



Snohomish County
Human Services

2022

Early Support for Infants and Toddlers Strategic Plan

Effective July 1, 2022



We are a community committed to growing and learning together to support the needs of all children and families we serve under the Part C of the IDEA.

We Value...

Compassion **Partnerships**

Equity **Collaboration**

Snohomish County ESIT Strategic Plan 2022-2025



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WHAT is the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) Program?

ESIT Program serves 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 ESIT Program is coaching and support provided to the family and other caregivers by an ESIT professional. This coaching and support will help them provide services 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 are the Early Support Services 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 ESIT Program follows a federal law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA-Part C).

WHERE do ESIT services take place?

The federal law requires that ESIT 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 ESIT services in a child's **natural environment** helps the child to participate more easily in everyday activities and with other children.

Background

Over the past 5 years, there has been and continues to be significant changes in Early Intervention services throughout Washington State.

- In 2018, the ESIT Program with DCYF went through major statewide system changes.
- In 2019, Snohomish County transitioned from Local Lead Agency to the County Lead Agency, responsible for overseeing 0-3 state Special Education funds which historically passed through the local school districts.
- In 2020, Snohomish County providers transitioned to virtual services to meet the needs of families during the COVID -19 pandemic.
- Starting in 2021, many providers began to gradually move to a hybrid service model with the intent of serving each family in the way most effective at meeting their unique needs.
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- In 2021, the Snohomish County Early Intervention program changed its name to Snohomish County Early Support for Infants and Toddlers in response to the community's feedback to reflect our services with inclusive and culturally responsive language.
- In 2022, to review and update the Strategic Plan, a series of meetings were held virtually with Snohomish County ESIT providers, school districts and community partners to review and identify key focus areas to address in the upcoming year.

Through this process, we recognized the need for a more flexible and relevant Strategic Plan, built within the shared values of compassion, partnership, equity, and collaboration with Snohomish County families.

The County Lead Agency will monitor and review achievement of the goals and progress as it relates to services and changes in the ESIT program.

A full review of the plan will occur no later than June 2025.



Roles and Responsibilities

Multiple partners collaborate to achieve the vision of Early Support for Infants and Toddlers services in Snohomish County. Each partner's role in the fabric of services is critical to the success of the overall effort.

The State Lead Agency: Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), is responsible for the implementation of IDEA-Part C Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) Program in Washington State.

The County Lead Agency: Snohomish County is responsible for the implementation of IDEA-Part C ESIT Program in Snohomish County.

- *The ESIT State and the County Lead Agency:*
 - *Conduct collaborative planning,*
 - *Distribute resources according to IDEA-Part C and Washington State's Plan,*
 - *Comply with IDEA-Part C requirements,*
 - *Comply with Chapter 110-400 WAC,*
 - *Monitor service providers for compliance with service quality requirements,*
 - *Administer the 0-3 State Special Education funds for all eligible children, 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 County Lead Agency on the implementation of ESIT in Snohomish County. Family Interagency Coordinating Council (Family ICC) is our local ICC.
- **Parents/caregivers** are responsible for identifying their priorities for their child in the development and implementation of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).
- **School districts** are key partners in transitioning eligible children from the ESIT Program at the children's 3rd birthday.
- **ESIT providers** support the implementation of the IFSP through the provision of ESIT services.
- **Private funding sources** such as private health insurance and fundraising by service providers fund ESIT services in our county.
- **Public funding sources** such as state Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), 0-3 State Special Education dollars, federal IDEA-Part C, State early intervention funds, and Medicaid fund ESIT services in our county.

Focus Areas and Action Steps

Focus Area: Outreach

Snohomish County will have a coordinated outreach process that represents services available for children birth to three and their families.

Action Steps during 2022-2023:

Create a workgroup with broad representation from providers to share current outreach best practices, materials, and presentations. The work group will be tasked with:

- 1) Creating consistent messaging and coordinating group efforts to promote ESIT services throughout Snohomish County.
- 2) Increasing the number of primary referral sources making referrals for ESIT services and identifying any trends or gaps.

Focus Area: Access

Snohomish County will increase county-wide enrollment and retention rates.

Action Steps during 2022-2023:

- 1) Identify the root cause(s) of instability in enrollment and retention:
 - Request and review enrollment/exit data already collected by each agency.
 - Identify what data is missing or what additional data points need to be collected.
 - Review and evaluate primary causes of early exits.
 - Recommend next steps to collaborate with agencies to improve stability in enrollment and retention.

Focus Area: Cultural Humility

Snohomish County will practice cultural humility to enhance family experiences in the ESIT program. We will focus on learning, adapting, and adjusting through relationships with families and community partners.

Action Steps during 2022-2023:

- 1) Collaborate with providers to understand what cultural communities are represented in Snohomish County.
- 2) Provide “listening circles” where agencies and families of diverse cultures learn from each other and promote a county wide culture of curiosity.
- 3) Increase access to reflective practice and consultation that supports cultural humility for all agency staff.

Focus Area: Comprehensive Service Coordination

Families will have access to timely, high quality ESIT services, resulting in positive outcomes for children and their families.

Action Steps during 2022-2023:

- 1) Strengthen family focus and family involvement, e.g., plan to host 3-5 small, targeted parent focus groups to hear from parents their overall experiences with ESIT services.
- 2) Collaboratively share best practices related to enrolling new families and supporting ongoing engagement.
- 3) Increase access to mental health support and Infant Mental Health services for ESIT families.
- 4) Partner with school districts for smooth transition processes from Part C to Part B services for families.
- 5) Facilitate FRC peer support groups to share resources and ideas, deepen understanding of requirements and service delivery of the ESIT Program.

Focus Area: Flexibility

We will have the ability to adjust services as needed to best meet the changing needs of our families based on their IFSP and program requirements.

Action Steps during 2022-2023:

- 1) Develop a written summary in plain language outlining requirements and expectations for IFSP service changes (e.g., frequency level) and service delivery model (virtual, in-person, or hybrid) created through collaboration and guidance as needed with DCYF.
- 2) Collaborate with DCYF in developing functionality and flexibility within the new DMS system to manage service changes timely and efficiently.
- 3) Coordinate staff trainings concerning service delivery models (virtual, in-person, or hybrid).



Implementation Plan

- 1) Final review by stakeholders at the Birth to Three Providers Meetings in May and June 2022.
- 2) Implementation of the plan effective July 1, 2022.
- 3) Provide progress updates of plan at the monthly Birth to Three Providers Meetings.
- 4) Review the plan on an annual basis with the Family ICC and the Birth to Three Providers Meeting, a subcommittee of the Family ICC.
- 5) A core leadership team will be formed to facilitate each work group and implementation of recommendations.
 - Work groups will be identified to lead the work on the five (5) focus areas.
 - The core leadership team will include:
 - Person(s) passionate about and committed to the issue (required)
 - Representative(s) from FRC agencies in the County (required)
 - A County ESIT program staff (required)
 - School District representative(s) (highly recommended)
 - Parent participants (highly recommended)
 - Participation should be representative of the broader Snohomish County ESIT provider community and
 - Full work groups will be identified and organized by the end of October 2022.



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 Family ICC, 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 supports 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 supports 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 Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is responsible for implementing the program in our state.

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

County 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 County Lead Agency since 2020 operating as Snohomish County Early Supports for Infants and Toddlers Program (previously the Local Lead Agency).

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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 services within their daily routines.

Snohomish County Transition Agreement - the Snohomish County Supports for Infants and Toddlers 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) - a comprehensive multi-year plan under Federal IDEA-Part C focusing on improving results for infants and toddlers with disabilities.

Washington's Federally Approved States Plan - 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 110-400 - Washington Administrative Code, formerly Chapter 170-400 WAC, updated 10/11/19 for Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) and Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) based on RCW 43.216.020.

Acknowledgement of Participants

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