

# KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND PRACTICES FOR SERVICE COORDINATORS

*For Infant Toddler Service Coordinators in Pennsylvania*





In 2020, the National Service Coordination Leadership Group through the Workgroup on Recommended Knowledge and Skills for Service Coordinators (RKSSC) developed the recommended Knowledge and Skills for Service Coordinators (KSSC). The KSSC is a set of common knowledge and skills of Infant Toddler Early Intervention (EI) service coordinators (SCs) that recognize their unique and specialized role. The purpose for the development of the KSSC was to provide awareness of the foundational knowledge and skills that are necessary for quality service coordination in Early Intervention. The KSSC was developed with guidance and support from the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the Early Childhood Personnel Center (ECPC).

**The Recommended Knowledge Areas for Service Coordinators are:**

1. Infant and Toddler Development
2. Family-Centered Practices
3. Leadership/Teaming
4. Coordination of Services
5. Transition
6. Professionalism

To assist SCs in Pennsylvania with their professional growth and development, the Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Supports (BEISFS) has developed this document for current and future SCs and their supervisors. Using the National Service Coordination Training Workgroup’s KSSC as the basis for the components of this document, BEISFS developed a set of practices that are specific to how SCs would demonstrate and apply under the knowledge and skill areas in Pennsylvania. Some Pennsylvania practices were adopted from the Early Intervention Training Program at the University of Illinois, while others were developed based on BEISFS identified needs specific to Pennsylvania.

With the KSSC and the PA Practices, SCs and their supervisors can use the PA KSSC self-assessment tool to provide a structured way to assess each knowledge and skill area. These tools are designed to work together, to identify an SCs strengths as well as areas where additional training and support may be needed. The KSSC, PA Practices and self-assessment are not meant for evaluative purposes, but rather to be used for professional growth and development.

# Pennsylvania's Knowledge Areas, Skills & Practices

## Knowledge Area 1: Infant & Toddler Development

Service Coordinators demonstrate knowledge of infant and toddler development including factors that contribute to development such as family context, relationships, culture, socio-economic considerations, environment, and experiences to inform intervention decisions, child development and learning within natural environments.

**Skill 1.1 Explain developmental delays and disabilities and their impact on children's development and learning to support intervention decisions.**

### Practices:

- Demonstrates understanding of the basic principles of child development.
- Able to describe the five developmental domains: adaptive development, cognitive development, communication, physical development, including vision and hearing, and social and emotional development.
- Supports families in understanding how child development occurs within everyday routines, activities, and places.
- Responds to follow-up questions from families when discussing child development and directs them to appropriate resources.

**Skill 1.2 Apply knowledge of typical development, individual differences, and cultural and linguistic diversity to support each child's development and learning within natural environments.**

### Practices:

- Asks questions about the child's and family's routines including those that the child and family enjoy and those they find difficult.
- Asks questions about the family's resources, including extended family, friends, community groups, people, and places where the child and family spend their time.
- Recognizes the adults in a child's life have their own preferred learning styles and have valuable insights, interests, and skills.
- Uses information gathered to help guide development of the IFSP, including outcomes, EI/non-EI resources, and service decisions based on the family's strengths and needs.

**Skill 1.3** Support families in their understanding of child development, how each developmental domain contributes to the whole child, and how ongoing progress is monitored.

**Practices:**

- Demonstrates an understanding of evaluation reports and uses the information appropriately related to the child’s eligibility for Early Intervention services.
- Provides families with information and resources about child development.
- Helps the family and other IFSP team members develop high-quality outcomes.



## Knowledge Area 2: Family-Centered Practices

Service Coordinators demonstrate the ability to respect and support the distinctive qualities of each family, recognizing the family as the teacher, support, decision-maker, and advocate for their child.

**Skill 2.1** Recognize implicit biases and respect the unique qualities of each family (e.g., culture, dynamics, roles, values, and practices, etc.) to identify their priorities and needs.

**Practices:**

- Respects individual differences of families and can modify actions accordingly in order to provide Service Coordination services using a non-judgmental approach.
- Recognize all families are unique; therefore, services and support will vary from family to family.
- Recognizes that each family’s culture, experiences, spiritual beliefs and activities, will be different from their own.

- Seeks to understand the family’s culture without judgment to support them holistically.
- Asks open-ended questions to gather family information that will be helpful in the design of Early Intervention supports and services that are respectful and culturally responsive to the child and family and their activities and routines.
- Supports families in making informed decisions by sharing complete and objective information in a professional manner.



**Skill 2.2** Comprehensively explain family rights & procedural safeguards to families in understandable terms, including when & how they may be applied, to support them in advocating for their child & family.

**Practices:**

- Describes procedural safeguards to families, using materials such as the Problem Solving in Early Intervention, a Family’s Introduction to Early Intervention in Pennsylvania, and the Parent Rights Agreement (PRA).
- Demonstrates an understanding of confidential and personally identifiable information as defined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- Obtains interpretation and translation services when necessary to ensure effective communication.
- Determines when to appoint a surrogate parent and understands the process involved in appointing a surrogate parent.

**Skill 2.3** Promote engagement & family capacity-building to address their priorities & concerns, by supporting them to identify opportunities to achieve goals for their family & child’s development & learning.

### Practices:

- Can explain Pennsylvania’s Early Intervention service delivery model.
- Provides the “Facts for Families” while discussing Early Intervention services and supports with families.
- Demonstrates an understanding of “PA Early Intervention Principles” and how they apply to their role as a Service Coordinator.
- Sets the stage with families by asking about their everyday routines and activities to establish an understanding of what their days look like.
- Checks in with family members throughout the EI process about their priorities and concerns and to ensure services and support are meeting their identified outcomes.
- Makes joint decisions with families as to who will do what when follow-up activities need to occur in accordance with the IFSP.
- Able to describe what a family and child outcome is and encourage family participation in the development.
- Guides the IFSP team in the provision of services that support the family in enhancing their child’s participation in family activities that support learning and development.
- Supports the family’s acquisition of knowledge, skills, and confidence in identifying and implementing strategies for their child and family.

## Knowledge Area 3: Leadership/Teaming

Service Coordinators demonstrate ability to be an effective leader by building professional, supportive partnerships with families; collaboration and teaming with IFSP team members to include family members; and engaging/collaborating with a variety of community partners.

**Skill 3.1** Use effective teaming and collaboration practices to support families and other professionals in carrying out the IFSP.

### Practices:

- Recognizes their role as the single point of contact in assisting a family access EI supports and services for their child.
- Coordinates and facilitates team meetings and ensures all voices are heard.

- Works collaboratively with team members by developing rapport and trust.
- Facilitates the decision-making process with the team in determining the supports and services necessary for the child and family.

**Skill 3.2.** Partner with families to identify, share, and access available community resources/services, parent groups, and state/local advocacy organizations.

**Practices:**

- Informs families of available parent training, community resources and advocacy services.
- Explains leadership development opportunities with families such as Competence and Confidence Partners in Policy Making (C2P2), Parents as Partners in Professional Development (P3D) and local/state advisory councils.
- Explains programs that connect families with other families, such as Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania (P2P) and Family Connections for Language and Learning.
- Shares information with families to support successful participation in community activities.
- Encourages families to explore the benefits of developing and utilizing informal supports.
- Supports families to gain confidence and competence in their ability to navigate the Early Intervention system and community resources.
- Exhibits flexibility in the ways support is provided to families according to the level of support they need (e.g., sharing a name/number, connecting the family with community supports, etc.) and adjusting this level of support over time as the family gains confidence to ensure individualized SC services.



## Knowledge Area 4: Coordination of Services

Service Coordinators demonstrate the ability to coordinate and monitor the timely delivery of identified evidence-based early intervention services.

**Skill 4.1** Comprehensively orient all families to the early intervention system and discuss formal and informal supports, and opportunities available to them.

### Practices:

- Demonstrates knowledge and requirements of PA's Early Intervention system, from referral to transition/exit from the program.
- Explains to parents and others the role of the Service Coordinator in the Early Intervention process as it relates to all areas of services and supports.
- Discusses community resources available to families, including formal and informal supports, and how to access these supports.
- Providing information and resources requested by the family.

**Skill 4.2** Explain to families how Early Intervention is funded and answer any questions related to systems of payments in understandable terms.

- Explains all funding sources that exist for families and the eligibility requirements for each.
- Answers families' questions related to funding of Early Intervention services or knows where to refer families for additional information.
- Explains the process for enrolling a child into Medical Assistance, including the need for obtaining Medical Necessity from a physician.
- Explains the process of enrolling a child into the Infants, Toddlers and Families Medicaid Waiver (ITF) program.
- Informs families that Early Intervention services in PA are provided at no cost to them.

**Skill 4.3** Coordinate evaluations and progress monitoring, identify and facilitate the multidisciplinary eligibility determination process, and ensure family participation through this process.



### Practices:

- Explains and implements the screening process, including sharing the results with families.
- Collects family information about a family's concerns, issues, priorities and resources and their relative importance to the family before, during and after the evaluation.
- Coordinates the Multidisciplinary Evaluation (MDE), both initially and annually, including those who will participate, and best time and location for the family.
- Prepares families for the MDE and IFSP process by helping them identify questions they have and how they would like to be involved.
- Explains PA's eligibility criteria to families.
- Assures team members prepare their written Evaluation Report (ER) in a family centered, strengths-based format that reflects the family's identified outcomes.

**Skill 4.4.** Facilitate IFSP development (initial, reviews, annuals) including functional outcomes addressed within family routines and natural environments.

### Practices:

- Coordinates the IFSP, including those who will participate, best time and location for the family.
- Prepares for IFSP meetings by reviewing evaluations and assessment results, progress summaries, session notes, and other documentation to ensure accurate information is being shared and considered.
- Leads the development of the IFSP, including the development of high quality functional and measurable outcomes for the child and family.
- Explains the family's role as partners and decision makers in the EI process.
- Supports families in identifying strengths, priorities, concerns, and resources when developing the IFSP.
- Supports families in identifying how they would like EI services and supports incorporated into their routines.
- Assists the team in determining which EI services are most appropriate to address their child's outcome.
- Explains the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) process to families.

**Skill 4.5.** Monitor progress and timely delivery of services in accordance with the IFSP.

**Practices:**

- Monitors EI supports and services as agreed upon in the IFSP.
- Reviews provider session notes to ensure services are being delivered as identified in the IFSP.
- Reviews and collects progress monitoring information and reviews with the family/caregiver, at a minimum of every 6 months.
- Provides families the opportunity to indicate their level of satisfaction with the progress made when reviewing the IFSP including the outcomes.
- Revises the outcomes and strategies based on progress monitoring and the needs of the family.
- Ensures timelines are met throughout the process and families are aware of their rights and procedural safeguards related to timely services.

**Skill 4.6.** Partner with families to coordinate educational, social, and medical services that the child needs or is being provided outside of EI.

**Practices:**

- Assists families in making referrals to other non-EI agencies and applying for needed services.
- Informs families of advocacy, support groups and family caregiver networks.
- Demonstrates knowledge of non-EI support and the other existing state programs and services including, but not limited to: Family Support/Evidence Based Home Visiting (EBHV); local mental health department, local Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) department, Department of Health's Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI), Children and Youth Services (CYS), etc., by sharing information with families as necessary.

## Knowledge Area 5: Transition

Service Coordinators implement smooth and effective transition plans with the family that identify the events, activities, and processes associated with key changes between environments or programs during the early childhood years.

**Skill 5.1.** Partner with families to plan & implement appropriate & individualized events, activities, & processes that support transitions across settings, agencies, & throughout the Early Intervention process.

**Practices:**

- Knows the similarities and distinctions between the Infant/Toddler Early Intervention and Preschool Early Intervention programs.
- Identifies all children potentially eligible for Preschool Early Intervention Services who will turn 3 during the coming transition year.
- Provides information to families to make informed decisions regarding future Early Childhood Education or other community options related to a child’s transition.
- Explains child information transmitted to the Preschool EI program for child find purposes shared with parent permission.
- Discusses with families the steps to prepare the child for changes based on developmental needs, including activities to help the adjustment to and participation in new settings.

**Skill 5.2.** Manage required timelines, processes, and documentation to support successful transitions.

**Practices:**

- Supports the development of individualized transition plans including activities/services designed to ensure a smooth transition and implementation of the plan.
- Ensures all steps in the transition process are completed within timelines.
- Conducts timely transition planning meetings for a child who may be eligible for Preschool Early Intervention services, becomes ineligible for EI to review other life activities or services that will enhance the child’s development or to discuss desired community supports and services upon successful exit from EI.

**Skill 5.3.** Support a variety of planned and timely strategies for successful adjustment and positive outcomes for both the child and family as they exit early intervention.

**Practices:**

- Maintains awareness of transition options in the community.

- Assists families in locating EI services in other counties and states when they are relocating.
- Provides anticipatory guidance to families as they make plans for their child during the transition process.
- Shares information with families during transitions so they can consider options and make decisions for their child’s continued growth and development.
- Understands parents’ rights when exiting the program.



## Knowledge Area 6: Professionalism

Service Coordinators demonstrate professionalism by using personal and professional boundaries, flexibility, resiliency, time management, dependability, and by engaging in ongoing professional development.

**Skill 6.1.** Apply organizational skills to meet and manage required timelines and documentation.

### Practices:

- Knows and adheres to time sensitive activities and has tools/strategies in place to ensure required activities are completed.
- Documents all tasks, activities, and communication/correspondence with families according to agency policies and procedures.
- Ensures required timelines are being met through an effective personal organizational system.

- Documents service coordination activities in Service Notes and/or IFSP in a professional, accurate, unbiased, and objective manner, and written so that others can understand what is being stated.

**Skill 6.2.** Reflect and evaluate current practices to determine strengths and areas of growth to access professional development to improve practices.

- Participates in 24 hours of annual professional development to stay current on Early Intervention and Service Coordination practices.
- Asks for guidance and support when needed.
- Sets professional goals to enhance knowledge and skills.

**Skill 6.3.** Set personal and professional boundaries and use leadership skills, applying ethical practices, policies and procedures in relationships and interactions.

**Practices:**

- Knows local policies and procedures related to ethical practices and/or codes of conduct.
- Know the importance and value of setting personal and professional boundaries in their work and apply it in practice.
- Recognizes when ethical dilemmas arise in their work and understands how to document, report, or seek supervisor support.
- Share information in ways that meet the preferred learning styles of the adults in the child's life.

