as</i> Interest in and knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral intervention best practices in early childhood care settings • Integration of mental health activities and philosophies in group settings • Infant and early childhood social-emotional development; family systems; cultural influences on parenting and mental health • Early childhood mental health disorders • Best practices in treatment for young children, including behavioral interventions • How their role differs from that of a therapist • Sensitivity to community and cultural strengths, practices and attitudes, including community resistance to mental health services

¹ Integrating Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation with the Pyramid Model. Perry, Deborah F., and Roxane K. Kaufmann. Issue brief. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, 2009. Print.

Table 4: I/T CC Consultant: Health Field	
Credentials & Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RNs, with pediatric training and experience • Licensed medical practitioners with pediatric and family experience
Skills & Knowledge	<p><i>All of the skills, competencies & knowledge described in Table 1 as well as:</i></p> <p>Interest in and knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local, state and federal public health law and guidance, special needs law and guidance (ADA, IDEA, Part C) and nurse practice act law and guidance; • The national Health and Safety Standards in “Caring For Our Children;” • Developmentally appropriate practice, including feeding, nutrition and physical activity, environmental health and food safety; • Injury prevention guidelines, including safe sleep recommendations; • Safe medication administration practices; • Disaster planning resources and collaborations within the child care community; • Staff health, including adult health screening, occupational health risks and immunizations.

Table 5: I/T CC Content Specialists

Content Specialists provide services in explicit cases, when the problem or focus area requires a depth of knowledge or specialty in an area that is not typically in the domain of all infant-toddler Child Care Consultants. The content knowledge may be very narrow and specific, but should be of a depth qualified by a credential or skill. Specialists are accessed through and work in coordination with an infant-toddler Child Care Consultant. Regional Service models should address the types of Content Specialists that will be part of their consultant pool as well as the relationship between the Consultants and Content Specialists.

Credentials & Qualifications	The following is an example list of the types of License, Credential or Training in the Specialty Topic Area. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ECE Credential• CLASS™ Certification• Infant Mental Health• Registered Dietician• Pediatric Nutritionist• Medical Physician/Nurse
Skills & Knowledge	Skills and Knowledge in the Specialty Focus Area. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Language proficiency and cultural competency with a specific population• Autism Spectrum Disorders• Diet/Nutrition for children with a particular medical condition <p><i>Other specialty focus areas may be identified in Regional Service Models or in practice</i></p>

Table 6: Relationship-Based Professional Development Technical Assistance Strategies Provided by infant-toddler Consultants and Content Specialists

Consultation	Mentoring	Coaching
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A collaborative process with an individual or program and an external consultant with specific expertise which is focused on problem-solving specific issues pertaining to individuals, clients or programs • Is time and task focused (more than 2 contacts with the same individual), and provides information and expertise to strengthen work-related skills • Includes development of goals and action plans designed to identify individual or program needs and implement solutions that address these issues; and facilitate the continued use of skills/processes learned • Designed to assist the early learning setting and its professional and paraprofessional staff and directly or indirectly impact children and families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ongoing, iterative process with a more-experienced individual providing guidance and/or example to the less-experienced mentee • Ideal match of mentor and mentee is agreed upon, not assigned • Often includes guided self-reflection and both formal and informal communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A one-on-one process led by an expert and focused on specific skill development or performance-based outcome • Requires interactions that build trust and respect • Promotes capacity-building around professional dispositions, skills, and behaviors • Reduces isolation and facilitates connection • Includes various combinations of questioning, listening, observation, reflection, feedback, prompting, modeling and practice. • Coaching can refer more specifically to on-site and in-vivo guidance in order to help a practitioner (parent, teacher, child care professional) learn to implement an intervention procedure with fidelity. • Usually occurs in planned, on-site formal visits

Specific Infant & Toddler Child Care Consultation Activities Include:
 Conducting caregiver/child observation and assessment practices and tools
 Observing and assessing environments
 Observing, listening, interviewing and assessing individuals and interactions between individuals
 Developing action plans, monitoring of progress, evaluating and communicating results
 Making referrals to specialized consultation or training or other community and/or professional development resources
 Outreach and engagement of providers in consultation

Table 7: infant-toddler Interdisciplinary Child Care Consultation Coordinating Activities

Activities related to:	Examples of activities:
The Consultant Pool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forming and maintaining a pool of consultants in accordance with these guidelines and reflective of any regional funding focus; • Providing professional development to incorporate developments in the field; • Responding to regional needs and/or increase the professional capacity of the pool of consultants
Communication, Coordination and Cross-referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing clear pathways and practices to support communications, coordination, problem solving and cross-referral • Supporting communication, coordination, problem solving and cross-referral within the I/T CC Consultant pool and among I/T CC Consultants and Content Specialists. • Supporting communication, coordination, problem solving and cross-referral across the range of consultation for infant-toddler care providers from within the DEL I/T CC Consultation funded visits and those not funded with DEL funds. Strengthening formal communication across systems (e.g., between lead agency and consultants, state systems, etc.) • Forming and Facilitating Consultant pool including face-to-face meeting time
Recruitment, Intake, Assessment and Referrals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and maintaining systems for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pursuing any regional focus ○ Responding to provider-initiated requests for consultation ○ Assessing provider needs ○ Linking providers with an appropriate consultant ○ Facilitating access to other consultants as needed

References for this document:

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Center on the Developing Child - Harvard University <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/initiatives/>

Center for Social and Emotional Foundations in Early Learning <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>

A more extensive annotated bibliography of resources related to infant and toddler child care consultation was produced in conjunction with these guidelines and is available from the Washington Department of Early Learning.