

**Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Guidance
Workgroup Recommendations
Final Response – January 13, 2009**

Public Awareness:

- 1) Early Steps will support the ongoing education of families and medical providers on ASD.**

Concur. The Early Steps State Office will seek existing and/or develop new public awareness materials and develop strategies in collaboration with the local Early Steps for dissemination of educational information to families and medical providers. The Early Steps State Office has already purchased and distributed the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Autism Tool Kit to area CMS offices and local Early Steps offices for use. The Early Steps State Office will collaborate with other stakeholders and amend strategies into their annual Public Awareness plan. (Timeline: ongoing)

Screening:

- 2) The LES will screen all toddlers for ASD, ages 16 months but no greater than 36 months, who are referred to and/or served by Early Steps and have not been screened for indicators of ASD.**

Local Early Steps will obtain screening results from the child's medical home, in recognition of the practice recommendation of the AAP, or other local community screening initiatives. Local Early Steps will provide screening for those children who do not have access to screening when there are communication or social/emotional concerns. Early Steps does not have the capacity to provide universal screening for all toddlers.

Guidance documents will need to be updated and training provided to LES staff and providers in order to implement statewide. (Timeline: July 2009)

- 3) A secondary screening should be conducted if a child fails the first administered screening. This will assist in the identification of an appropriate evaluation team.**

Concur. If a child fails the first administered screening, Early Steps will conduct a secondary screening. Guidance documents will need to be updated and training provided to LES staff and providers in order to implement statewide. (Timeline: July 2009)

Eligibility

- 4) If a child has been identified with indicators for ASD, an individual with expertise on autism will be a member of the eligibility team to assist in the development of appropriate IFSP outcomes and services.**

Concur. Policy and Guidance documents require that appropriate professionals are identified to participate on IFSP teams based on the needs of individual children. The Early Steps State Office will continue to provide professional development and recruitment of providers with expertise in ASD to build local capacity. (Timeline: ongoing)

ASD Diagnosis:

- 5) The LES will identify at least one accessible local diagnostic resource, either within the LES, or in the community.**

Concur. The Early Steps State Office is sponsoring an evaluator from each Local Early Steps to participate in training on administration of the ADOS in January 2009. (Timeline: January 2009)

- 6) The LES will assist the family in arranging a diagnostic evaluation, when requested by the family.**

Concur. Policy and guidance documents require that service coordinators assist the family with obtaining needed medical and diagnostic services as identified on the IFSP. (Timeline: ongoing)

IFSP Development:

- 7) IFSP strategies will be implemented through opportunities for active engagement of the child throughout the child's and family's daily routines and activities in combination with the direct services necessary to support active engagement.**

The Early Steps State Office agrees it is the responsibility of the IFSP team to identify the direct services necessary to support active engagement and the strategies will be implemented through opportunities for active engagement throughout the child's and family's daily routines and activities. The Early Steps State Office will continue to provide technical assistance and training on best practices for providing early intervention services. (Timeline: ongoing)

- 8) Specific IFSP strategies will reflect the individualized needs of children with ASD and should include opportunities to increase socialization and communication skills in the home and community settings.**

Concur. The Early Steps State Office will continue to provide technical assistance and training on the development of effective outcomes and strategies for children. (Timeline: ongoing)

Ongoing Assessment:

- 9) The IFSP team, which includes the family and an individual with expertise in ASD, will assess ongoing progress towards achieving the identified functional outcomes, which may include the use of assessment tools that are related to the identified outcomes.**

Concur. Policy and Guidance documents require that the IFSP be reviewed periodically, at least every 6 months, or sooner if needed, to determine progress and consider if changes are needed. (Timeline: ongoing)

Enhancing Services and Supports:

- 10) The LES will collaborate with the local CARD, the local CMS, universities, and other community partners who have expertise in planning and implementing services and supports for families of children with ASD.**

Concur. The Early Steps State Office has been asked to join the Florida autism state team, an initiative promoted by the Network of Autism Training and Technical Assistance Programs, and their first meeting will be held on January 17, 2009. Further timelines for this recommendation will depend on the defined purpose for this team. (Timeline: January 2009)

- 11) Evidenced based practices that are scientifically defensible will be implemented to assist the child and family in achieving their outcomes through activities that promote active engagement. (See Daly: Attachment 4).**

Concur. The IDEA requires that states have policy in effect that ensures appropriate early intervention services based on scientifically-based research, to the extent that it is possible, given

the availability of such research. Policy and Guidance documents address this requirement. (Timeline: ongoing)

12) An ESSO staff position, designated as the liaison for ASD Services, will coordinate with other educational entities including CARD, Universities, the Mailman Center for Child Development, Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (MCCD-LEND) so that consistent evidenced based information is provided to the LES's across the state.

Concur. The Early Steps State Office has identified Sally Golden-McCord as our liaison for ASD Services. (Timeline: ongoing)

13) The Family Resource Specialists (FRS) will be utilized as a liaison with local ASD support groups and facilitate the creation of autism family support groups, if none are available in the local area.

The Family Resource Specialists will facilitate access to family-to-family support for families of children with ASD in Early Steps, including local ASD support groups if available in their local community. (Timeline: ongoing)

14) Early Steps will create an ASD Assistant paraprofessional position to address IFSP outcomes when intensive family/caregiver training is necessary. This position will operate under the supervision of the Primary Service Provider and will be piloted to evaluate its effectiveness. (See Attachment 5: Personnel Descriptions and Levels for ASD Assistants and Behavioral Specialists, Schrot 2008).

The Early Steps State Office will need to research the feasibility of implementing the recommendation. There are numerous licensure and fiscal issues to consider. We will seek the assistance of the Personnel Development and Training Committee of the Florida Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers as well as other community stakeholders with regards to the creation of the recommended paraprofessional position. The Committee will be briefed on this recommendation during early 2009 and will develop further timeline. (Timeline: TBA)

Training and Personnel Development:

15) ESSO will develop a comprehensive training plan to serve children with ASD, and their families, with collaborative partners such as CARD, Universities, the Mailman Center for Child Development, Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (MCCD-LEND). Priorities for training will include ASD screening and assessment, linking assessment to intervention, writing meaningful, measurable, functional IFSP outcomes, progress monitoring, adult learning strategies, and active engagement.

Concur. Our training unit will work closely with our ASD liaison and collaborative partners to develop a comprehensive plan. The Early Steps State Office annual training plan will be updated as priorities are established. The Early Steps State Office has been asked to join the Florida autism state team, an initiative promoted by the Network of Autism Training and Technical Assistance Programs, and their first meeting will be held on January 17, 2009. Further timelines for this recommendation will depend on the defined purpose for this team. (Timeline: ongoing)

**16) The training will follow a 4 tier approach:
Level 1- General Information**

Level 2- Educational Training

Level 3- Competency Training

Level 4- Special Consultation (See Attachment 6: Coleman, 2008, Training Model Overview with Example)

The Early Steps State Office, in developing the comprehensive training plan to serve children with ASD (above recommendation) will explore the 4 tier approach recommended above for inclusion. This recommendation will also be shared with the Personnel Development and Training Committee of the Florida Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers during early 2009. Further timelines will be established based on their input. (Timeline: TBA)

17) The designated ESSO ASD Liaison will actively seek information and participate in training on ASD evidence based practices in early childhood and disseminate information to Local Early Steps Training Coordinators.

The Early Steps State Office will continue to seek information on evidence based practices for young children with ASD, and their families, and ensure policies are reflective of those in alignment with Part C of IDEA. Furthermore, the Early Steps State Office will continue to utilize the expertise and function of CARD in providing education and information on autism specific practices for children with ASD, and their families. (Timeline: ongoing)