

Two Year Strategic Plan

Infant and Toddler Early Intervention Program of Snohomish County

**Created
November, 2007**

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Strategic Plan

The Vision: All eligible Snohomish County infants, toddlers and their families have access to effective and efficient early intervention services in natural learning environments.

Purpose of this Plan: The Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program partnership in Snohomish County, with support from the local Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC), identified a need to establish a framework to accomplish program improvements in the light of key changes in the program in the next two years.

This document, which was developed by the ITEIP ad hoc planning group, provides an instrument to:

- Clarify roles and responsibilities;
- Determine directions for countywide actions; and
- Ensure an equitable and transparent use of financial and other resources to support these efforts.

Key changes include:

- Emphasis on the intentional implementation of services in natural learning environments;
- Emphasis on meeting the requirements of the State Performance Plan;
- Reassignment of the Local Lead Agency function; and
- Implementation of the legislative directive that all school districts provide IDEA-Part C early intervention services by September 2009.

The ITEIP ad hoc planning group will formally reassess/modify the plan May, 2008, November, 2008, and May, 2009. The Local Lead Agency will monitor achievement of the steps in the plan through November, 2009.

Roles and Responsibilities: Multiple partners collaborate to achieve the vision of early intervention in this community.

- **The State Lead Agency**, DSHS- Division of Developmental Disabilities, is responsible for the implementation of IDEA-Part C-Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP) in Washington State.

- **The Local Lead Agency** is responsible for the implementation of IDEA-Part C-ITEIP in Snohomish County. The ITEIP state and Local Lead Agencies:
 - Conduct collaborative planning;
 - Distribute resources according to IDEA-Part C and the Washington State's Plan;
 - Comply with IDEA-Part C requirements;
 - Monitor service providers for compliance with service quality requirements; and
 - Administer IDEA-Part C funds following the payer of last resort policy.
- **The local Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)** advises the Local Lead Agency on the implementation of ITEIP in Snohomish County.
- **Parents** are responsible for identifying their priorities for their child in the development and implementation of the IFSP.
- **School districts** which have chosen to either directly provide or contract out for early intervention services are key partners in both the funding and implementation of ITEIP.
- **ITEIP providers** support the implementation of the IFSP through the provision of early intervention services.
- **Private funding sources**, such as private health insurance and fundraising by service providers, fund ITEIP early intervention services in our county.
- **Public funding sources**, such as state Developmental Disabilities, special education through school districts, federal IDEA-Part C and Medicaid, fund ITEIP early intervention services in our county.

Each partner's role in the fabric of services is critical to the success of the overall effort.

Action Steps to Accomplish the Strategic Plan

Step One: Communication

Strategy: ITEIP and its partners will develop a formal process of communications to ensure that all stakeholders to the system stay informed.

Outcomes:

1. Key players will know how and where to access necessary information about program initiatives and requirements;
2. Information will be clear and transparent to all participants; and
3. Access will be easy and straightforward.

Action Steps:

By October 1, 2008 the Local Lead Agency will:

1. Establish a website with links to important IDEA-Part C information;
2. Create a system of official, numbered memos to communicate policy, required action, or provide clarification to providers and contractors;
3. Serve as a clearinghouse of information to community partners from federal and state early intervention sources; and
4. Meet with the ICC, the Birth to Three Providers Group and local school districts on a regular basis to share information.

Step Two: Coordination of Services

Strategy: ITEIP and its partners will establish procedures to ensure the effective coordination of child find, referral, service delivery and transition throughout the county.

Outcomes:

1. ITEIP and its partners will have a clear plan and procedures for the child find and referral processes within each local school district and throughout the county;
2. ITEIP and its partners will have a clear plan for service delivery within each local school district and throughout the county; and
3. ITEIP and its partners will have clear procedures for transition planning for the county.

Action Steps:

1. By January, 2008, the Local Lead Agency will establish a workgroup of early intervention providers to examine current referral procedures and to recommend system solutions.
2. By June 1, 2008 the Local Lead Agency will create a document outlining the Snohomish County early intervention system components including the following:
 - a. The contact intake/referral names and numbers for each school district;
 - b. The responsibilities of the ITEIP Local Lead Agency, the school district, the FRC and the family within each school district including:
 - 1) Who will track referrals both within a district and overall in the county; and
 - 2) The process to obtain parent/guardian consent for referral to school district;
 - c. The program choices within each school district; and
 - d. The names and phone numbers of key ITEIP and school district contacts responsible for the coordination of transition planning.
3. By October 1, 2008 and annually thereafter, the Local Lead Agency will meet with all special education directors to provide the system component document and the Snohomish County Transition Agreement in order to improve coordination of services.
4. By October 1, 2008, the Local Lead Agency will meet with contracted early intervention service providers and contracted FRC's to provide information to improve coordination of services.

5. By October 1, 2008 and annually thereafter, the Local Lead Agency will review and update the Snohomish County Transition Agreement.
6. On an ongoing basis, the Local Lead Agency will coordinate child find activities within each school district through communication with school districts and with the service providers within that district.

Step Three: Data

Strategy: The Local Lead Agency will maintain and distribute data to local school districts and ITEIP early intervention providers.

Outcomes:

1. Child find efforts will result in the number of children enrolled in ITEIP and in their local school district meeting expected incidence for our state's eligibility criteria;
2. All ITEIP-eligible children will be enrolled in their local school district by October 1, 2009; and
3. Snohomish County ITEIP will meet requirements of the State Performance Plan (SPP) by December 1, 2008 and each year thereafter.

Action Steps:

1. Beginning January 15, 2008, and each month thereafter the Local Lead Agency will distribute a data report to all Snohomish County school districts and ITEIP contractors. The report will include data in the following categories
 - a. The number of children enrolled in ITEIP as of the first of that month;
 - b. The percentage of overall 0-3 population that is reflected in this enrollment;
 - c. The total number of ITEIP-enrolled children who are also enrolled in their school district;
 - 1) The number of ITEIP- enrolled children by school district;
 - 2) The expected incidence of ITEIP-enrolled children by school district; and
 - 3) The number of ITEIP-enrolled children who are also enrolled with or funded by their local school district.
2. Beginning March 1, 2008 and annually thereafter, the Local Lead Agency will distribute a data report indicating the percentage of ITEIP-enrolled children whose plans meet the following State Performance Plan indicators and targets (as of December 1 of the previous year):

Indicator 1. Percent of infants and toddlers with IFSP's who receive the early intervention services on their IFSP's in a timely manner (within 30 days of the signed IFSP).

Target: 100%.

Indicator 2. Percent of infants and toddlers with IFSP's who primarily receive early intervention services in the home or programs for typically developing children.
Targets: 80% by 2008; 85% by 2009 and 90% by 2010.

Indicator 3. Percent of infants and toddlers with IFSP's who demonstrate improved:

- a. Positive social emotional skills (including social relationships);
- b. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication); and
- c. Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

Targets will be set once baseline data is obtained.

Indicator 4. Percent of families participating in ITEIP who report that early intervention services have helped the family:

- a. Know their rights;
- b. Effectively communicate their children's needs; and
- c. Help their children develop and learn.

Targets: 95% by 2008; 96% by 2009 and 96% by 2010.

Indicator 5. The percent of infants birth to 1 with IFSP's compared to the total 0-3 population.

Targets: .90% by 2008; .97% by 2009 and 1% by 2010.

Indicator 6. Percent of infants and toddlers birth to three with IFSP's.

Targets: 2% by 2008; 2.2% by 2009 and 2.3% by 2010.

Indicator 7. Percent of eligible infants and toddlers with IFSP's for whom an evaluation and assessment and an initial IFSP meeting were conducted within Part C's 45-day timeline.

Target: 100% ongoing.

Indicator 8. Percent of all children exiting Part C who received timely transition planning to support the children's transition to preschool and other appropriate community services by their birthday including:

- a. IFSP's with transition steps and services;
- b. Notification to Local Education Agency (school district), if child potentially eligible for Part B; and
- c. Transition conference if child potentially eligible for Part B.

Target: 100% ongoing.

(Target dates for indicators 1-8 listed above are December 1 of the year listed).

Step Four: Funding Coordination

Strategy: Funding for ITEIP early intervention services is provided through multiple sources, which include private health insurance, Medicaid, IDEA-Part C, state Developmental Disabilities funds and school district special education funding. These sources will be coordinated through county-wide planning to ensure that legal priorities are maintained and that duplication is avoided. Essential funding is also secured through fundraising by early intervention providers.

Outcomes:

1. The funding system will support the provision of early intervention services according to IDEA-Part C and the Washington State's Plan.
2. The funding system will support the early intervention system to meet the requirements in the State Performance Plan (SPP).
3. The funding system will sustain and increase early intervention service capacity.
4. All ITEIP-eligible children will have access to the available school district special education funds.

Action Steps:

1. By May 1, 2008 the Local Lead Agency will provide the following information to all local school districts to assist them in providing and/or funding early intervention services:
 - a. IDEA-Part C federal regulations;
 - b. Washington State's Federally Approved Plan;
 - c. Washington State Performance Plan;
 - d. Snohomish County ITEIP Plan;
 - e. Snohomish County Interagency Agreement; and
 - f. Snohomish County Transition Procedures.
2. By May 1, 2008 the Local Lead Agency will develop and maintain a document for each school district which includes:
 - a. Details of how that district participates in the provision of IDEA-Part C early intervention services;

- b. Additional options for participation in IDEA-Part C in order to expand service capacity;
 - c. How many children residing in that district that are served by ITEIP; and
 - d. What percentage of the district's ITEIP-served children are enrolled in the district.
3. By July 1, 2008, Snohomish County Human Services will establish a clear and uniform process by which they will provide early intervention services through a contract with a local school district, when that option is requested by the district.
4. By July 1, 2008 Snohomish County Human Services will establish a clear and uniform process by which they will contract out for early intervention services. This process will include:
 - a. Issuance of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) specifying the process to become a qualified provider;
 - b. Assurance of the availability of all of the services required in IDEA-Part C;
 - c. A rate structure to support the provision of the required IDEA-Part C services;
 - d. Contracts which meet the requirements of IDEA-Part C, the Washington State's Plan and Snohomish County Human Services contracting guidelines;
 - e. A system to track all funding managed by Snohomish County Human Services to ensure that IDEA-Part C funding is payer of last resort; and
 - f. Requirements and procedures for monitoring, data collection and reporting by all parties.

Step Five: Professional Development

Strategy: ITEIP and its partners will seek to maintain high quality services to children and families by providing up-to-date information regarding best practices, seeking out training opportunities, and supporting all providers to continually improve. Each part of the system has a role to play as described below.

Outcomes:

1. All partners will be informed about current and changing initiatives in the field.
2. All partners will have access to training opportunities.

Action Steps:

The Local Lead Agency, providers and contractors will incorporate these initiatives in their regular work flow during the next two-year period. Progress will be assessed during the six-month reviews of the Strategic Plan.

1. ITEIP Local Lead Agency will provide information and training opportunities so that ITEIP providers and contractors may stay abreast of national research and best practice approaches by:
 - Providing regular, ongoing access to national research through web links, web casts, conference calls and written documents;
 - Encouraging use of best practice in service provision by providing semi-annual training opportunities; and
 - Encouraging use of best practice in policy and program management by providing annual training opportunities.
2. ITEIP Local Lead Agency and its partners will support this effort by:
 - Examining national research in program design; and
 - Participating in and sending staff members to training opportunities.
3. ITEIP Local Lead Agency and its partners will work together to develop funding for these opportunities that support the cost of training as well as the cost of releasing staff to attend training.

Appendix A

Definitions

Birth to Three Providers Group - Snohomish County IDEA-Part C contractors and partners who meet regularly to coordinate our county's ITEIP services. This group is described in the by-laws for our ICC as an official sub committee of the ICC.

Family Resources Coordinator (FRC) - the term used in Washington State for "service coordinator" whose role includes carrying out the activities to assist an eligible child and the child's family to receive the rights, procedural safeguards and services that are authorized to be provided under Washington's early intervention program.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C - the federal law that governs early intervention services for infants and toddlers.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) - the planning process that results in a written plan for providing early intervention services to a child eligible under IDEA-Part C and to the child's family.

Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP) - the name for Washington State's IDEA-Part C program. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)-Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) in Olympia is responsible for implementing the program in our state.

Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) - the group that advises and assists the Local Lead Agency in the administration of IDEA-Part C.

Local Lead Agency - the agency in a county that receives funds and administers the implementation of the IDEA-Part C/ITEIP program. In our county the Local Lead Agency has been DSHS-DDD and will change in 2008 to Snohomish County Human Services-Developmental Disabilities.

Natural Environment - in IDEA-Part C it means settings that are natural or normal for the child's age peers who have no disability. In Washington State's Plan these settings are home, neighborhood or community setting in which children without disabilities participate. In the State Performance Plan these settings are described as "programs for typically developing children". In our community we use the term "natural learning environments" which also includes an approach to working with families to imbed intervention within their daily routines.

Snohomish County Transition Agreement – is the Snohomish County Early Intervention to Early Childhood Transition Agreement, a document which outlines the steps and responsibilities required to promote a smooth transition of a child and family from ITEIP into preschool special education services. This document includes a memorandum of understanding which is signed by ITEIP providers and local school districts.

State Performance Plan (SPP) - a plan from the US Department of Education: Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) that evaluates a state's efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of IDEA and describes how the state will improve implementation.

Washington State's Plan - is Washington State's Federally Approved Plan: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Early Intervention Section; a detailed document summarizing how our state is implementing IDEA-Part C. This plan is submitted annually for approval by Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

Appendix B

Links to important web sites and documents

For access to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)-Part C:

<http://www.nectac.org/idea/303regs.asp>

For the Washington State Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP) website:

<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/iteip/>

For Washington State's Federally Approved Plan: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Early Intervention Section go to the ITEIP web site:

<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/iteip/> and click on "Federal Application 2007"

For the Washington State Performance Plan (SPP):

<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/iteip/Publications.html>

To read this document online go to:

http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Human_Services/Divisions/DevDisabilities

Appendix C

Snohomish County Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program Natural Learning Environments

(Developed by the Snohomish County ITEIP Natural Environments Leadership Team)
March, 2007

Our Vision...

All children can participate in activities desired by their families.

We value...

- Parents as knowing their child best and as primary teacher, advocate and decision-maker for their child.
- The uniqueness of each child and family.
- Honoring the relationship between the parent and the provider through respect, generous listening and instilling hope.
- Quality interactions between parent, child and provider to achieve positive child and family outcomes.
- Quality partnerships among providers.
- Successful inclusion of all children in their communities.

WHAT is early intervention?

Early intervention is families of children 0-3 with delay or disability, working in partnerships with professionals to support *each family's* desires and concerns for their children's growth, development and learning.

The focus of the early intervention program is coaching and support provided to the family and other caregivers by an early intervention professional. This coaching and support will help them provide the intervention naturally throughout the child's day and through the child's everyday activities and routines with adults, other children and their surroundings. This is how young children naturally learn.

WHY is early intervention important?

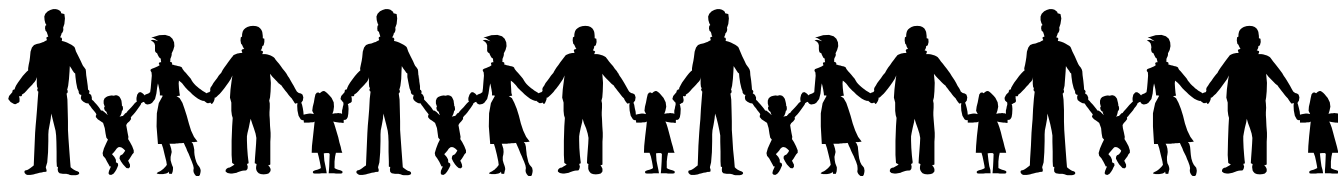
We know from research that the first three years of a child's life are critical years for learning. During a child's first three years, it is important to focus on every child's developmental needs and take advantage of the child's natural ability to learn.

When a child has a delay in development or a diagnosis that could result in a delay, it is important to offer a program which is designed and delivered to enhance the development of that child and to enhance the capacity of the family to meet their child's needs. The early intervention program follows a federal law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA-Part C).

WHERE does early intervention take place?

The federal law requires that early intervention services take place where children live, learn, and play: in the child's **natural environments**. This may include home, childcare, neighborhood, or a community setting that is designed for typically developing children and in which children without delays participate.

Providing early intervention in a child's **natural environment** helps the child to participate more easily in everyday activities and with other children.



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