

B2: Building Workforce Capacity to Meaningfully Include Children with Special Needs in Child Care Settings

Wednesday, April 17, 2019

2:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. | Penn Quarter B

1. Descriptive Information

B2: Building Workforce Capacity to Meaningfully Include Children with Special Needs in Child Care Settings

Supporting the knowledge and application of strategies to support children with disabilities and their families and collaboration among childcare and special education services is essential for successful inclusion. This session will highlight professional development programs that specifically target topics related to children with disabilities for professionals across settings. Additionally, we will discuss relationships between current practical recommendations and policies with state policy, procedures, and practices. Three presentations will present current research and activities across different states to stimulate discussion on how state activities, particularly related to Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) and state-wide professional development systems, can support or hinder inclusive programming. First, researchers across three states (i.e., Delaware, Kentucky, South Carolina) will share their work on the examination of the alignment of Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices (2014) with state QRIS standards. Second, two states will share how they have approached professional development related to inclusion. The Early Intervention Training Program at the University of Illinois will share its collaboration with state child care professional development system to deliver multidisciplinary training opportunities. Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning will share their use of inclusion specialists and intensive professional development to support center's inclusive practices. Interactive discussion with presenters and attendees will include successes and challenges to supporting the early care and education workforce on issues related to children with disabilities, inclusive practices, and collaboration across early care and special education. Considerations will be discussed in relation to state and program policies, QRIS systems, and directions for future work.

Facilitator

Jenna Weglarz-Ward, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Presenters

Lynn Barts, Early Intervention Training Program at the University of Illinois | *Supporting Quality Care for Young Children with Special Needs Through Collaboration and Professional Development*

Beth Rous, University of Kentucky | *Alignment of QRIS Standards and DEC Recommended Practices in Three States*

Bentley Ponder, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning | *Increasing Access to High Quality, Inclusive Early Learning Opportunities for Children with Disabilities through Targeted Professional Development*

Scribe

Ryan Laychak, ICF

- **Documents Available on Website**
- **VIDEO:** Child care and EI: Natural Partners in Natural Environments

2. Brief Summary of Presentations

- **Summary of Presentation #1:** *Supporting Quality Care for Young Children with Special Needs Through Collaboration and Professional Development*, Lynn Barts
- This presentation centered around collaboration between ECE providers and early intervention providers. The presenter works at EITP at the University of Illinois whose goal is to enhance the knowledge and skills of service coordinators and early interventionists and other stakeholders. They also focus on designing and delivering professional development activities to strengthen Illinois' early intervention workforce to ensure meaningful outcomes for children and families they serve. EITP aims for collaboration and currently supports 25 different states. Some of their stats include welcoming between 550-700 new early intervention providers each year and

offering 150-200 pediatric specific offerings to support young children birth-3 and their families online, face to face, and through blended approaches.

- One example of their collaborative approach is their PD Event. EITP created a one-day professional development event called Natural Partners, which is a 6-hour training with the goal of learning and sharing between child care and early interventionists. Some of the takeaways from these events were that many child care providers did not feel confident of what their services should look like, who they should refer and what should happen next. At these PD events, organizers talk about practical strategies at these events and what are the barriers in place and how to move past them. They examine what is needed to be taken to the state level and what early interventionists can do immediately back at their organizations. Since 2016, there have had nearly 300 participants at the Natural Partners event.
- Lessons Learned: EITP learned that collaboration is key, information must be readily available, buy-in starts at the top, and that time and turnover are significant barriers to collaboration. They also note that if you don't have the Director buy in, many challenges arise.
- The presenter then shared a video that walks child care providers through the early intervention options and serving children in natural environments. **VIDEO: Child care and EI: Natural Partners in Natural Environments**
- Future Goals: the organization hopes to continue to build partnerships, especially at the local level and expand offerings and support participation.

- **Summary of Presentation #2: Alignment of QRIS Standards and DEC Recommended Practices in Three States, Beth Rous**
- This presentation focused on a study whose purpose was to support inclusion by determining the degree of alignment between quality frameworks in ECE and EC special education. The presenter found that there is less inclusion today than previously.
- The research approach: Content analysis was used a matrix approach with deductive and inductive coding. The researchers used the quality compendium and looked at state QRIS standards and indicators from DE, KY, and SC. They also used the Division for Early Childhood recommended practices.
- Currently, the DEC Recommended Practices are: Unified at the professional level, based on a provider relationship to individual children, families and systems. Conversely, QRIS standards are: Varied and locally designed, written to ensure they can be verified, and include program level standards.
- The presenter noted that if you take the QRIS standards and the DEC Recommended Practices you can see an overall level of alignment between the two. There are some areas of difference, but in general they are fairly well aligned. However, when you look at the actual indicators of practice, you find that the two systems are not close at all and that the place they are closest is in family partnerships and engagements.
- What are the implications? The research exposed the longstanding gap between the theoretical foundations and resulting descriptions of ideal practices of general early childhood and early childhood special education services. Furthermore, DEC Recommended Practices are based on an assumption that quality foundational teaching practices are routinely implemented in the classroom setting. QRIS is a framework designed to support ongoing quality enhancement to bring the field to implementation of quality foundational teaching practices. **The distance between these two systems is great.** Additionally, while some QRISs use the phrase "children with special needs" within their standards and rating system, they have not adequately attended to the specific policies and practices that will actually provide access participation and support to young children with disabilities and families that need them.

- **Summary of Presentation #3: Increasing Access to High Quality, Inclusive Early Learning Opportunities for Children with Disabilities through Targeted Professional Development, Bentley Ponder**
Speaker not in attendance

3. Brief Summary of Discussion

The discussion centered around the idea that QRIS drives how we align and train people for licensure and the implications of this.

Discussion occurred around the idea of using workforce competencies and pulling it down to a person-to-person standard versus a program to person standard. The presenter talked about the state of Kentucky and how their

practices are developed from inter-agency practices with the expectation that there is no way to embed knowledge of working with specific special needs cases at the early level of professional development. The discussion continued around the motivation to use the QRIS because it is so dominant across the board right now and it is used as an anchor in many states. There was thoughtful discussion around the need to take a moment of pause to look at the actual words being used for these standards and identify the different interpretations of these key words in indifferent states. There is an imperative to do better to help our ECE workforce. A participant challenged fellow participants to work up and not down and identify key family engagement curricula assessments with the goal of moving from theoretical standards to actual practices.

4. Summary of Key Issues Raised

- The distance between QRIS and DEC Recommended Practices is great.
- Collaboration is key between ECE providers and early intervention providers
- Buy-in needs to begin at the top at the director level
- Research has exposed the longstanding gap between the theoretical foundations and resulting descriptions of ideal practices of general early childhood and early childhood special education services
- Acknowledgment of the dominance of the QRIS being used across the board.