



AzEIP Guidance on the Use of Alternative Services in the Provision of Early Intervention

November 15, 2024

The Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP) provides IDEA Part C services in conformity with the child's individualized family service plan (IFSP) which includes initial planning process activities that occur in the family's natural environment (home and community) to the maximum extent possible (Refer to TBEIS Scope of Work 3.3 for service description of Team-Based Early Intervention Services). The State's expectation is that all early intervention services are provided in person with the family or caregiver in their home and/or community. AzEIP accommodates the family's request for use of alternative services when the family is unable or unwilling to receive Early Intervention Services in person.

During the 2020 COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE), the Office of Special Education (OSEP) provided guidance to have the flexibility to conduct IFSP meetings and services through alternative means when in-person meetings and services were not feasible or practicable. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) ended the PHE for the United States, effective on May 11, 2023. COVID-19 has become an endemic concern. As child, family, and service provider safety is a priority, AzEIP continues to manage risks similar to other communicable illnesses like the flu and RSV. Home visitors should utilize the [Home Visitor Safety](#) guidance document to support them in keeping healthy and safe.

AzEIP continues to accommodate families with alternative service delivery methods utilizing the guidance below:

- **Alternative Service Delivery Methods**
Alternative Services are an accommodation to ensure all families have equal access to high-quality Early Intervention Services. IFSP teams should be cognizant of the family's learning style when identifying the service delivery method. AzEIP highly recommends the use of video conference calls when alternative methods are required. If the family is unable to utilize video conference calls, phone calls are permissible.
- **Factors to Consider for Alternative Services**
Service providers should consider that alternative services may not be a viable option for all families. If a family does not have consistent access to technology

or the ability to return documents electronically signed, the family may not be a candidate for virtual services.

- **Informed Decision Making**

For parents to make informed decisions regarding their child's participation in early intervention, as well as their own role, it is essential that they have a comprehensive understanding of AZEIP's mission, guiding principles, and the team based early intervention approach to early intervention.

Family Delay

- If a family is unavailable to attend an in person visit due to illness, the visit may be considered a family delay reason. The conversation must be documented in the Early Intervention service provider's contact log. The visit must be completed as soon as possible after the reason no longer exists. Alternatively, the IFSP service could be offered to be completed through alternative means until the child or family's illness is over and the family can resume in person services.

Documentation

- Service Coordinators and active IFSP team members are responsible for documenting all conversations with families and caregivers in their contact logs.
- If a family has identified that they are unwilling or unable to receive their Early Intervention Services (Initial Planning Activities, IFSP meetings, and IFSP service delivery) in person, all active IFSP team members must document in their contact logs at a minimum:
 - The discussion with the family that AZEIP operates as a home and community based program.
 - The discussion and decision that the family is unable or unwilling to meet in person with their Early Intervention Team.
 - The identified alternative method.
 - Strategies the IFSP team will utilize to ensure the family has access to high-quality Early Intervention Services.
 - Timeline to rediscuss the decision for alternative method service delivery to ensure alternative service methods are evaluated for effectiveness.
- At IFSP meetings, if a family indicates the need for some or all of their IFSP services to be provided through alternative means due to being unwilling or unable to meet with the providers in person, the Service Coordinator documents the decision on the "IFSP Services Needed to Make Progress Towards Outcomes" page method section.

Staffing Capacity Shortage

- If the Service Providing Agency is unable to provide IDEA Part C activities, meetings, or services in person due to a capacity shortage, they must submit

- Updated organizational chart to AzEIP within five (5) business of any Contract Personnel changes per TBEIS Scope of Work 7.2.3. and
- Proof of recruitment efforts upon request as per TBEIS Scope of Work 6.11 to
 - Arizona Department of Economic Security
Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP)
Contract Manager
1789 W. Jefferson Street- MD 2HP1
Phoenix, AZ 85007
Email: AzEIPContracts@azdes.gov
- If the Service Providing Agency is not able to provide IDEA Part C services in accordance with the IFSP, it must provide Prior Written Notice to the parents as soon as possible and support the family with their dispute resolution options. Service Providing Agencies should refer to IDEA Part C 303.421 for detailed information on the use of Prior Written Notice and Procedural Safeguards Notices.

Guidance on AzEIP's use of alternative services should be implemented as soon as possible and no later than February 1, 2025.

Service Providing Agencies may contact their AzEIP Continuous Quality Improvement Coordinator or email AzEIPQualityImprovement@azdes.gov with any questions or concerns. We appreciate each of our Service Providing Agencies for their continued support in providing high quality Early Intervention Services.