

## Infant-Toddler Program Service Coordination

### Introduction

One of the required services under the Infant-Toddler Program is service coordination. Because the Service Coordinator plays a significant role in the implementation of the Infant-Toddler Program, federal and state regulations require that children and families served by the Infant-Toddler Program have an assigned Service Coordinator. The entitlement of the Infant-Toddler Program guarantees that service coordination as defined by the Infant-Toddler Program be provided regardless of restrictions imposed by funding sources. Service coordination may be billed to funding sources under a different service name and with a slightly different service definition. Service Coordinators must pay close attention to the service definitions of both the Infant-Toddler Program and any funding sources used to ensure that all applicable requirements are met.

### Overall Roles and Responsibilities

Overall roles and responsibilities of Service Coordinators include:

- arranging, linking, integrating, coordinating, and monitoring the delivery of services, including evaluation, assessment, medical, and health services, across agency lines, and serving as a liaison between parents and other service providers;
- serving as a single point of contact in helping the parent to obtain the services and assistance they need;
- assessing child and family concerns, priorities, and resources on a regular basis; assessing the child's development and monitoring the child's progress toward outcomes;
- initiating the Individualized Family Service Plan process and taking responsibility for the development, implementation, and reviews of the Individualized Family Service Plan;
- assisting parents of eligible children in identifying and gaining access to the early intervention services and other services identified in the Individualized Family Service Plan;
- assisting families by providing knowledge, information, and support in order to access needed services;
- facilitating the timely delivery of available services and monitoring the provision of services;
- exploring continuously the appropriate services and situations needed to benefit the development of each child being served for the duration of the child's eligibility;

- assessing the service coordination needs of the child and family on a regular basis;
- informing and educating the families of the availability of advocacy services and all child and family rights and procedural safeguards under the Infant-Toddler Program, and assisting with dispute resolution, if needed;
- assisting and enabling a child eligible under the Infant-Toddler Program and the child's family to receive the rights, procedural safeguards, and services that are authorized to be provided under this Program, and
- facilitating the transition, including the development of a transition plan, of the child from the Infant-Toddler Program at the age of three.

### **Designation of a Service Coordinator**

The Children's Developmental Services Agency must:

- assign a Service Coordinator to assist the family within two working days of the child's referral to the Infant-Toddler Program;
- coordinate with other providers to ensure that only one Service Coordinator under the Infant-Toddler Program is assigned;
- ensure that the assigned Service Coordinator does not provide other required Infant-Toddler Program services, except as a last resort when no other provider is available;
- assign the most appropriate Service Coordinator based on the needs of the child and family and available service coordination providers;
- inform the parent that he may request a change in the family's Service Coordinator if the needs of his child or family change or if he determines that another Service Coordinator would be better able to assist them;
- accommodate requests for changes to the best of its ability, and
- provide training and monitoring of Service Coordinators.

### **Service Coordination Providers**

Service coordination for the majority of children in the Infant-Toddler Program will be provided by the Children's Developmental Service Agency. The following agencies may provide Infant-Toddler Program service coordination through agreement with the Children's Developmental Services Agency for children who meet the following criteria:

#### Governor Morehead Preschool Program

- primary diagnosis of the child is visual impairment;
- must meet eligibility requirements for Governor Morehead Preschool Program services and is referred to or enrolled in the Infant-Toddler Program, and
- major service needs are related to a diagnosis of visual impairment and these will be ongoing for child and family over the time child is enrolled in the Infant-Toddler Program.

#### Early Intervention Program for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- primary diagnosis of the child is deafness or hearing impairment;
- must meet eligibility requirements for the Early Intervention Program for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and is referred to or enrolled in the Infant-Toddler Program, and
- major service needs are related to a diagnosis of deafness or hearing impairment and these will be ongoing for child and family over time child is enrolled in the Infant-Toddler Program.

#### Local Health Departments

- primary diagnosis of the child is related to significant health conditions, although service coordination may be provided to a broader population based on collaborative decision-making between the local Health Department and the Children's Developmental Services Agency; and
- is referred to or enrolled in the Infant-Toddler Program.

The Children's Developmental Services Agency must collaborate with the above agencies from the time of referral to the Infant-Toddler Program or from the time that a child who meets these special criteria is identified in order to designate the most appropriate Service Coordinator. Service Coordinators under the Infant-Toddler Program must adhere to all Infant-Toddler Program requirements as outlined in this Policy, the provider agreement with the Children's Developmental Services Agency, and the *North Carolina Infant-Toddler Program Policy and Procedure Manual*.

#### Parents as Service Coordinators

Although a rare occurrence, a parent may wish to assume the role of Service Coordinator. This is acceptable in regard to responsibilities related to identifying concerns, priorities and resources, thinking about decisions, arranging for services, coordinating all the services being received, etc. However, federal regulations are clear that the Infant-Toddler Program must designate someone other than the parent to fulfill responsibilities related to ensuring that child and family rights are protected and Infant-Toddler Program procedures are followed. Clear delineation of responsibilities must be outlined on the Individualized Family Service Plan by the parent and the designated Infant-Toddler Program Service Coordinator, if a parent makes this request.

#### Specific Roles and Responsibilities

The Service Coordinator has primary responsibility for assisting and supporting the family during referral, eligibility determination, service planning, service delivery, and transition. The Service Coordinator is the family's guide, advocate, and support person at all times. In addition to the specific responsibilities outlined in the following sections, the Service Coordinator is responsible at each point in time for:

- establishing and maintaining communication among all parties involved with the child and family;
- ensuring that procedural safeguards, including notification of Child and Family Rights, Written Prior Notice, Written Parental Consents, Native Language/Mode of Communication, Surrogate Parent, Confidentiality and Privacy Issues, Parental Access and Amendment to Records, and Individual Child Complaint Resolution, are followed, and
- ensuring appropriate and timely documentation, including the reporting of relevant data and the submission of required forms, notations, and other information to the Children's Developmental Services Agency.

### **First Contacts**

- establishing a relationship with the family on behalf of the Infant-Toddler Program;
- explaining the Infant-Toddler Program including Program philosophy, child and family rights, referral and eligibility determination process, etc.;
- explaining options and the intake process, gathering necessary intake information, getting consents signed by parent, and coordinating with the business staff of the Children's Developmental Services Agency to gather financial information at necessary times;
- determining if the child is enrolled in the Child Service Coordination Program or another service coordination program and coordinating next steps in the Infant-Toddler Program referral process with this person;
- providing information to the parent about selection of a Service Coordinator under the Infant-Toddler Program and of process for requesting a change, should the parent so choose;
- beginning a family-directed identification of family needs, strengths, concerns, priorities resources, daily routines, activities, and places and
- verifying risk indicators for referrals to the Infant-Toddler Program.

### **Eligibility Determination and Evaluation**

- working closely with the parent and other members of the team that completes the initial evaluation and makes the eligibility determination;
- gathering documentation on which to base eligibility decisions;
- conducting a family-directed evaluation of family concerns, priorities, and resources, and identification of supports needed related to enhancing their child's development, unless completed by another professional;
- discussing with the parent the family's need for transportation to the evaluation, if it is not conducted in the child's home and helping to arrange transportation;
- coordinating the initial evaluation as well as necessary follow-up assessments, including making recommendations regarding the other disciplines to be involved, scheduling evaluations, identifying with the family and other team members the most appropriate environments for the evaluations to occur;
- serving as a member of the evaluation team and completing components of the child's evaluation, as appropriate;
- participating in the eligibility determination decision;
- organizing and managing the interpretative process to discuss the evaluation results with the parent;
- notifying the referral source and the child's primary physician of eligibility status with written parental consent;
- making referrals to the Child Service Coordination Program, if the child is deemed not eligible for Infant-Toddler Program services or if the parent declines enrollment in the Infant-Toddler Program, and
- making referrals to other community resources, as appropriate.

**Individualized Family Service Plan Development**

- identifying with the parent appropriate Individualized Family Service Plan team members based on child and family information;
- facilitating the Individualized Family Service Plan meeting, including discussions of the evaluation team's functional developmental concerns, the child's present level of development, child and family strengths and needs;
- facilitating the development of the Individualized Family Service Plan with the parent and other members of the Individualized Family Service Plan team;

- working with the parent and other Individualized Family Service Plan team members to identify specific functional outcomes for the child and family and how to incorporate these outcomes into daily routines, activities and places;
- identifying with the parent natural environments and supports existing in the community appropriate for the child and family;
- working with the parent and other Individualized Family Service Plan team members to determine the level of assistance needed for the child to function successfully and achieve identified outcomes in such environments;
- working with the parent to select service providers once outcomes are identified;
- explaining the content of the Individualized Family Service Plan so that the parent fully understands the content and implications;
- determining with the parent the specific nature of assistance the Service Coordinator will provide to support and assist the family in implementing and monitoring the Individualized Family Service Plan;
- obtaining required signatures and assuring that the parent and other team members have a copy of the Individualized Family Service Plan, and
- monitoring the 45-day timeline and recording documentation regarding the process and any delays.

**Ongoing Individualized Family Service Plan Follow-up, Service Provision, and Assessment**

- authorizing the provision of services through the Children's Developmental Service Agency as delineated in the Individualized Family Service Plan;
- assisting the family with timely access to services, including referral to services and arranging service provision with follow up, as needed and documenting any delays in obtaining services and keeping the parent and the Children's Developmental Services Agency informed of all efforts;
- working with service providers to meet identified child and family outcomes and giving input as a part of the Individualized Family Service Plan Team;
- completing reviews of the Plan with the parent and other Individualized Family Service Plan team members and modifying the Individualized Family Service Plan as appropriate;
- actively monitoring services for quality and recommended practices, including being present for some services, talking with the parent as well as service providers regarding the provision of services, discussing progress made toward outcomes, identifying any new concerns, reviewing service delivery documentation, etc.;

- arranging new assessments and re-evaluations by other providers as needed and completing child or family assessments or re-evaluations, as appropriate;
- gathering the parent's input on system issues and outcomes, service provision and parent's satisfaction with the supports and services they are receiving, and
- assessing and monitoring the ongoing consultation and support needs of persons providing services for the child and family and providing or arranging for consultation and technical assistance, as needed.

**Resource Specialist**

- identifying other community individuals, agencies, programs, natural environments, supports, and services that may be resources for the child and family and how these can be accessed;
- educating and empowering the family to advocate for their child;
- linking the family to other families and to advocacy and parent support organizations, as appropriate;
- providing the family with information and support related to understanding the child's special needs;
- providing the family with information about child health and development, including the need for well child care, immunizations, etc.;
- providing information and resources to the family and providers regarding natural environments and other recommended practices, and
- facilitating communication and coordination with the child's medical home and other specialty care providers involved with the child and family as necessary to support and assist the family.

**Transition at Age Three or Upon Exiting the Infant-Toddler Program**

- educating the parent regarding options, transition process, etc.;
- working jointly with the Local Education Agency staff to ensure a successful transition to the public school system, if the child qualifies for the Preschool Program;
- arranging for all evaluations required for transition;
- functioning as a liaison between the child and parent and the next program, as appropriate, including making referrals, arranging transition planning meetings, providing information to

the parent on the next program, facilitating visits to see the next program and meet staff, providing required information to next program with parental consent;

- working with the parent and service providers to arrange for appropriate services to continue for the child on his third birthday, as needed, and
- referring the child to the Child Service Coordination Program, if appropriate and with written parental authorization.

*(Additional information about these responsibilities can be found in other Policy Bulletins in this Manual.)*