

**Strategic Plan**

**For**

**Snohomish County  
Early Intervention Program**

**Updated**  
**June 15, 2017**

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# Strategic Plan

## **The Vision:**

All eligible Snohomish County infants, toddlers and their families have access to effective and high quality early intervention services in natural learning environments. We embrace the concepts of strength-based and relationship-based services in our work and create an environment of continuous learning. We will strive for provision of service delivery system that ensures equity for all children and families. We are committed to work together to identify families very early in their child's life who need extra support to thrive. We will work to engage them in the services that they need including those that address the needs of all members of the family. This will require strong partnerships working together to build resilience in families and ultimately in the community.

## **Purpose of this Plan:**

The Early Intervention Program partnership in Snohomish County, with support from the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers State Program, identified a need to establish a framework to accomplish program improvements in the light of key changes in the state program in the next five years.

This document, which was developed by the Snohomish County early intervention services partners, 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 will include:

- Emphasis on ensuring equity in all we do;
- Emphasis on providing high quality evidence based services;
- Emphasis on creating and maintain fiscally sound early intervention system;
- Emphasis on preserving collaborative nature of our partnership

The Local Lead Agency will monitor achievement of the steps in the plan through June, 2022.

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

- **The State Lead Agency**, Department of Early Learning (DEL), is responsible for the implementation of IDEA-Part C-Early Support for Infants and Toddlers Program (ESIT) in Washington State.
- **The Local Lead Agency** is responsible for the implementation of IDEA-Part C ESIT Program in Snohomish County. The ESIT 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;
  - Comply with Chapter 170-400 WAC;
  - Monitor service providers for compliance with service quality requirements; and
  - Administer IDEA-Part C and state early intervention funds following the payer of last resort policy.
- **The local Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)** advises the Local Lead Agency on the implementation of ESIT in Snohomish County. Family Interagency Coordinating Council (FICC) is our local ICC.
- **Parents/caregivers** 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 ESIT Program.
- **EIP 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 ESIT early intervention services in our county.
- **Public funding sources**, such as state Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), special education through school districts, federal IDEA-Part C and Medicaid and state Early Intervention Services, fund 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: Equitable Outcomes**

**Strategy:** We believe that all children and families should have the opportunity for relevant and effective outcomes of service. We will identify, acknowledge and address inequitable outcomes for our families across race, ethnicity, gender, language, sexual orientation/identity, socioeconomic status, and ability. We will work with providers and partners to provide culturally competent services and to increase exposure to the current state of inequity and the root causes and work to address these inequities.

### **Outcomes:**

1. Positive and equitable outcomes for all children and families.
2. Reduce institutional racism and inequity.
3. Identify appropriate metrics to inform our actions and evaluate their impact.

### **Action Steps:**

The Local Lead Agency will:

1. Partner with Department of Early Learning's Racial Equity Initiatives and align with the County's own initiatives.
2. Explore partnership with King Co. and/or other organizations to leverage work already being done. (King County, Best Starts for Kids, etc.)
3. Explore funding opportunities to increase awareness and implementation of initiatives and to support staff participation in trainings.
4. Develop and implement an onboarding process for new staff and providers.
5. Regularly, (annually at a minimum), review and report on racial/ethnicity data and child outcome data to the community (providers group, FICC, other appropriate stakeholders).
6. Increase outreach efforts to underserved and unserved populations as identified by community partnerships.
7. Explore the role and function of FRCs in this outcome area.



## **Step Two: Communication**

**Strategy:** Local Lead Agency and its partners will develop a formal process of communication to ensure that all stakeholders in 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:**

The Local Lead Agency will:

1. Create a system (web based, email, FAQ's, current policy documentation, regularly scheduled meetings) to communicate policy, required actions or provide clarification to providers and contractors on key elements.
2. Meet on regular basis with the FICC (quarterly), the Birth to Three Providers Group (monthly) and local school districts (annually at a minimum) to share information.
3. Collaborate and align with other Early Learning Initiatives and programs through the work of FICC and the Snohomish County Early Learning Coalition.



## **Step Three: Coordination of Services**

**Strategy: The Local Lead Agency (LLA) and its partners will establish procedures to ensure the effective coordination of child find, referral, service delivery and transition throughout the county.**

### **Outcomes:**

1. Empower confident and competent families by building a flexible and adaptable system.
2. The LLA and its partners will have a clear plan and procedures for early identification and referral processes within and throughout the county;
3. The LLA and its partners will have a clear plan for service delivery within each local school district and throughout the county;
4. The LLA and its partners will have clear procedures for transition planning for the county; and
5. The LLA and its partners will establish a proactive and adaptable plan for ensuring that children and families have access to services and for optimizing staff capacity.

### **Action Steps:**

The Local Lead Agency will:

1. Establish and maintain a workgroup of early intervention providers to examine current referral procedures and staff capacity so as to recommend system solutions.
2. Coordinate early identification activities throughout the county.
3. Update and maintain 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 and provider agency;
  - b. The responsibilities of the Local Lead Agency, service provider agency, school district, FRC and family within each school district including:
    1. Tracking referrals both within a district and overall in the county; and

2. Obtaining parent/guardian consent for referral to school district;
  - c. The names and phone numbers of key Early Intervention service providers and school district contacts responsible for the coordination of transition planning.
4. Meet with all school district special education directors at least annually to provide the system component document and the Snohomish County Transition Agreement in order to improve coordination of services during the school.
5. Meet with contracted early intervention service providers and FRC's to provide information to improve coordination, consistency, and efficacy of services, and innovation of practices. Determine and implement consistent methods for sharing information, training, and providing expectation and feedback to FRCs.
6. Identify strategies for decreasing administrative burden, in collaboration with School Districts and 0-3 service providers, so as to improve services for children and families.
7. Annually review and update the Snohomish County Transition Agreement with all the School Districts and early intervention provider agencies.



## **Step Four: Data**

**Strategy:** The Local Lead Agency will collect, analyze and distribute data to local school districts and early intervention providers to better improve child and family outcomes and financial success of system.

### **Outcomes:**

1. Early Identification efforts will result in the number of children enrolled in ESIT and in their local school district meeting expected incidence for our state's eligibility criteria;
2. The LLA will meet requirements of the State Performance Plan (SPP) and State System Improvement Project (SSIP) activities as directed by ESIT.
3. The LLA, EI providers, and school districts commit to collecting data to use for improving services for children and families.
4. The LLA will commit to distribution of relevant, meaningful data with those engaged most directly with children and families.

### **Action Steps:**

The Local Lead Agency will:

1. Commit with EI providers, and school districts to allocating resources (e.g. staff time) to influence and advocate for new and efficient, functional, and flexible state Data Management System through intentional participation in redesign process.
2. Identify strategies and training for better collection and use of data to inform services at both individual child/family and systems levels. (i.e. parent survey that is family friendly and family centered)
3. Recognize multiple functions of data; to document program compliance, program evaluation, and most importantly, relevant child and family outcomes. Implement strategies to maximize collaborative use of data for improving individual child/family and system outcomes.
4. Implement strategies and methods for using data to better track referrals and outcomes in order to allocate resources and improve processes for providers and families.



## **Step Five: Funding Coordination**

**Strategy:** Funding for ESIT early intervention services is provided through multiple sources, which include private health insurance, family cost participation (copays, deductibles, sliding fees, scholarships, etc.). Medicaid, IDEA-Part C and state Early Intervention funds, state Developmental Disabilities Administration funds and school district special education funding. These sources are 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) and State System Improvement Plan (SSIP).
3. The funding system will sustain and increase early intervention service capacity.
4. The funding system will implement the requirements in Chapter 170-400 WAC.

### **Action Steps:**

Local Lead Agency will:

1. Review budget on a quarterly basis and seek input from providers on budget modifications.
2. Review funding formula annually to address system changes.
3. Inform and assist all local school districts in implementation of changes regarding funding early intervention services.
4. Adapt and respond to changes in flow of school district funding and create equitable system of billing for each child's services.



## **Step Six: Professional Development**

**Strategy:** Local Lead Agency 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 learning 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 commit to sharing learnings, ideas and strategies for staff recruitment, nurturance, development and retention.
3. All partners commit to sharing learnings, ideas and strategies, and innovative best practices in support of quality services.
4. All EI providers and partners will have access to learning opportunities and practice high quality evidence based early intervention services.

### **Action Steps:**

The Local Lead Agency and EI providers will incorporate these initiatives in their regular work flow.

1. The LLA will provide information and learning opportunities so that EI providers and contractors may stay abreast of ESIT/DEL's direction and best practice approaches by:
  - Providing regular, ongoing access to national research through web links, web casts, conference calls and written documents;
  - Promoting the use of evidence based practices in service provision across the provider agencies
2. The LLA and its partners will support this effort by:
  - Participating in and sending staff members to training opportunities to increase staff competence.
  - Establishing work groups at local level as well as participating at the state level, to share ideas and strategies for staff recruitment and retention.

3. The LLA 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.
4. The LLA will strengthen relationship with, communication to, and training for all FRCs in the County.

# Implementation Plan

1. Final review by stakeholders at the June 15<sup>th</sup> 2017 Birth to three Providers Meeting.
2. Roll out as of July 1, 2017.
3. Review an element of the plan at monthly meetings
4. Review the overall plan on an annual basis at a minimum with 0-3 Providers and at FICC.

# Appendix A

## **Definitions:**

**Birth to Three Providers Group** - Snohomish County IDEA-Part C contractors and partners who meet regularly to coordinate our county's ESIT services. This group is described in the by-laws for FICC, our local 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.

**Early Support for Infants and Toddlers Program (ESIT)** - the name for Washington State's IDEA-Part C program. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) in Olympia is responsible for implementing the program in our state.

**Family Interagency Coordinating Council (FICC)** – the Snohomish County's local group that advises and assists the Local Lead Agency in the administration of IDEA-Part C and creates stronger partnership with families and community organizations.

**Local Lead Agency** - the agency in a county that receives funds and administers the implementation of the IDEA-Part C/ESIT program. Snohomish County Human Services has been the Local Lead Agency since Oct. 2018, operating as Snohomish County Early Intervention Program.

**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 ESIT into preschool special education services. This document includes a memorandum of understanding which is signed by ESIT 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.

**State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)**

**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).

**WAC-Chapter 170-400**

Washington Administrative Code adopted on 12/2/2016 for Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) and Department of Early Learning (DEL) based on RCW 43/215/020(2)(f).

# Appendix B

## Snohomish County Early Intervention Program

### Natural Learning Environments

#### **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.

The following individuals participated in the development of the strategic plan and supported its implementation.

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