

Professional Development Standards for DI Assistants Post Validation [Last updated 12-20-2011]

This document presents Professional Development Standards for Developmental Intervention (DI) Assistants. DI Assistants is the title used for paraprofessionals working with infants and toddlers with exceptional needs and their families in the state of Colorado. The 10 state professional development standards, which include knowledge and skills, are aligned with national and state early childhood professional preparation standards of the Division of Early Childhood (DEC), the National Association of Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Common Core Professional Development Standards for Paraeducators in Special Education and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Early Childhood Special Education Personnel Standards.

The knowledge and skills for each of the DI Assistant professional development standards were determined after a thorough review of early childhood and early childhood intervention literature and extensive deliberations by an Expert Panel (EP) which included diverse national and state leaders in early childhood special education, early intervention and related services, with representation from Zero to Three, state Part C, early childhood teacher educators from higher education [4 year and 2 year colleges] and direct service providers across early intervention disciplines. Each knowledge and skill underwent a thorough validation process in the state to identify if: (a) they were necessary for safe and effective practice, and (b) the wordings were appropriate and clear for personnel working with infants and toddlers with exceptional needs and their families.

Thus, the terminology used in the standards is consistent with DEC-CEC and appropriate for those who serve populations of children birth through 2 years of age and their families. *Additionally, the knowledge and skills under each standard are preceded by a preamble which has been adapted with permission from the DEC and CEC (DEC, 2010; CEC, 2011).*

Terms used in the DI Assistant Standards:

1. *Development and Learning*: terms to be used, and in that order, to convey the focus of the following knowledge and skills for DI Assistants – to support the developmental and learning needs of infants and toddlers and their families.
2. *Developmental Domains*: term to be used to simplify the listing of the five developmental domains specified in federal law – cognitive, communicative, social-emotional, motor, and adaptive development.
3. *Developmental Intervention*: includes services that address the functional developmental needs of infants and toddlers with developmental and/or learning needs as identified by the family, in the areas including, but not limited to the above mentioned developmental domains.
4. *Developmental Intervention Assistant (DI Assistant)*: provides developmental intervention services to families, infants and toddlers under the supervision of a qualified early intervention provider who has completed the Developmental Intervention Supervisor Academy (DISA).
5. *Early Intervention Team*: includes family members, a service coordinator, members of the multidisciplinary assessment team, appropriate qualified personnel providing early intervention services, and other individuals identified by the family to participate on the early intervention team. DI Assistants provide intervention services to families, infants and toddlers as determined by the Early Intervention Team.
6. *Evidence-Based Early Intervention Practice*: a decision-making process that integrates the best-available research evidence with family and practitioner wisdom and values, and which considers characteristics, preferences, strengths, and needs of child and family (Buysse, Wesley, Snyder, and Winton, 2006).

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7. *Exceptional Needs*: in accordance with DEC-CEC professional development standards, the term “exceptional needs” will be used for infants and toddlers who have developmental delays or disabilities.
8. *Family-Centered*: a philosophy or way of thinking that leads to a set of practice in which families or parents are considered central and the most important decision maker in a child’s life and that service systems and personnel must support, respect, encourage and enhance the strengths and competence of the family (DEC, 2005, p #301).
9. *IFSP*: refers to the Individualized Family Service Plan. The IFSP process includes identification, referral, evaluation, development and implementation of the Individualized Family Service Plan, periodic reviews and transition planning.
10. *Infants and Toddlers*: all children birth through 2 years of age.
11. *Infants and Toddlers with Exceptional Needs*: infants and toddlers, birth through 2 years of age, who have developmental delays or disabilities.
12. *Natural Learning Environments*: settings in which children without disabilities spend time. Common places include the home, child care programs, family daycare homes, and in community settings (e.g., stores, barber’s shops, doctor’s offices, parks, etc.) and programs (e.g., children’s hour at the library, gymnastics classes, etc.) available to all children in the society. Activities and routines may need to be adapted to ensure that children with disabilities are able to be integral members of the activity or routine (DEC, 2005, p #96).
13. *Supervisor*: in Colorado, a qualified early intervention provider who has completed the Developmental Intervention Supervisor Academy (DISA) to expand their communication, collaboration, problem solving, and supervisory skills needed to work with DI Assistants. DI Assistants use specific strategies and procedures under the guidance of the supervisor.

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Standard 1: Foundations

DI Assistants understand that early intervention is an evolving discipline based on philosophies, evidence-based practices and principles, relevant laws and policies, diverse and historical points of view and human issues that influence the field of early childhood special education and the development of infants and toddlers with exceptional needs. DI Assistants understand how issues of human diversity interact with the delivery of early intervention services.

Standard 1: Foundations	
	Knowledge
EIP1K1	Purpose of supports and services for infants and toddlers with exceptional needs.
EIP1K2	Basic understanding of historical, philosophical foundations, and policies guiding services for infants and toddlers both with and without exceptional needs.
EIP1K3	Eligibility categories for the system of early intervention.
EIP1K4	Allowable supports and services for the system of early intervention.
EIP1K5	Rights and responsibilities of infants and toddlers with exceptional needs, their families, and other stakeholders.
EIP1K6	Family systems and the role of families in the early intervention process.
EIP1K7	Impact and contributions of culturally diverse groups on provision of services for infants and toddlers in their natural environments.
	Skills
EIP1S1	Use basic early intervention terminology to perform responsibilities of a DI Assistant.
EIP1S2	Implement activities associated with family-centered, routines-based interventions within natural environments under the guidance of the supervisor.
EIP1S3	Implement family services consistent with family rights and procedural safeguards under the guidance of the supervisor.
EIP1S4	Demonstrate respect and appreciation for differences in values, languages and customs among home and community (i.e., infant-toddler centers, hospitals, etc.).
EIP1S5	Access credible resources to extend and expand understanding of exceptional needs as guided by the supervisor.

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Standard 2: Development & Characteristics of Learners

DI Assistants demonstrate respect for infants and toddlers and their families as unique individuals. DI Assistants understand the similarities and differences in early childhood development and the characteristics between and among infants and toddlers with and without exceptional needs. Moreover, DI Assistants understand how exceptional conditions can interact with the domains of early childhood development and understand how experiences of young children with exceptional learning needs impact families, as well as infants' and toddlers' ability to develop and learn.

Standard 2: Development & Characteristics of Learners	
	Knowledge
EIP2K1	Typical and atypical early childhood development.
EIP2K2	Physical, biological and environmental factors that affect early childhood development and learning in all domains.
EIP2K3	Developmental implications of characteristics of various exceptionalities.
EIP2K4	Infants and toddlers develop and learn at varying rates.
EIP2K5	Impact of exceptionality and related care on development and learning of infants and toddlers.
EIP2K6	Impact of exceptionality on family concerns, resources and priorities.
EIP2K7	Family systems and the role of families in supporting development for infants and toddlers.
	Skills
EIP2S1	Use knowledge of developmental characteristics when implementing services for infants and toddlers with exceptional needs under the guidance of the supervisor.

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Standard 3: Individual Learning Differences

DI Assistants develop an understanding of the effects an exceptional condition, as well as beliefs, traditions and values across and within cultures can have on infants' and toddlers' ability to learn and develop. DI Assistants understand how primary language, culture and familial backgrounds interact with the individual's exceptional condition to impact the infant or toddler's development and learning. The understanding of these learning differences and their possible interactions provide the foundation upon which DI Assistants implement individualized interventions leading to meaningful and challenging learning for infants and toddlers with exceptional needs.

Standard 3: Individual Learning Differences	
	Knowledge
EIP3K1	Impact of cultural, social and physical environments on development and learning of infants and toddlers in all developmental domains.
EIP3K2	Impact of infants' and toddlers' abilities, needs and characteristics on development and learning in all developmental domains.
	Skills
EIP3S1	Implement and document learning experiences and strategies that respect the diversity of infants and toddlers and their families as determined by the early intervention team.
EIP3S2	Use knowledge of individual infant and toddler's strengths and interests to encourage engagement in varied home and community activities.
EIP3S3	Implement levels of support appropriate to learning and social-emotional needs of infants and toddlers with exceptional needs as determined by the early intervention team.

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Standard 4: Instructional Strategies

DI Assistants possess a repertoire of evidence-based practices to individualize and promote positive learning experiences for infants and toddlers with exceptional needs and their families. Under the guidance of the supervisor, DI Assistants use strategies to facilitate acquisition, maintenance, and generalization of skills across environments.

Standard 4: Instructional Strategies	
	Knowledge
EIP4K1	Develop an understanding of evidence-based practices in early intervention.
EIP4K2	Develop an understanding of the role of responsive caregiver-child relationships as related to implementing instruction.
	Skills
EIP4S1	Demonstrate proficiency in supporting early cognitive skills including oral communication and early literacy skills.
EIP4S2	Support the integration and participation of infants and toddlers and their families within natural environments.
EIP4S3	Support the use of self-assessment and problem solving by families of infant and toddlers under the guidance of the supervisor.
EIP4S4	Adapt instructional strategies and materials after consultation with the supervisor and the early intervention team.
EIP4S5	Use strategies to facilitate, maintain and generalize skills across environments under the guidance of the supervisor.
EIP4S6	Support the families' ability to promote infants' and toddlers' positive sense of self and self-regulation.
EIP4S7	Support strategies that promote successful transitions for toddlers.
EIP4S8	Implement and reinforce a wide variety of effective, developmentally appropriate, instructional and facilitation strategies that are responsive to the child and family's learning styles as determined by the early intervention team.
EIP4S9	Use and maintain assistive technology for infants and toddlers under the guidance of the supervisor.
EIP4S10	Use social and emotional supports, determined by the early intervention team, to enhance infants' and toddlers' meaningful, positive and active engagement.
EIP4S11	Collect data under the guidance of the supervisor for the purposes of evaluating developmental growth and providing ongoing feedback under the guidance of the supervisor.
EIP4S12	Use a continuum of intervention strategies to support infants and toddlers and families to engage in daily routines and activities as determined by the early intervention team.
EIP4S13	Implement appropriate strategies to address behavior concerns under the guidance of the supervisor.

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Standard 5: Learning Environments/Social Interactions

DI Assistants use family's daily routines to actively facilitate natural learning environments that foster health, safety and social-emotional well-being for infants and toddlers with exceptional needs. DI Assistants assist in shaping environments to encourage positive social interactions, active engagement, independence, self-motivation and self-regulation of infants and toddlers.

Standard 5: Learning Environments/ Social Interactions	
	Knowledge
EIP5K1	Strategies to facilitate responsive caregiver-child relationships.
EIP5K2	Strategies for establishing and maintaining partnerships with families.
EIP5K3	Possible communicative intent of behaviors of infants and toddlers.
EIP5K4	Influence of culture on social interactions, values and beliefs of families, professionals and society.
EIP5K5	Ways to support learning environments that allow families to maintain and appreciate their own respective language and cultural heritage.
EIP5K6	Understand the terms natural environments and routines-based activities as used in early childhood.
	Skills
EIP5S1	Support families to implement basic health, nutrition and safety practices and procedures for infants and toddlers as determined by the early intervention team.
EIP5S2	Use universal precautions to assist in maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment for infants and toddlers and their families.
EIP5S3	Support adaptations of the physical environment to provide optimal learning opportunities under the guidance of the supervisor.
EIP5S4	Assist families in using developmentally and functionally appropriate materials, equipment and environments to support infant and toddlers' learning under the guidance of the supervisor.
EIP5S5	Establish and maintain positive relationships with infants and toddlers and their families.
EIP5S6	Use everyday routines, relationships, activities and environments to facilitate learning opportunities under the guidance of the supervisor.
EIP5S7	Promote self-regulation and independence in infants and toddlers under the guidance of the supervisor.
EIP5S8	Support families in implementing strategies in a variety of settings to assist in the development of social skills of infants and toddlers as determined by the early intervention team.
EIP5S9	Implement legal and ethical practices in behavioral interventions as determined by the early intervention team.

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Standard 6: Language

DI Assistants understand typical and atypical language development and ways in which exceptional conditions can affect infants' and toddlers' experiences and use of language. According to plans designed by early intervention teams, DI Assistants support families' implementation of individualized strategies that reinforce communication development of infants and toddlers with exceptional needs. DI Assistants are familiar with the use of augmentative, alternative and assistive technologies. DI Assistants match their communication methods to infants' and toddlers' language proficiency, culture and language differences under the guidance of the supervisor.

Standard 6: Language	
Knowledge	
EIP6K1	Basic understanding of language and communication on development in infants and toddlers.
EIP6K2	Impact of language on early learning and development.
EIP6K3	Characteristics of one's own cultural use of language and how this may differ across cultures.
EIP6K4	Basic understanding of the importance of an infant and toddler's home language(s) in delivery of services.
EIP6K5	Implications of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication between providers and families.
EIP6K6	Effects of cultural and linguistic differences on growth and development.
EIP6K7	Impact of language delays on cognitive, social emotional, adaptive, play, temperament and learning needs.
Skills	
EIP6S1	Match communication methods to families' language needs and preferences under the guidance of the supervisor.
EIP6S2	Support and reinforce the development of communication of infants and toddlers under the guidance of the supervisor.
EIP6S3	Support infants and toddlers in their use of augmentative and alternative communication skills and other assistive technology as determined by the early intervention team.
EIP6S4	Support the acquisition and use of learning strategies to enhance emergent literacy of toddlers as determined by the early intervention team.
EIP6S5	Support infants' and toddlers' maintenance and generalization of strategies for effective communication across environments.
EIP6S6	Support families to respond to infants' and toddlers' cues and preferences, establish predictable routines, and facilitate communicative intentions under the guidance of the supervisor.
EIP6S7	Support and facilitate infant, toddler and family interactions as primary contexts for development and learning.

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Standard 7: Instructional Planning

The DI Assistants organize and implement recommended activities to support learning in natural environments under the guidance of the early intervention team. These efforts include managing time effectively, following written intervention and data collection plans, seeking clarification when necessary and implementing culturally responsive practices.

Standard 7: Instructional Planning	
	Knowledge
EIP7K1	Purpose and components of Individualized Family Service Process (IFSP).
EIP7K2	Roles and responsibilities of the DI Assistant related to early learning, intervention and family support.
	Skills
EIP7S1	Follow written plans for intervention with infants and toddlers, seeking clarification as needed.
EIP7S2	Prepare and organize activities to support learning of infants and toddlers in the natural environment under the guidance of the supervisor.
EIP7S3	Manage time with families effectively.
EIP7S4	Use individualized intervention strategies appropriate to the abilities and needs of the infants and toddlers as determined by the early intervention team.
EIP7S5	Use developmentally and ability appropriate strategies, technology, activities and materials for infants and toddlers under the guidance of the supervisor.
EIP7S6	Make culturally responsive adaptations for the unique developmental and learning needs of all children under the guidance of the supervisor.

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Standard 8: Assessment

DI Assistants play a vital but limited role in assessment by facilitating parents' active participation and collecting multiple types of information during intervention so that supervisors can use this data for making informed decisions. DI Assistants are aware of purposes of assessment related to referral, eligibility, program planning, instruction and placement for infants and toddlers with exceptional needs, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Standard 8: Assessment	
	Knowledge
EIP8K1	Purposes of assessment.
EIP8K2	Link between assessment and intervention.
	Skills
EIP8S1	Record information in various formats as directed by the supervisor and determined by the early intervention team.
EIP8S2	Assist in collecting and providing objective, accurate information for the supervisor.

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Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice

Like early intervention professionals, DI Assistants are guided by the profession’s ethical and professional practice standards. Their practice requires ongoing attention to legal matters along with serious professional and ethical considerations. DI Assistants engage in activities and behaviors that foster their professional growth and keep them current with evidence-based, best and promising practices to benefit children and families. DI Assistants view themselves as lifelong learners and regularly reflect on and adapt their practices. They are aware of how their own and others’ attitudes, behaviors and communication methods can influence their practice. DI Assistants understand their own skill limits as well as the limits of their role and practice within those limits.

Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice	
	Knowledge
EIP9K1	Principles that guide ethical practice.
EIP9K2	Personal and cultural biases and differences that affect one’s practice.
EIP9K3	Professional growth opportunities for continued learning.
	Skills
EIP9S1	Conduct activities in compliance with applicable laws and policies.
EIP9S2	Maintain the dignity, privacy and confidentiality of all infants and toddlers with exceptional needs, families, and agency employees.
EIP9S3	Protect the welfare and safety of infants and toddlers at all times.
EIP9S4	Provide accurate and timely information about infants and toddlers with exceptional needs to individuals who have the need and the right to know under the guidance of the supervisor.
EIP9S5	Report suspected child abuse and/or dangerous behaviors as required by law, policies and agency procedure.
EIP9S6	Practice within the limits of the defined DI Assistant’s role and responsibilities.
EIP9S7	Respect role difference of early intervention team members and DI Assistants.
EIP9S8	Follow chain of command to address policy questions, system issues and personnel practices.
EIP9S9	Practice within one’s skill limits and request direction, instruction or guidance for new or unfamiliar tasks.
EIP9S10	Practice with competence, integrity and sound judgment.
EIP9S11	Request, accept and utilize feedback from supervising professionals.
EIP9S12	Reflect on one’s performance for continuous improvement.
EIP9S13	Maintain relationships and communication with families within their professional scope of responsibility.

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Standard 10: Collaboration

DI Assistants work within a team environment where family and multiple early intervention providers collaborate to develop plans, guidance and direction for DI Assistants. DI Assistants use effective communication, problem-solving and conflict management techniques to function effectively as a contributing member of an early intervention team and the broader community.

Standard 10: Collaboration	
	Knowledge
EIP10K1	Purpose and characteristics of collaborative teaming.
EIP10K2	Common concerns and challenges faced by families of infants and toddlers with exceptional needs.
EIP10K3	Roles and responsibilities of DI Assistants and other participants on the early intervention team, including the supervisor.
	Skills
EIP10S1	Use federal, state and local policies for confidential communication about early intervention team practices.
EIP10S2	Forge respectful relationships with family members, service professionals and other early intervention team members.
EIP10S3	Communicate effectively with stakeholders as determined by early intervention team.
EIP10S4	Participate as a team member to enhance early intervention team roles, communication and problem-solving.
EIP10S5	Establish and maintain professional relationships and communication with families of infants and toddlers under the guidance of the early intervention team.