

**Infant Toddler Early Learning Guidelines**  
**Implementation Recommendations**  
**June 25, 2012**

*The Infant Toddler Guidelines are designed to support professional development of infant toddler providers and help raise awareness among families of developmental practices and indicators. The Guidelines should be embedded across systems, including the Illinois State Board of Education's Prevention Initiative programs, the Illinois Department of Human Services' Child Care and Early Intervention systems, as well as other Home Visiting and medical networks among others. Implementation goals include:*

1. Improve the quality of care and learning through more intentional and appropriate practices to support infant-toddler development across systems of care.
2. Develop a more qualified workforce prepared to address the specific developmental needs of infants and toddlers.
3. Enhance the current system of early childhood services by aligning and integrating infant-toddler developmental standards with existing standards and practices for older children and across system components.
4. Serve as a resource for those informing decision-makers involved with developing and implementing birth-to-three policies and system improvements.

*Meaningful implementation will require widespread availability of comprehensive and targeted training on the Guidelines coupled with requirements within state systems. The following steps should be included in the specific implementation plan in order to achieve the above goals:*

- Continue the iterative process to gather additional information on specific implementation needs and targeted approach to individual systems through focused discussions with stakeholders throughout the state. Engage providers of all service systems to ensure the multi-layered implementation strategy for the Guideline's roll-out that will achieve desired outcomes.
- Continue coordination with networks of two- and four-year institutions to ensure that training on the Guidelines is embedded into early childhood professional preparation content.
- Create a comprehensive provider training approach that ensures a bridge from theory to practice while maintaining the integrity of the product. The training must have multiple layers to demonstrate that it is customizable for each specific system and applicable statewide. The modules should take into account the variety of services delivered and how the standards will be integrated into a range of work with infants and toddlers;
- Work with appropriate training centers in Illinois to build the customized training curriculum, tools and supporting resources necessary to implement the guidelines throughout their networks. Using a train-the-trainer model to ensure fidelity to the implementation approach across each network, training body, and technical assistance opportunity;
- Develop training and implementation modules which account for the various gradations of professional development opportunities and variety of training styles within each system. The modules should also allow for the diversity of professional training, expertise and experience of professionals within each system of infant and toddler care throughout the state;

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- Develop companion pieces to the Guidelines, which may include: guidance on use of standards within different systems of care, descriptions or crosswalks on alignment with a range of programs, abbreviated handouts on guidelines for use by parents, and others as needs are determined through the implementation. Consider comprehensive integration of document's companion pieces into training and implementation plan, as they are developed.
- Continue to pursue large training opportunities, such as conferences and network meetings, to ensure access by a broad diversity of stakeholders to the Guidelines document.
- Work to embed implementation of the Guidelines into the accountability structures of specific state agencies and systems, as appropriate, by requiring training on and use of Guidelines by existing programs and funded services.
- Build a comprehensive electronic tool to facilitate implementation and use of the Guidelines statewide.

*In addition to the specific recommendations above, further investigation should be done into the following ideas to understand the implications and direction of Illinois' implementation of the Infant/Toddler Early Learning Guidelines:*

- Follow-up with states initially interviewed to understand any new lessons learned or implementation successes achieved since initial contact;
- Explore specific training modules developed by existing training entities particular to infant and toddler development;
- Investigate implementation strategies being planned for the revisions of the Preschool Learning Standards currently in process by the Illinois State Board of Education;