

Recruitment and Retention of Personnel Serving Young Children with Disabilities: Supportive Workplace Environment Strategies



For more, visit <https://ectacenter.org/topics/personnel/recruitment.asp>

The ways early interventionists, early childhood special educators, and related service providers perceive their working environment directly impacts job satisfaction and whether they stay or leave.



Factors that contribute to job satisfaction include administrative support, communication, and individual decision-making. Studies show that support from school and program leaders that focuses on staff's professional and emotional needs is essential for staff retention. Administrators who prioritize staff needs and wellness create a supportive environment. Policies and practices that meet staff's most essential needs help them stay. Peer-to-peer collaboration, coaching, mentoring, and breaks for self-care can reduce stress and improve working conditions.

Examples of successful programs include:



Alaska's Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association (APIA) invested American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds into holistic self-care and wellness initiatives to support staff. This includes offering bi-weekly online yoga classes for all staff by an Indigenous yoga instructor. The classes combined traditional knowledge and Western approaches. The classes reduced anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic distress symptoms and improved coping skills, immune functioning, relationships, and connection to culture and traditional practices.



Colorado's [Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program](#) is an investment in the mental health and well-being of children, families, and professionals in the state's ECE system. Its goal is to reduce workforce stress, increase staff retention, support the well-being of young children, and address behaviors adults find challenging. Consultants use reflective consultation as a key strategy to promote staff mental health and well-being.



Illinois' [Early Intervention Training Program \(EITP\) Leadership Fellowship](#) supports leaders to grow in their capacity to meet the needs of the EI workforce and families. The fellowship provides professional development opportunities to:

- increase emotional intelligence and strengthen leadership skills;
- increase capacity to leverage strengths and opportunities to achieve goals;
- strengthen relationships to sustain quality EI work; and
- establish social networks to connect with after the fellowship is completed.

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