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PROVIDER INFORMATION NOTICE

TO: EI Providers

FROM: Ann M. Freiburg
Bureau of Early Intervention

DATE: November 20, 2015

RE: Evaluation/Assessment and Assessment Policy & Procedure Clarification

As noted in the Provider Information Notice released October 29, 2015, the Early Intervention (EI) Child & Family Connections (CFC) Procedure Manual was updated and released November 1, 2015. This notice provides additional clarifying information on evaluation/assessment policies and procedures.

Federal Regulations governing EI require we have processes in place to determine eligibility for children. These regulations specify that a child is eligible based on a multidisciplinary approach and that evaluation and assessment processes help teams determine eligibility, identify the unique strengths and needs of a child and family, and identify the appropriate services to help meet those needs.

Federal Regulations also specify that Evaluation and Assessment have separate definitions as they are two separate processes. Evaluation refers to the processes utilized to determine a child's eligibility for EI and Assessment refers to the processes utilized to determine a child's unique strengths and needs and the EI services appropriate to meet those needs. A Service Coordinator is responsible for establishing whether existing documentation can determine a child's eligibility for EI, this means a child who is referred to EI already has documentation to show:

- 1) a state-determined physical or mental condition which typically results in developmental delay, or
- 2) existing evaluations done before entering EI that verify that the child has the state-determined level of delay, or
- 3) risk of substantial developmental delay based on biological and/or environmental risk factors as outlined in policy and procedure.

Federal Regulations further describe that for a child whose available documentation establishes eligibility, a multidisciplinary Assessment must be conducted to understand the child's and family's unique strengths and needs in order to determine which EI services will help meet those needs.

The CFC Procedure Manual was updated to ensure compliance with the federal language. The definition of a child with a developmental delay as outlined in federal regulations is a child experiencing a delay in one or more of the following areas:

- 1) Cognitive development
- 2) Physical development, including vision and hearing
- 3) Communication development
- 4) Social or emotional development
- 5) Adaptive development

The updated CFC Procedure Manual incorporated this language and the processes for determining eligibility were restated to ensure that CFC staff were fully aware of the requirements for eligibility determination. The definition of delay has not changed with the CFC Procedure Manual but clarification about expectations has been provided as it was determined that current practices were not consistent with the intent of the law.

The *Early Intervention Service Descriptions, Billing Codes and Rates* document (Provider Handbook) contains similarly matching language in the Definitions section under Global Evaluation. The new language does not reflect a change in how children are eligible or ineligible for Early Intervention in Illinois. The language has been updated to improve the practices being utilized in order to comply with the intent of the federal law.

Therefore, as part of the clarification of Evaluation and Assessment practices, the EI Provider Evaluation/Assessment Report format has been updated to follow the intent of the law. The required EI Evaluation/Assessment Report format is a “format” meaning the actual document is available for use by all EI evaluating and assessing providers. If providers have their own report form, the provider may continue its use as long as the provider’s report incorporates the same elements, in the same order as the updated EI Evaluation/Assessment Report format. When comparing the former version to the updated version, you will notice the same components remain and that we have included better instructions and have improved the flow of the document to match the intended practices of EI eligibility determination.

The updated report format and instructions will be incorporated into the updated Provider Handbook when it is released at a later date. The updated report format is available for use effective 12/01/15 but must be used effective December 15, 2015. Attached to this notice are the instructions (Attachment 1) and the updated report format. For your convenience, the report format will also be available online soon. Additional resources for understanding evaluation/assessment and eligibility determination practices including the CFC webinars, evaluation/assessment resources, and a variety of training opportunities are available on the EI Training Website. A Frequency Asked Question document is being finalized and will be posted there soon as well.

An update to the EI Provider Handbook with input from various stakeholders, including EI Providers, is underway, so look for an updated Provider Handbook in the coming months.

Again, thank you for the hard work you do every single day and, as usual, continue to watch the EI Provider Connections’ website for future announcements.