



Wendy Whipple, Program Specialist  
With Support from the RRCP,  
Early Childhood Service Delivery Priority Team

**KEY PRINCIPLES OF EARLY INTERVENTION  
AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICES: A CROSSWALK  
WITH THE ARC OF THE UNITED STATES AND  
THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION ON  
INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL  
DISABILITIES POSITION STATEMENT ON  
EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES**

Many states have been evaluating their early intervention practices and undergoing system change to incorporate effective practices related to providing services within the natural environment, as well as implementing a primary service provider approach based on the family and child's needs. This document provides a crosswalk that illustrates effective early intervention practices and relevant statements from disciplines providing early intervention services.

This document highlights how the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) and the ARC of the United States' position statement on early intervention supports the early intervention key principles and reflects alignment with high quality early intervention practices. It is intended to promote dialogue within the early childhood community about the key principles and provision of high quality early intervention services, which each profession provides within their profession's scope of practice.

The starting point for this document was the "AGREED UPON PRACTICES FOR PROVIDING EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES IN NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS" document, which includes practices that support the key principles of providing early intervention services in natural environments. The document, developed by the Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments, reflects practices validated through research, model demonstration, and outreach projects implemented by workgroup members. The document includes the consensus opinions of the workgroup members, who avoided endorsing any specific model or approach.

The national workgroup included Susan Addision, Betsy Ayankoya, Mary Beth Bruder, Carl Dunst, Larry Edelman, Andy Gomm, Barbara Hanft, Cori Hill, Joicey Hurth, Grace Kelley, Anne Lucas, Robin McWilliam, Stephanie Moss, Lynda Pletcher, Dathan Rush, M'Lisa Shelden, Mary Steenberg, Judy Swett, Nora Thompson, Julianne Woods, and Naomi Younggren.

### Citations:

- Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments (2007). *Agreed upon practices for providing early intervention services in natural environments*. OSEP TA Community of Practice—Part C Settings.  
 [Agreed upon Practices for Providing Early Intervention Services in Natural Environments](#)
- Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments (February 2008). *Seven key principles: Looks like/doesn't look like*. OSEP TA Community of Practice—Part C Settings.  
 [Seven Key Principles: Looks Like/Doesn't Look like](#)

The principles identified in this document were cross-walked with statements from AAIDD and the ARC's position statement that supports the early intervention key principles. In some instances, the literature may use different terms to refer to the principles and practices. This document reflects statements found in the position statement but it does not attribute meaning to those statements. The reference used in developing this publication is included at the end of this document.

Early Intervention Key Principles	Supporting Statements from AAIDD and ARC Position Statement
<p><b>1. Infants and toddlers learn best through everyday experiences and interactions with familiar people in familiar contexts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning activities and opportunities must be functional, based on child and family interest and enjoyment</li> <li>• Learning is relationship-based</li> <li>• Learning should provide opportunities to practice and build upon previously mastered skills</li> <li>• Learning occurs through participation in a variety of enjoyable activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All young children who are at-risk for or who have been identified with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities should have access to high-quality, affordable developmental services in natural environments.</li> <li>• When early childhood services are provided in natural environments, both children and families will experience increased community inclusion during early childhood and across the life span.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. All families, with the necessary supports and resources, can enhance their children’s learning and development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All means ALL (income levels, racial and cultural backgrounds, educational levels, skill levels, living with varied levels of stress and resources)</li> <li>• The consistent adults in a child’s life have the greatest influence on learning and development-not EI providers</li> <li>• All families have strengths and capabilities that can be used to help their child</li> <li>• All families are resourceful, but all families do not have equal access to resources</li> <li>• Supports (informal and formal) need to build on strengths and reduce stressors so families are able to engage with their children in mutually enjoyable interactions and activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental involvement in any program is crucial for success, and early intervention is most effective when the families of children are fully involved.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. The primary role of the service provider in early intervention is to work with and support the family members and caregivers in a child’s life</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EI providers engage with the adults to enhance confidence and competence in their inherent role as the people who teach and foster the child’s development</li> <li>• Families are equal partners in the relationship with service providers</li> <li>• Mutual trust, respect, honesty and open communication characterize the family-provider relationship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families are the constant in children’s lives, and the primary source of lifelong support and early learning.</li> <li>• Families should be supported in making informed decisions and in partnering effectively with professionals to achieve positive outcomes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. The early intervention process, from initial contacts through transition, must be dynamic and individualized to reflect the child’s and family members’ preferences, learning styles and cultural beliefs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families are active participants in all aspects of services</li> <li>• Families are the ultimate decision makers in the amount, type of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and families must have access to a system of evidence-based services which is community-based and coordinated and responsive to individual and cultural differences.</li> <li>• Services should build on the strengths of the child and family, address their needs, be responsive to their culture and personal priorities.</li> </ul>

Early Intervention Key Principles	Supporting Statements from AAIDD and ARC Position Statement
<p>assistance and the support they receive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child and family needs, interests, and skills change; the IFSP must be fluid, and revised accordingly</li> <li>• The adults in a child's life each have their own preferred learning styles; interactions must be sensitive and responsive to individuals</li> <li>• Each family's culture, spiritual beliefs and activities, values and traditions will be different from the service provider's (even if from a seemingly similar culture); service providers should seek to understand, not judge</li> <li>• Family "ways" are more important than provider comfort and beliefs (short of abuse/neglect)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5. IFSP outcomes must be functional and based on children's and families' needs and priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functional outcomes improve participation in meaningful activities</li> <li>• Functional outcomes build on natural motivations to learn and do; fit what's important to families; strengthen naturally occurring routines; enhance natural learning opportunities</li> <li>• The family understands that strategies are worth working on because they lead to practical improvements in child &amp; family life</li> <li>• Functional outcomes keep the team focused on what's meaningful to the family in their day to day activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early childhood services should also provide family support that responds to families' strengths and needs and improves family quality of life.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. The family's priorities needs and interests are addressed most appropriately by a primary provider who represents and receives team and community support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team can include friends, relatives, and community support people, as well as specialized service providers.</li> <li>• Good teaming practices are used</li> <li>• One consistent person needs to understand and keep abreast of the changing circumstances, needs, interests, strengths, and demands in a family's life</li> <li>• The primary provider brings in other services and supports as needed, assuring outcomes, activities and advice are compatible with family life and won't overwhelm or confuse family members</li> </ul>	
<p><b>7. Interventions with young children and family members must be based on explicit principles, validated practices, best available research and relevant laws and regulations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practices must be based on and consistent with explicit principles</li> <li>• Providers should be able to provide a rationale for practice decisions</li> <li>• Research is on-going and informs evolving practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services should be delivered through research-based practices.</li> </ul>

Early Intervention Key Principles	Supporting Statements from AAIDD and ARC Position Statement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice decisions must be data-based and ongoing evaluation is essential</li> <li>• Practices must fit with relevant laws and regulations</li> <li>• As research and practice evolve, laws and regulations must be amended accordingly</li> </ul>	

## SOURCE

The Arc & American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. (2008). *Early intervention: Joint position statement of AAIDD and The Arc*. Retrieved from <http://aaid.org/news-policy/policy/position-statements/early-intervention>

RRCP Early Childhood Service Delivery Priority Team provided review and technical assistance to this document. Members of the team included: Betsy Ayankoya, Sharon Ringwalt, Ann Bailey, Sharon Walsh, Sue Goode, Joicey Hurth, Anne Lucas, Karen Mikkelson, and Lynda Pletcher