



A MESSAGE FROM ROSALIN WILLIS

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There's a saying – “the only time you should ever look back is to see how far you've come.” As we prepare to become a part of the restructured Texas health and human services system on September 1, 2016, I want to take a moment to reflect on some of the accomplishments we've made over this past year.

1) We strengthened and improved the performance of the ECI system. This has been reflected in the increase in average delivered service hours to more appropriately meet the needs of ECI children and families, as well as in the number of children served.

2) We worked to develop a strong network for ECI that will allow us greater opportunities for increased interagency collaborations with other organizations that share our purpose of serving children with disabilities and their families. Some of those include collaborations with:

- Early Childhood Personnel Center Leadership Institute with partners from the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) IDEA Part B
- Texas Autism State Planning Grant Workgroup
- Department of State Health Services (DSHS) — Texas Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (TEHDI) Program
- DSHS Project Launch Expansion Council
- TEA and Region 11 Education Service Center's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Leadership Committee
- DFPS Prevention and Early Intervention — Texas Prevention Network (TPN)

3) We identified areas of challenge for ECI contractors through monitoring and oversight, and those areas became the subjects of newly developed training and technical assistance to ensure greater contractor compliance and enhance opportunities for program success – for example, the *Empowerment Through Data* webinar series and *Keys to Successful Supervision*.

4) We have prepared to transition to the Health and Human Services Commission. In the process, we have kept the ECI contractors and others informed of how the transition will impact ECI.

If you will recall, in our inaugural edition of the *ECI Connection*, these were the four priorities set by the ECI leadership team for FY 2016. And to further our efforts to make the program more efficient, we've begun to evaluate our state requirements to more closely align with federal requirements.

Our combined work and passion for ECI have shown that together we make a difference and we thank you.

On September 1, a few things about us will change, but our mission and our work will continue. As we look ahead, we understand and embrace the notion that “tomorrow” we start again.

Rosalin A. Willis

Interim Assistant Commissioner

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KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL SUPERVISION: ONGOING TRAINING SUPPORT AT 3/6/9/12 MONTHS

What is it?

3/6/9/12 Ongoing Support is a new and innovative way to support training participants/supervisors following completion of the *Keys to Successful Supervision* training module on reflective supervision that was launched in June 2016.

Regular, ongoing follow-up will be provided to any questions, needs, and challenges that may arise when implementing the knowledge learned in *Keys* to real life situations.

Why is it important?

Initial training provides critical foundational information including purpose, function, and implementation strategies on specific topics/content. Equally important is a process to follow-up and support participants as they begin applying new knowledge, skills, and strategies gained as a result of the training. After the initial training, participants will be provided with new information and tools that align with changing needs during implementation. This will help them feel supported as they experience the positive results from their supervisory skill development.

How does it work?

Regular ongoing support will be provided at critical phases of content application and implementation. At 3, 6, 9, and 12 months after completing *Keys*, supervisors will access a webpage and select their appropriate follow-up month. For each initial learning objective in the *Keys* module, additional resources including relevant information, current literature and research, websites, forms, checklists, and other tools will be provided.

A Special Feature

At 6 and 12 months, the ECI State Office will facilitate a supervisor-to-supervisor forum via Go-To Meeting for supervisors experiencing the same reflective supervision journey to share and learn from each other. Look for more information about the supervisor sharing sessions in future editions.

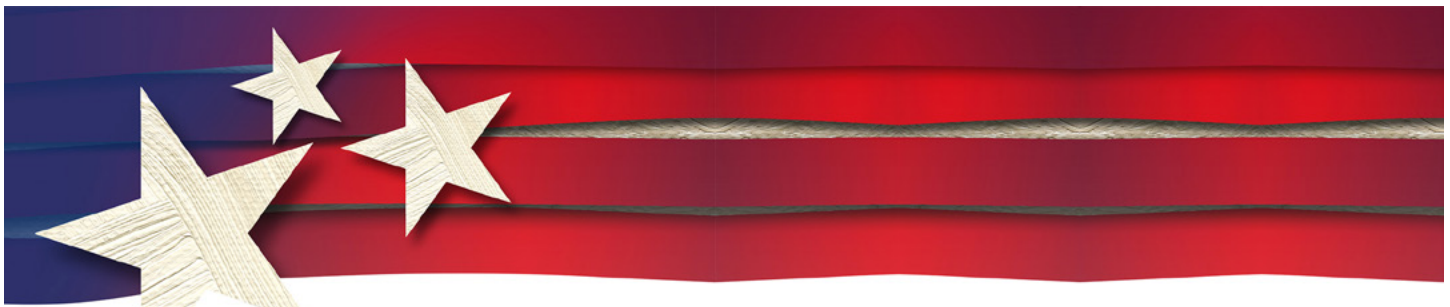
Want a great recruitment resource? Look no further than your office

Recently, the ECI State Office added a question to the final *Making It Work* survey to determine how new staff found out about their ECI position. The majority of new staff indicated a friend or colleague told them about ECI. Your current staff is a valuable recruitment resource. Here are a few tips from [Jobvite](#), a recruiting software company, about using employee referrals as an effective recruitment strategy.

- 1) Make sure staff know about current and upcoming openings and how to apply for these positions.
- 2) The effort you put into staff retention strategies will also pay off in staff recruitment. If your current employees are happy at their jobs, they are more likely to tell their friends and colleagues about the benefits of working for your program and any job openings.
- 3) When an employee-referred candidate is hired, recognize the staff person who referred him/her. Recognition doesn't necessarily have to be a monetary bonus. It can be extra time off, free lunch or snack food, or a handwritten thank-you note.

More tips and guidelines for starting and growing an employee referral plan can be found in the [Referral Madness](#) booklet from Career Builder.





A NEW STAR WILL SHINE FOR TEXAS KIDS

STAR is the acronym for State of Texas Access Reform and that means Medicaid managed care. A new managed care health plan, STAR Kids, will go into effect November 1, 2016. The service population for STAR Kids is children and youth (age 0-21) who have more complex needs than children served under STAR. To be eligible for STAR Kids the child must:

- receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Medicaid, or
- receive home- and community-based services (1915(c) Medicaid waiver), or
- live in an intermediate care facility for individuals with intellectual disabilities, or
- live in a skilled nursing facility.



Families will have the choice of at least two STAR Kids managed care organizations (MCOs) in their area. A map showing the MCOs' service areas is available at this website:

www.hhsc.state.tx.us/medicaid/managed-care/mmc/Managed-Care-Service-Areas-Map.pdf.

STAR Kids will pay for medically necessary prescription drugs, hospital care, primary and specialty care (including ECI services), preventive care, personal care services, private duty nursing, and durable medical equipment and supplies. Each STAR Kids member will have their service needs assessed, which will form the basis of that member's individual service plan (ISP). For an ECI enrolled child, the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) will be included in the STAR Kids ISP.

Families also can expect coordination of care through STAR Kids. The MCOs will provide service coordination, which will help identify needs and connect members to medical services and qualified providers. The Health and Human Services Commission and DARS ECI are currently collaborating on a training to help the ECI contractors and STAR Kids MCOs understand each other's responsibilities, confidentiality, and the state's expectations. Collaboration and communication between the ECI contractors and the STAR Kids MCOs will most definitely be necessary.

If you would like more information about STAR Kids, please visit the STAR Kids website at www.hhsc.state.tx.us/medicaid/managed-care/mmc/star-kids.shtml. The website includes a training for service providers like you.

Learning, Networking and Recruitment Opportunities

Texas Pediatric Society Conference

Austin, September 15-18, 2016

<https://txpeds.org/annual-meeting>

Texas Association for the Education of Young Children Conference

Dallas, September 22-24, 2016

http://www.texasaeyc.org/?page_id=1657

Congenital Cytomegalovirus Public Health & Policy Conference

Austin, September 26-27, 2016

www.cmvconference.org

Partners in Prevention Conference

Austin, September 28-30, 2016

www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention_and_Early_Intervention/PIP_Conference/

Gulf Coast African American Family Support Conference

Houston, October 8, 2016

<http://gcaafsc.net/events/conference-2016/>

Texas Physical Therapy Association Conference

Fort Worth, October 27-30, 2016

www.tpta.org/?page=ACMain

Texas Occupational Therapy Association Conference

Sugarland, November 4-6, 2016

www.tota.org/

THE IMPORTANCE OF COACHING: HELPING FAMILIES ACHIEVE RESULTS FOR CHILDREN

Coaching is an evidence-based practice used in early intervention service delivery to strengthen parents' and other caregivers' capacity to help children learn. One component of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) is to identify an evidence-based practice and ensure it is practiced with fidelity, or true to the approach as it was intended. SSIP stakeholders recommended strengthening the practice of coaching as part of the state's multi-year plan to improve children's social and emotional skills. To maximize the benefits of coaching, service providers must know the key components of coaching, including joint planning, observation, action, feedback, and reflection; and they must apply them consistently in their interactions with families and other caregivers.

The coach's (ECI provider's) role is to help the learner think about how he/she is supporting the child's learning in a specific activity or daily routine. In other words, the parents will reflect on what they are doing, evaluate the effectiveness of the actions and develop ideas for improvement so the child can make progress in learning a new skill. Learning becomes a natural outcome of parents interacting with their children.

Coaching can also be expanded to other important people in a child's life, like grandparents, other relatives, and child care providers. Using the coaching approach in early intervention redefines who supports are intended for, thus broadening the concept of serving a child with a disability to support the key people involved with the child across a variety of activities (Sheldon & Rush, 2001).



Research demonstrates that coaching is an effective tool when providing early intervention services because it increases parents' competence and confidence in their ability to encourage the child's learning and participation in daily life (Bruder & Dust, 1999; Fenichel & Eggbeer, 1992; Falherty, 1999; Kinlaw, 1999). Parental confidence when children are infants and toddlers not only strengthens the parent-child relationship, it provides practice on how to ask for what their child needs when they are seeking access to other service systems.

Parental confidence benefits children and families long after their time in ECI.

For more information on the SSIP, see the October 2015 and April 2016 editions of the *ECI Connection*. More information about the coaching approach will be available in a coaching training module, which is currently in the final stages of development and review. Also stay tuned for a coaching fidelity checklist and corresponding supervisor guidelines!

You don't have to wait until the module and checklist are released to increase your knowledge about coaching and improving children's social and emotional skills. There are numerous trainings and technical assistance materials to support staff in learning more about these topics. A spreadsheet listing currently available materials is posted on the ECI Extranet in the SSIP Document Library.

Research in the News

[*Right from Birth, Eliminating the Talk Gap in Young Children*](#), written by Stephen F. Warren, Ph.D., from the [LENA Research Foundation](#), explains the connection between early language learning and children's ability to be successful in school. The author outlines a small set of strategies which research has demonstrated improve young children's language development.



DEC RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

In the April 2016 edition of the *ECI Connection*, we discussed four strands of the Division for Early Childhood's (DEC) 2014 Recommended Practices: Leadership, Family, Environment, and Assessment. In this edition, we are providing you information on the remaining four strands and their associated practices. Links to the Early Childhood Technical Assistance center's (ECTA) website are included for additional guidance.

Instruction

Instruction practices refer to the foundational practices providers from all disciplines can use for effective service delivery. Because DEC supports providers who work with children up to age eight, some of the recommended practices in the Instruction strand are more appropriate for practitioners working in a classroom setting, or for practitioners who work with children over three. Additionally, some of the practices in this strand are written as if the practitioner is providing direct instruction to a child. In ECI, these practices should be interpreted as teaching the parent how to use the practice.



Instruction: <http://ectacenter.org/decrp/topic-instruction.asp>

Interaction

Brain research has proven that a child's development is dependent on interactions with others. The practices in the Interaction strand promote sensitive and responsive interactions that foster children's social-emotional competence, communication, cognitive development, problem-solving, autonomy, and persistence. More information about how interaction builds a child's brain architecture can be found on the Harvard Center for the Developing Child's website:

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/serve-and-return/>.

Interaction: <http://ectacenter.org/decrp/topic-interaction.asp>



Teaming and Collaboration

The practices in the Teaming and Collaboration strand promote and sustain collaborative interactions and partnerships. Key components of these practices include that the family is always a member of the team and the team includes providers from multiple disciplines who work together to meet the needs of the child and family.

Teaming and Collaboration: <http://ectacenter.org/decrp/topic-teaming.asp>



Transition

The practices in the Transition strand address how to support the child and family as they adjust to changes between environments or programs during the early childhood years.

Transition: <http://ectacenter.org/decrp/topic-transition.asp>



We welcome your input!

Email your feedback, suggestions or questions related to the *ECI Connection* newsletter to eciconnection@dars.state.tx.us. Messages to the *ECI Connection* mailbox should pertain only to the newsletter.

