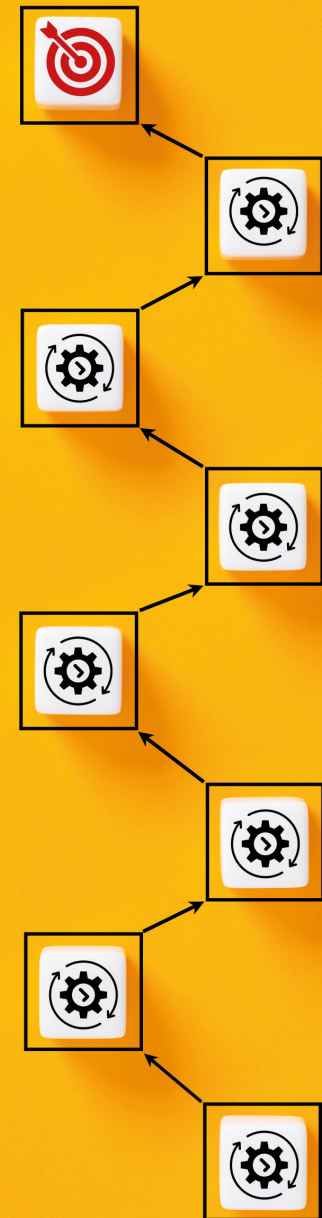


Quality Standards for Early Childhood Intervention Service Provision



Title:

Policy brief for Policy makers and relevant stakeholders

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What is contemporary ECI?

“The provision or mobilization of supports and resources to families of young children from informal and formal social network members that directly or indirectly influence and improve parent, family, and child behaviour and functioning in ways having capacity-building consequences.”

(Dunst, 2017)

“To ensure that the parents or other key caregivers are able to provide young children who have developmental disabilities with experiences and opportunities that help the children gain and use the functional skills they need to participate meaningfully in the key environments in their lives.”

(Moore, 2022)

“Builds upon and provides supports and resources to assist family members and caregivers to enhance children’s learning and development through everyday learning opportunities.”

(Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments, OSEP TA Community of Practice: Part C Settings. 2008, March)

“The different types of parenting supports provided by early childhood practitioners and other social network members that provide parents the time and energy, and knowledge and skills, to engage their children in everyday child learning opportunities that promote and enhance both child and parent confidence and competence.”

(Dunst & Espe-Sherwindt, 2017)

What are quality standards in ECI?

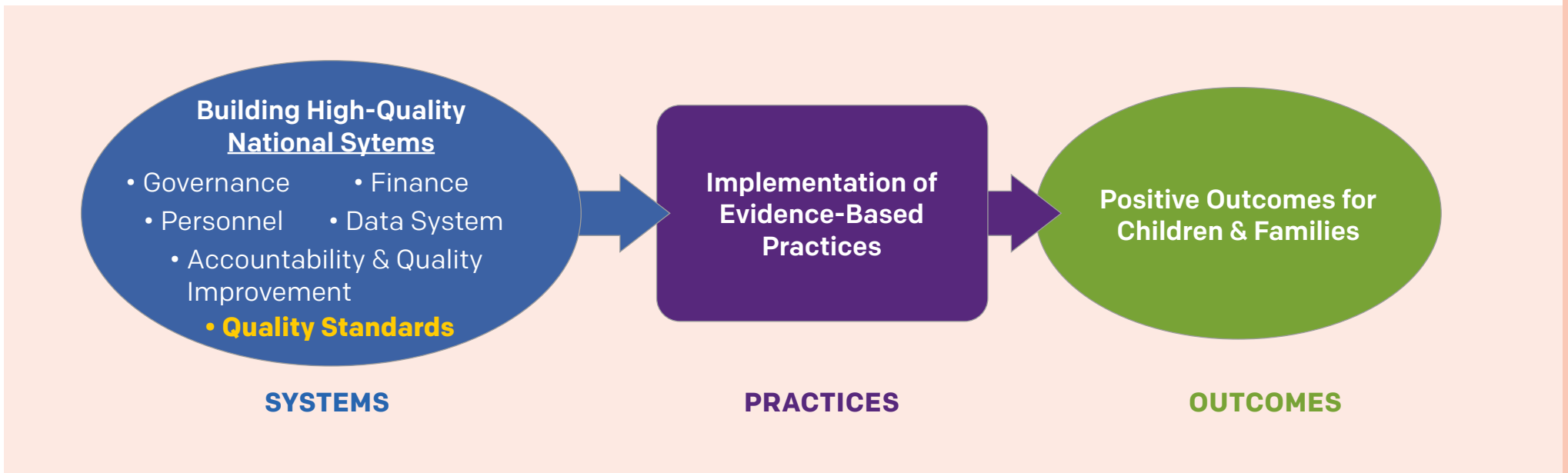
Quality standards are a set of concise statements describing those specific ECI practices that repeatedly have been shown by research to lead to positive child and family outcomes.

Why does the field need quality standards?

Quality standards...

- Bridge the gap between research and day-to-day practice
- Provide guidance to programs, practitioners and families about ways to improve child and family outcomes
- Guide the development of policies and procedures at national, regional, local and program levels
- Inform advocacy and technical support efforts
- Identify process and outcome variables for quality improvement and accountability measurement

How do systems, practices and outcomes work together?



Adapted from <https://ectacenter.org/outcomes.asp>, retrieved 12/1/2022

What serves as the foundation for quality standards in contemporary ECI?

In 2008, a national workgroup was convened by the United States Office of Special Education Programs TA Community of Practice on Part C Settings. Its task was to produce several consensus documents on ECI principles and practices validated through research, model demonstration and outreach projects. Below are the seven key principles identified by the group that are the foundation to support the development and implementation of an ECI system and quality standards.

Supporting Documents:

- [Mission and Key Principles for Providing Early Intervention Services in Natural Environments](#)
- [Seven Key Principles: Looks Like/Doesn't Look like](#)
- [Agreed upon Practices for Providing Early Intervention Services in Natural Environments](#)
- [Crosswalks: Discipline-Specific Support for Key Principles and Practices](#): This page highlights how the position statements, resources and literature across various professional organizations working in early intervention support the Agreed Upon Practices and addresses how the services of these professional organizations align with high quality early intervention practices.

Seven Key Principles and Practices for Providing Early Intervention Services in Natural Environments

1

Infants and toddlers learn best through everyday experiences and interactions with familiar people in familiar contexts.

2

All families, with the necessary supports and resources, can enhance their children's learning and development.

3

The primary role of a service provider in early intervention is to work with and support family members and caregivers in children's lives.

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.

5

IFSP outcomes must be functional and based on children's and families' needs and family-identified priorities.

6

The family's priorities, needs and interests are addressed most appropriately by a primary provider who represents and receives team and community support.

7

Interventions with young children and family members must be based on explicit principles, validated practices, best available research, and relevant laws and regulations.

Source: Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments, OSEP TA Community of Practice: Part C Settings. (2008, March). Agreed upon mission and key principles for providing early intervention services in natural environments. Retrieved from http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/families/Finalmissionandprinciples3_11_08.pdf

What serves as the foundation for quality standards in contemporary ECI?

Quality ECI Program Standards from an International Perspective

Below are standards identified by countries who have developed a national system based on the seven key principles and contemporary science.

	Portugal	Australia	USA
Link	<p>Recommended Practices in Early Childhood Intervention</p> <p>https://www.eurlyaid.eu/eciguidebook-englishversion/</p>	<p>National Guidelines for Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention</p> <p>https://www.eciavic.org.au/documents/item/1419</p>	<p>Division for Early Childhood. (2014). DEC recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education 2014</p> <p>http://www.dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices</p>
Areas/ Domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The family-centred approach ■ The family-centered intervention approach (the intervention cycle and effective help-giving practices) ■ An integrated ECI system: Intersectoral and transdisciplinary collaboration ■ Evaluation of ECI programmes ■ Training ■ Supervision 	<p>Quality Area 1: Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Family-centered and Strengths-based Practice ■ Culturally Responsive Practice <p>Quality Area 2: Inclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inclusive Participatory Practice ■ Engaging the Child in Natural Environments <p>Quality Area 3: Teamwork</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Collaborative Teamwork Practice ■ Capacity-Building Practice <p>Quality Area 4: Universal Principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Evidence Base, Standards, Accountability and Practice ■ Outcome-Based Approach 	<p>Recommended Practices: Domains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assessment ■ Environment ■ Family ■ Instruction ■ Interaction ■ Leadership ■ Teaming ■ Transition <p>DEC Recommended Practices with Examples</p> <p>https://divisionearlychildhood.egnyte.com/dl/b3QfKC3jsp</p>

	Portugal	Australia	USA
<p>Supporting docs/links</p>		<p>https://www.eciavic.org.au/resources/best-practice-information-sheets-for-families</p> <p>Best Practice Information Sheets for Families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What is Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention (ECI)? ■ What is Early Childhood Intervention (ECI)? ■ What is Family-centred & Strengths-based Practice? ■ What does Culturally Responsive Practice mean? ■ What is Inclusive & Participatory Practice? ■ What does Engaging the Child in Natural Environments mean? ■ What is Collaborative Teamwork Practice? ■ Why is Capacity-Building Practice important? ■ Why is Evidence-Based and Accountable Practice important? ■ Why should an Outcome-based Approach be used? 	<p>https://ectacenter.org/decrp/</p> <p>Performance Checklists for Practitioners https://ectacenter.org/decrp/type-checklists.asp</p> <p>Practice Guides for Practitioners https://ectacenter.org/decrp/type-pgpractitioner.asp</p> <p>Practices Guides for Families https://ectacenter.org/decrp/type-pgfamily.asp</p>

What are some important aspects/ indicators of high quality ECI system standards?

<https://ectacenter.org/sysframe/component-qualitystandards.asp>

High quality ECI standards...

- Reflect the best available evidence on early childhood program quality.
- Apply to the full range of programs in which young children with disabilities participate.
- Address a program's ability to support the needs of a diverse population of children.
- Address program's responsibilities to build on families' strengths to support them in caring for their children and in encouraging them to serve in leadership roles.
- Are clear and understood by practitioners, local program administrators and families.
- Are widely disseminated and easily accessible to practitioners, families and the general public.
- Are used to drive program improvement at all levels.
- Are reviewed and revised as necessary with input from stakeholders, including families of young children with disabilities, practitioners and representatives from ECI programs.
- Are used to drive preservice preparation and ongoing professional development, training and technical assistance.

An Example of How State/Local Programs Identify and Implement Quality Standards

In Australia, the State of Victoria developed and published in 2016 *The Victorian Early Childhood Intervention Standards* <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/needs/victorianecistandards.docx>

The document introduces five quality standards, based on national and international research:

1. *Family centred practice. Families can expect to be involved in a respectful, collaborative working partnership with service providers.*
2. *Access and engagement. Children and families have access to services appropriate to their needs without being disadvantaged by their cultural, financial or geographic situation.*
3. *Outcomes for children and families. Service delivery focuses on functional outcomes for children and families that support the achievement of their goals.*
4. *Inclusion and participation. The inclusion and participation of children in everyday family and community life is promoted.*
5. *Organisational performance. Sound governance and management guides quality service delivery.*

Each of the five standards is linked to specific components and detailed indicators. The primary intent of the standards is a tool for quality improvement. “When services implement the ECI Standards they set in place the framework that will guide continuous quality improvement in their organization” (p. 2).

What are some important aspects/ indicators of high quality ECI system standards?

Guiding the Implementation of an ECI System and Quality Standards

Implementing and Sustaining an Effective Service Delivery Approach

<https://ectacenter.org/topics/eiservices/implementing.asp>

This interactive website on the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (USA) describes five major stages in the process of transforming ECI service delivery to be consistent with quality standards. The stages were developed from multiple sources: a) analyzing the long-term change plans used by three US states to successfully transform their ECI services; b) a review of the literature on systems change, and c) incorporating extensive feedback from stakeholders and technical support providers involved in long term systems change. “While not a rigid sequence of activities, there is a logical flow. In actual implementation, the activities may cross stages and may be worked on simultaneously. Also, a change effort may begin at a later stage but back-track to do the work of the earlier stages.” The guide can be used to guide the adoption/revision of quality standards at a national, regional or district, or local program level.

Below is an overview of how each of the five stages and the steps involved are described on the ECTA website. At the end of each of the five stages are additional resources developed by states, programs, projects, and professional organizations. (<https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/effectiveservicedelivery-long.pdf>):

Guiding the Implementation of an ECI System and Quality Standards (cont.)

Stage One: Explore Service Delivery Approaches with Stakeholders

The definitions of ECI and the seven key principles described earlier provide the context for developing program standards. Years of research have identified multiple approaches, models and practices that fit within this context (and some that do not). The decisions regarding approaches depend on variables such as management, infrastructure, and staffing.

▶ **Step:** Articulate the mission

- Identify and bring together a diverse group of stakeholders (families, professionals, managers, university faculty, professional organizations, politicians)
- Come to consensus on the scope and purpose of ECI
- Develop or re-affirm the principles to be the foundation for the service delivery approach

▶ **Step:** Compare approaches

- Review the literature, gather information from other countries and consultants
- Identify the core features, benefits, implementation process and potential fiscal impact
- Choose the approach/models that best align with the chosen mission, values and directions for the country/region/local program

▶ **Step:** Compare the current service delivery system to the desired approach and identify desired changes

- List the concerns/challenges that need to be addressed
- List desired changes/outcomes at all level that the new approach will address
- Review current infrastructure & current services delivery (issues/concerns/strengths) and come to consensus on what to keep and what to change

▶ **Step:** Explore implementation

- Discuss how to implement, evaluate and sustain
- Explore readiness of potential adopters, commitment of leadership

What are some important aspects/ indicators of high quality ECI system standards?

Guiding the Implementation of an ECI System and Quality Standards (cont.)

Stage Two: Build Support and Commitment

Successful change takes time and widespread support and champions. Sharing the vision is key. However, it is important to include the voices of less-than-enthusiastic stakeholders to ensure their concerns are heard and addressed.

▶ **Step:** Advocate for Changes

- Make sure stakeholders understand the research and evidence base so that they are prepared to advocate with their respective audiences/constituencies
- Provide multiple opportunities for stakeholders to ask questions and have their questions answered
- Continue to use stakeholder input to make needed changes

▶ **Step:** Secure Leadership Support

- Identify administrators and decision-makers who will need to be supportive of the changes
- Use multiple strategies (relationship-building and communication) to turn them into champions

▶ **Step:** Develop Communication Plan

- Identify a variety of “audiences” and develop messages, materials, and formats appropriate to each
- Identify potential opposition, their issues and your response

- Develop multiple communication strategies

- Share information with stakeholders and get feedback from them

- Identify ways to use your stakeholders and champions to promote the service delivery approach

▶ **Step:** Develop, Evaluate and Refine Public Relations Materials & Activities for Your Audiences

- Disseminate the Seven Key Principles

- Develop common language for all groups of stakeholders

- Describe the core features/components of the new approach

- Include supporting evidence (research, voices of families and professionals...)

Guiding the Implementation of an ECI System and Quality Standards (cont.)

Stage Three: Develop Implementation Plan

The most important task in this stage is to create an implementation team that has consistent leadership and membership. The team will be responsible for developing the plan and overseeing its implementation. The team should contain expertise in the desired new service delivery approach and systems change/implementation.

▶ **Step:** Build Implementation Team

- Be intentional in choosing representation from all system levels, with varied experiences and perspectives, and having an understanding of implementation science
- Define roles and responsibilities and long-term commitment
- Assure that the team has what it needs to lead the change: resources, information and skills
- Choose a team leader and hold regular meetings

▶ **Step:** Determine System Supports

- Determine changes needed to administrative structures (e.g., contracts, agreements, policies and procedures, etc.)
- Determine changes needed in function structures

▶ **Step:** Build Training and Technical Assistance Capacity to Support and Sustain the Standards/Approach

- Conduct needs assessment and plan initial training

activities/& technical assistance

- Review and revise licensure and certification requirements to align with standards and new approach
- Involve higher education programs to align pre-service teaching with standards/new approach
- Develop a plan to evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of the initial training/technical assistance

▶ **Step:** Draft Implementation Plan

- Determine how to introduce and implement standards/new approach (e.g., "pilots," incentives, etc.)
- Develop strategies to assure on-going input from diverse stakeholders
- Use the stakeholders to disseminate the plan widely and gather feedback
- Use the feedback to make changes
- Use multiple methods to disseminate the plan as widely as possible

What are some important aspects/ indicators of high quality ECI system standards?

Guiding the Implementation of an ECI System and Quality Standards (cont.)

Stage Four: Implement the Plan

The implementation plan is actively facilitated by the implementation team. Examining outputs/outcomes and feedback are crucial and should lead to any needed adjustments. The plan should continually be reviewed and revised.

▶ **Step:** Adapt/Adjust Infrastructure

- Adjust any administrative procedures to increase consistency with and fidelity to the standards/new approach
- Provide general oversight, guidance and implement credentialing
- Revise policies, procedure, guidance and forms
- Develop fiscal policies and funding mechanisms

▶ **Step:** Implement Training and Technical Assistance

- Develop guidance and training materials
- Implement training and technical assistance at all levels
- Maintain relationships with and provide materials to higher education and professional organizations

▶ **Step:** Begin Implementation

- Implementation team continues to oversee all aspects
- Gather information about startup and implementation costs

- Plan and test any adaptations needed

▶ **Step:** Fully Implement

- Use evaluation and monitoring to assure (a) fidelity to standards and the approach and (b) that desired results are being achieved
- Continuously update the Implementation Plan (any changes in activities, timelines, benchmarks, evaluation, roles and responsibilities)
- Implementation team continues to gather and use information about what programs and providers need

Guiding the Implementation of an ECI System and Quality Standards (cont.)

Stage Five: Assure Sustainability

Sustainability should be planned from the very beginning. Once the plan is being implemented, gathering information through monitoring and quality assurance procedures is key. “Most important, keeping track of progress, sharing successes, keeping champions (spokespersons and advocates) active and stakeholders aware and involved will keep on-going implementation a priority, rather than allowing shift from fidelity.”

▶ **Step:** Maintain & Expand Support Base

- Make sure the “champions”/advocates are active and nurture new ones
- Disseminate public awareness, including outcomes, evaluation results, cost benefits, and family and professional stories
- Keep the focus and priority on standards and quality implementation

▶ **Step:** Continue Infrastructure/Fiscal Support

- Track information about actual costs
- Review and revised policy, procedures, guidance, etc.
- Continue to explore and expand fiscal resources

▶ **Step:** Continue Training and Technical Assistance for Fidelity

- Recruit and orient new staff to provide services according to standards and approach
- Provide tiered training and support that match all levels

of skills and experience

- Provide ongoing mentoring and reflective supervision
- Continuously fund team-level support and learning opportunities
- Update and expand all materials and trainings

▶ **Step:** Evaluate for Fidelity/Quality

- Integrate quality standard practice measures into monitoring
- Provide fiscal incentives for quality practices
- Assure provider contracts are in line with and support standards/approach
- Implementation team uses all evaluation and monitoring data to maintain and improve

Supplemental Materials on the ECTA Website:

Supplemental Materials:

- [Outline of Stages and Steps](#)
- [Implementing and Sustaining an Effective Service Delivery Approach: Stages and Steps](#)
- [Questions to ask/things to consider](#) when choosing one or the other proponents of a service delivery approach to work with

Additional Resources to Guide the Implementation of an ECI System, Programs and Quality Standards

1. Program Self-Assessments

- FINESSE-II (Families in Natural Environments Scale of Service Evaluation) (Professional Version)
https://eieio.ua.edu/uploads/1/1/0/1/110192129/finesse_ii_international_english.pdf
- FINESSE-II (Family Version) https://eieio.ua.edu/uploads/1/1/0/1/110192129/family_finesse_english.pdf
- Family FOCAS (Family Orientation of Community and Agency Services)
https://eieio.ua.edu/uploads/1/1/0/1/110192129/family_focas_english.pdf

2. Measuring Child and Family Outcomes

- <https://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/childoutcomes.asp>
- <https://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/familysurveys.asp>

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