Department of Economic Security/Arizona Early Intervention Program (DES/AzEIP)

Guidance for Safely Providing Early Intervention Services

Implementation Date: Mar 18, 2022

This document serves as a general framework for Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP) service providing agencies (team-based early intervention services contractors, Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), and Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (ASDB) on safely providing early intervention services.

Introduction

The Department of Economic Security/Arizona Early Intervention Program (DES/AzEIP) guidance regarding Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C early intervention services during the COVID-19 pandemic supports the importance of regular contact with families to maintain a presence and continued support for families during this difficult time. This guidance is informed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) and DES/AzEIP COVID-19 Taskforce.

This is a guidance document, not a procedure, and is subject to updates as our understanding of the COVID-19 viruses evolve and new information becomes available. AzEIP Service Providing Agencies (SPAs) should routinely refer to the CDC and ADHS for the most updated guidance and protocols. Guidance will continue to be provided through statewide meetings, individual contractor meetings, and written correspondence.

Every SPA must keep updated internal agency protocols to ensure compliance with DES/AzEIP and the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) service delivery requirements and address health and safety practices for early intervention providers and families. Service Providing Agency internal agency protocols must be available on request.

See page 5 for EOE/ADA disclosures
DES/AzEIP COVID Response Overview

DES/AzEIP’s guidance to SPAs is based on updated information from federal and state government agencies. DES/AzEIP’s guidance regarding services to families has evolved as additional information about COVID-19 is shared, including impact on communities, medical advancements, and the increasing length of the pandemic.

IDEA underscores the important role of parents as members of the IFSP team. The identification of the early intervention services needed, as well as the appropriate setting for providing each service to an infant or toddler with a disability, must be individualized decisions made by the IFSP Team. In alignment with IDEA Part C, DES/AzEIP grants the IFSP Team, including the family, the sole responsibility and flexibility to make an individualized determination on what and how services are appropriate for each child and family. The SPA may not put into place any local procedures or protocols that interfere with the IFSP Team’s responsibility to make an individualized determination on what and how services are to be provided for each family. Each IFSP Team must explore any factors relevant to achieving the results or outcomes identified on the IFSP. Parents and caregivers are the best source of information to determine if meaningful and functional progress is being made.

Federal Guidance

The United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) released two new “Questions & Answers” documents relevant to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Q&As are titled: (1) Return to School Roadmap: Child Find, Referral, and Eligibility under Part C of IDEA and (2) Return to School Roadmap: Provision of Early Intervention Services for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities and their Families under Part C of IDEA. (October 29 2021)

In accordance with the most recent guidance from OSERS, the following are required:

- Child Find and Equity: ensuring continued consistent efforts to identify potentially eligible children from underserved populations and determine eligibility for children, birth to three, who may have disabilities. COVID-19 has significantly impacted children and families in underserved populations. DES/AzEIP and SPAs must ensure efforts are made to decrease disparities by reaching out to referral sources, building relationships with local communities, and communicating consistently regarding DES/AzEIP referral processes and expectations.

- Screening and Evaluation: offering screenings and evaluations in-person unless the family requested to do so virtually. In-person services are unique and individualized based on discussions between the family and the providers. If a family requests a virtual evaluation or screening, ensure the screening and evaluation tools used are valid for virtual use.
● In-Person services: providing in-person services with individual child and family circumstances taken into account. Virtual or hybrid service delivery may be provided upon request of the family. In-person does not necessarily mean in-home. In-person can be outdoors in a park or family’s yard, childcare setting, or anywhere a child would naturally be. Service providing agencies may also provide services in non-natural settings, including a clinic if they have access to a clinic and document on the IFSP the plan to return to services in the natural environment. Early intervention services must be evidence-based practices.

● Compensatory services: determining who has not received services due to the COVID pandemic (including, but not limited to, those with overdue interim IFSPs, those who did not get transition services, etc.) and determining if additional services are needed.

Additional Resources

Arizona Department of Health Services

1. ADHS COVID-19 Data Dashboard
2. ADHS Office of Children’s Health Hearing & Vision Screening COVID-19 Considerations
4. ADHS COVID-19 Communications Materials
5. ADHS Arizona’s Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic
6. ADHS Masks and Respirator
7. ADHS COVID-19 Everyone- Get Tested
8. ADHS: COVID-19 Vaccine Registration

Arizona Local County Health Departments

1. Apache County
2. Cochise County
3. Coconino County
4. Gila County
5. Graham County
6. Greenlee County
7. La Paz County
8. Maricopa County
9. Mohave County
10. Navajo County
11. Pima County
12. Pinal County
13. Santa Cruz County
14. Yavapai County
15. Yuma County
Centers for Disease Prevention and Control

1. COVID-19 Travel Recommendations by Destination
2. COVID-19 - Masks
3. Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility
4. How to Protect Yourself & Others
5. When and How to Wash Your Hands
6. Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home
7. Variants of the Virus
8. About COVID-19
9. Families & Children
10. COVID-19 Guidance for Operating Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs

Other

1. Arizona State Executive Orders
2. AHCCCS
3. Arizona Together

Tribal Nations Contacts

1. Ak-Chin Indian Community
2. Cocopah Indian Tribe
3. Colorado River Indian Tribes
4. Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation
5. Fort Mojave Indian Tribe
6. Gila River Indian Community
7. Havasupai Tribe
8. Hopi Tribe
9. Hualapai Tribe
10. Kaibab-Paiute Tribe
11. Navajo Nation
12. Pascua Yaqui Tribe
13. Pueblo of Zuni
14. Quechan-Fort Yuma Indian Tribe
15. Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community
16. San Carlos Apache Tribe
17. San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe
18. Tohono O'odham Nation
19. Tonto Apache Tribe
20. White Mountain Apache Tribe
21. Yavapai Apache Nation
22. Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe
Tribal Resources

1. Indian Health Service (IHS)
2. Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona
3. Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI)