



COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

201 East Colfax Avenue [Central Office 303.866.6600]
Denver, Colorado 80203-1704 • www.cde.state.co.us

William J. Moloney
Commissioner of Education

Roscoe Davidson
Deputy Commissioner

To: Local Part C Coordinators, Service Coordinators and Service Coordinator Leads
From: Elizabeth Hepp, Colorado Department of Education
Date: September 9, 2003
Re: Part C System Procedures for Children with Sensory Disabilities

This memo is to provide clarification on procedures and expectations related to referral, service coordination, multi-disciplinary assessment and IFSP development for infants and toddlers with vision and/or hearing disabilities.

There are approximately 250 Colorado children, birth – 12 months of age, who are identified each year with a sensory disability. In order to be as effective as possible in supporting the needs of their families, it is essential that those with expertise in sensory disability work in a collaborative partnership with the local Part C early intervention system, including Child Find.

The Part C procedures for children with sensory disabilities are the same procedures as for any child entering into the Part C system. This memo is to clarify the roles of people and organizations that have expertise specific to sensory disability.

In all cases the local school district's Child Find team is responsible for the initial multi-disciplinary evaluation and assessment and for participating in the development of the initial IFSP. An infant or toddler whose primary disability is a sensory loss must have a team member with expertise specific to infants and toddlers with that disability. Colorado has specially trained and/or qualified personnel to offer expertise to local teams and to families about infants and toddlers with sensory disabilities. By participating in the multi-disciplinary assessment and the development of the IFSP, these individuals contribute their knowledge and expertise to the development of a plan that is appropriate for an infant or toddler with a sensory disability.

Expertise in Visual Impairment: Persons with this specific expertise include teachers endorsed in the area of visual impairment (TVI) and certified orientation and mobility specialists. These professionals would provide evaluation and assessment in vision function, including communication skills, and the diagnosis and appraisal of specific visual disorders, delays, and abilities. Colorado has such personnel who are additionally trained in the area of early childhood. Anchor Center for Blind Children (ACBC) has an outreach program, as does the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind (CSDB), School for the Blind. The names of these appropriately qualified personnel are identified in the attached document.

Expertise in Hearing Loss: The ten regional Colorado Hearing Resource (CO-Hear) Coordinators, who are employed by CSDB, School for the Deaf, have expertise in hearing loss and early childhood. These professionals provide evaluation and assessment in functional auditory skills, language, speech, communication mode, social development, cognitive skills and development in a variety of domains. These regionally-based CO-Hear Coordinators have also participated in Colorado's Service Coordination Core Training. The Colorado Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services Unit, recommends that the multi-disciplinary assessment include utilization of a compilation of assessment procedures and instruments that are appropriate for infants and toddlers with hearing loss called the FAMILY Assessment. The names of the CO-Hear Coordinators and their respective counties are identified in the attached document.

There should always be a collaborative relationship between the CO-Hear Coordinator, the Anchor Center, or CSDB's Infant Toddler Program or any personnel specifically qualified to address the needs of infants and toddlers with sensory disabilities and the local Part C system, including the local service coordinator and all members of the multi-disciplinary team. In order to support the spirit of collaboration and partnership, we recommend that each community follow the following procedures:

- If the referral of a child with a sensory disability is received first by the local community, an appropriate resource for children with sensory disabilities will be contacted to partner with the service coordinator in initial contacts with the family and to participate in the multi-disciplinary assessment, eligibility determination and development of the IFSP (e.g., for vision loss, Anchor Center for Blind Children or CSDB, School for the Blind, Infant and Toddler Program; for hearing loss, the CO-Hear Coordinator).
- If the referral of a child with a sensory disability is received first by an agency or individual specific to that disability, the local Part C point of entry will be contacted to partner with that specialist to coordinate contacts with the family, the multi-disciplinary assessment, the determination of eligibility for Part C and the development of the IFSP.
- The IFSP team may determine that the CO-Hear Coordinator, Anchor Center staff or another person with expertise specific to the child's disability would be the most appropriate person to act as the Service Coordinator as long as that person has completed Service Coordination Core Training and agrees to fulfill all of the responsibilities of Part C Service Coordination as defined in IDEA and to participate in local service coordination training activities.
- Questions pertaining to the sensory disability should always be directed to appropriately qualified personnel.

- Local disputes regarding the referral, assessment, eligibility determination and IFSP process which cannot be resolved locally should be referred to state personnel.

An on-going spirit of collaboration and partnership on behalf of young children with sensory disabilities and their families is essential to facilitate appropriate planning and smooth transitions. A bridge conference call to discuss these procedures and to answer questions has been scheduled Tuesday, September 30 from 3:00 – 4:00 pm or Wednesday, October 1 from 3:00 to 4:00 pm. Simply dial (toll free), 1-877-778-9088 and use the conference code: 051384# to participate in the call.

cc: Colorado Hearing Resource (CO-Hear) Coordinators
Anchor Center for Blind Children
CSDB, School for the Blind/Infant and Toddler Program
CSDB, School for the Deaf /Colorado Home Intervention Program
Child Find Coordinators