



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  
DIVISION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD AND  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE  
EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN  
POSITION STATEMENT**



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 Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) position statement on inclusion supports the early intervention key principles and reflects 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 DEC and the NAEYC position statement that support 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 from the DEC and NAEYC 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 DEC/NAEYC 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>• Providing access to a wide range of learning opportunities, activities, settings, and environments is a defining feature of high quality early childhood inclusion.</li> <li>• Opportunities for learning in the child's natural settings must be identified including the learning opportunities that occur in those settings.</li> <li>• More active involvement of parents in their child's program appears to be related to greater developmental progress.</li> <li>• Regular caregivers and regular routines provide the most appropriate opportunities for children's learning and receiving most other interventions.</li> <li>• Young children learn through ongoing interactions with their natural environment rather than in isolated lessons or sessions.</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>• Family-based practices provide or mediate the provision of resources and supports necessary for families to have the time, energy, knowledge and skills to provide their children learning opportunities and experiences that promote child competence and development.</li> <li>• Professionals must strengthen families' abilities to support the development of their children in a manner that is likely to increase families' sense of parenting competence, not families' sense of dependency on professionals or professional systems.</li> <li>• Interventions must be based on the strengths and assets of children, parents, and the family, in order to have optimal benefits and outcomes.</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> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families are the constant in a child's life, thus practices should honor and facilitate the family's caregiving and decision-making roles.</li> <li>• Families or parents are considered central and the most important decision maker in a child's life.</li> <li>• Family members, practitioners, specialists, and administrators should have</li> </ul>

Early Intervention Key Principles	Supporting Statements from DEC/NAEYC Position Statement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mutual trust, respect, honesty and open communication characterize the family-provider relationship</li> </ul>	<p>access to ongoing professional development and support to acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to implement effective inclusive practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognizing the central role of the family, providers, agencies and family members must work together as a team, rather than as individuals.</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 assistance and the support they receive</li> <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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respect for all children and families is a fundamental value supported by DEC.</li> <li>Teachers and others who work with and on behalf of children and families must respect, value, and support the culture, values, and languages of each home and promote the active participation of all families.</li> <li>Practitioners’ use ongoing data to individualize and adapt practices to meet each child’s changing needs.</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>Team members focus on the individual child’s functioning (e.g. engagement, independence, social relationships) in the contexts in which he or she lives, not the service.</li> <li>Functionality is stressed to ensure that children receive intervention aimed at valued outcomes or outcomes that matter in their daily lives.</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> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transdisciplinary model of service delivery is recommended to avoid fracturing (or segregating) services along disciplinary lines.</li> <li>A critical value embedded in transdisciplinary practices is the exchange of competencies between team members.</li> </ul>

Early Intervention Key Principles	Supporting Statements from DEC/NAEYC Position Statement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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> <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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DEC Recommended Practices have two primary goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To produce an empirically supported set of recommendations for practice with young children with disabilities birth through age 5, their families, and those who work with them.</li> <li>○ To increase the likelihood of the use and adoption of the Recommended Practices by identifying "indirect supports" necessary for improving direct service practice.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Practices are supported by research evidence, experience and values of stakeholders, and field validation.</li> <li>• The field now has a good deal of research for guiding practitioners' decisions related to organizing and influencing children's experiences.</li> </ul>

## SOURCE

Division for Early Childhood, & National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2009, April). *Early childhood inclusion: A joint position statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)*. Retrieved from [http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/DEC\\_NAEYC\\_EC\\_updatedKS.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/DEC_NAEYC_EC_updatedKS.pdf)

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