

eci CONNECTION



Vol. 2, No. 1 — November 2016

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



In October, I accepted the invitation to serve as the Director of Early Childhood Intervention Services. I'm excited about the opportunity and believe it's an honor and privilege to work with all of you as we continue providing the best opportunities for ECI children and families.

On September 1st, we made our transition to the Health and Human Services Commission's Health and Developmental Services Section. We have received tremendous support from our new leadership and we're looking forward to developing a strong, effective and efficient partnership.

With a new organizational structure and a legislative session quickly approaching, the ECI leadership team has identified the following priorities for FY 2017:

1. Inform our new health and human services leadership, our Legislature and other decision-makers about the value and needs of the ECI program.
2. Identify ways to increase ECI's sustainability.
3. Realize the vision of the Health and Human Services transformation by improving cross-program coordination and making connections that lead to better client services.

I look forward to partnering with you on these goals and on our larger mission of ensuring that families with children with developmental delays or disabilities have the resources and support they need to reach their goals.

Dana McGrath
ECI Director

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ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF NEWSLETTER

The *ECI Connection* newsletter, whose inaugural edition released on October 22, 2015, aims to enhance communication with contractors and their staff. The newsletter is designed to share information about activities at the State Office that impact or benefit contractors; introduce best practices for service delivery; raise awareness of available trainings, events and resources; and keep you abreast of other important news and developments. Now that we have a year of distribution under our belt, we would like to gauge your feedback about the *ECI Connection's* value, usefulness, and importance to you. Please take a few minutes to take this survey and tell us what you think about the *ECI Connection*.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6BR6PYV>

Study Highlights Importance of Social-Emotional Development: Confirms Texas SSIP is on the right track

The purpose of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) is to improve outcomes for the children we serve. In Texas, we are focusing on improving the rate of growth in social-emotional skills of infants and toddlers. We are in a very exciting phase of the SSIP where new professional development products have recently been released and improvement activities are being implemented. A coaching training module, a coaching fidelity checklist, and a family informational handout with an associated tip sheet on its use are new tools developed for this effort. As we begin using these products to improve the social-emotional development of infants and toddlers, it is helpful to remember why social-emotional development is so important.

A new study out of Johns Hopkins University and the Baltimore Education Research Consortium describes the relationship between social-emotional readiness for kindergarten and long-term school success. The study shows that children who develop positive social-emotional skills before entering kindergarten are less likely to be retained, to require special education services, and to be suspended or expelled by fourth grade. It also shows the importance of strengthening the parents' ability to relate to their children and manage their behavior.

This study clearly underscores how critical it is for ECI providers to identify social-emotional delays and concerns early and also provide necessary, effective intervention to strengthen social-emotional skills as well as the parent-child relationship. For an article summarizing the research study and linking to the actual study, visit:

www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/selstudy/



Spotlight on Texas Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (TEHDI) Publications



The ECI state office and you, as a local provider, partner with TEHDI to ensure infants and toddlers' hearing is appropriately screened and assessed.

In the last year, the TEHDI program developed a brochure for hearing screeners that explains ECI services. As a result, hearing screeners are able to better explain to families what they can expect from ECI and how ECI can assist them. ECI service coordinators may find several of TEHDI's publications useful in helping families understand the difference between screening and assessment and in answering common questions from parents.

TEHDI, which is part of Texas Health Steps (THSteps), provides a number of informational materials for referral sources, including physicians, hearing screeners, audiologists, and early intervention providers. These materials explain best practices for professionals, but also help families to better understand why newborn hearing screening, diagnosis and, if needed, early intervention services are critical for their children's development.

In addition to TEHDI, THSteps provides health and dental care, case management and transportation services for children with Medicaid. THSteps provides publications that can help service coordinators link families to these important benefits.

The TEHDI brochures and other THSteps publications are available at no cost and can be ordered online at <http://dshs.texas.gov/thsteps/THStepsCatalog.shtm>

QA Visits Identify Areas of Strength and Areas for Growth

ECI quality assurance (QA) staff is committed to achievement of program standards and continuous improvement in the delivery of ECI services. The ECI QA team provides scheduled visits throughout the year to assist programs in detecting areas of concern; identify program strengths; and provide technical assistance (TA), training and guidance to improve child and family services and outcomes. During a QA visit, the team reviews child records, completes onsite observations, and examines general program oversight and efficiency.

During Fiscal Year 2016, the ECI QA team visited 17 programs. Below are the top three identified program strengths, the top three areas of concern and the recommendations for TA provided by the QA team from those visits.

STRENGTHS

8 of the 17 programs excelled at family engagement during service delivery visits.



7 of the 17 programs made sure the Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) identified all needs as documented in the child's record.



7 of the 17 programs used the Electronic Record Form BDI-2/Mobile Data System (MDS) for administration.



CONCERNS

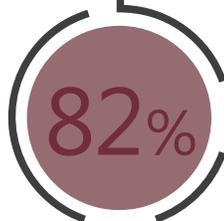
16 of the 17 programs had Licensed Practitioner of the Healing Arts (LPHA) reports that lacked elements required by ECI and/or Medicaid.

Recommendation for TA
The [Quality Services Webinar #2 – Referral and Evaluation \(Parts 1 & 2\)](#) includes information on the necessary components of an LPHA evaluation report.



14 of the 17 programs had evaluation teams that did not proceed to Qualitative Determination of Delay (QDD) when the BDI-2 scores and/or other information warranted.

Recommendation for TA
The [Qualitative Determination of Delay \(QDD\) webinar series](#) provides guidance on when to proceed to QDD and how to document the team's rationale.



13 of the 17 programs had inadequate service planning to meet the needs of children and families.

Recommendation for TA
The [Quality Service Webinar #4 – Service Planning](#) includes information to address service planning. Another resource on adequate service planning on the ECI website is [An Analysis of Needs and Service Planning in ECI](#).



INCREASING UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN ECI AND MMCO CONTRACTORS: A WEBINAR SERIES

ECI and the Medicaid Managed Care Unit are collaborating on the development of a webinar series for both ECI contractors and the Medicaid managed care organizations (MMCOs). This training is the result of surveys of both the ECI contractors and the MMCOs. Contractors were asked to provide information about their successes and challenges working with the provision, billing, and payment of ECI services within the state's Medicaid managed care system.

The webinar series will focus on educating the contractors about each other, share their successful strategies, and help them avoid common pitfalls. An information alert will be distributed when the webinar is available.

The tentative structure of the training is as follows (the anticipated audience for parts 1 and 2 is anyone working in the ECI service system. The anticipated audience for parts 3 and 4 is anyone working for an MMCO):

PART
01

Overview of Texas Medicaid Managed Care:

An overview of managed care, how the MMCO differs from TMHP, the MMCO's general contractual responsibilities, and the MMCO's contractual responsibilities specific to ECI.

PART
02

Providing ECI Services through Medicaid Managed Care:

Finding the correct MMCO personnel for the task at hand, potential content for contracts with the MMCOs, establishing routine communication processes, and accessing MMCO service coordination personnel.

Texas Early Childhood Intervention Overview:

An overview of ECI, capitated versus non-capitated ECI services, FERPA, Part C entitlement, and the IFSP team.

PART
03

Managed Care with ECI Contractors:

IFSP as service authorization, Medicaid entitlement, potential content for contracts with ECI contractors, establishing routine communication processes, and accessing the ECI service coordinator.

PART
04

LEARNING, NETWORKING AND RECRUITMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Central Texas African American Family Support Conference

February 8-9, 2017

Austin, Texas

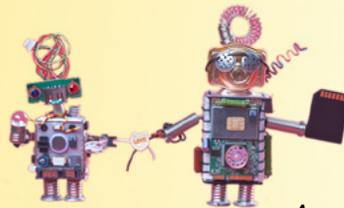
www.ctaafsc.org

Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association

February 23-25, 2017

Austin, Texas

www.txsha.org



RESEARCH IN THE NEWS

From Best Practices to Break Through Impacts: A Science-Based Approach to Building a More Promising

Future for Young Children and Families, is a new report that synthesizes decades of research and advances in science to identify five key characteristics that are consistently associated with positive outcomes within the early childhood system of services. A series of articles are available on the Harvard Center for the Developing Child's website at <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/from-best-practices-to-breakthrough-impacts/>.



We welcome your input!

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