

## **NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS: EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES**

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) ([20 U.S.C. 1228a](#)) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program.

**ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW GRANT AWARDS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.**

Please respond to the following requests for information:

- 1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.**

Pennsylvania's Part C Early Intervention (EI) program has a mission, a vision, and an equity statement that ensures equitable access to, and equitable participation in the Part C EI program. The mission and vision statements of the Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Support Programs (BEISFS), as part of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), are below.

- **Mission:** The Office of Child Development and Early Learning provides families access to high quality services to prepare children for school and life success.
- **Vision:** The Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning supports families and their children, from prenatal through school age, by using data, research, and stakeholder guidance to assure high quality services.

The mission and vision statements guide the funding, governance, and provision of high-quality Part C EI services. Pennsylvania is committed to providing access to and equitable participation in an evidence-based model of Early Intervention services for all infants and toddlers and their families in the Commonwealth (*EI Announcement 20-03: Early Intervention Service Delivery: Coaching Across Settings*).

An OCDEL Equity Work Group, which included families who participated in Part C EI, collaborated on the development of the OCDEL equity statement. The statement was approved by OCDEL Executive staff in April 2022 and all OCDEL staff in September 2022. Currently, the OCDEL Equity Work Group is focused on the development of implementation strategies.

The OCDEL equity statement incorporates the definition of equity provided by the National Association of the Education of Young Children:

*The state that would be achieved if individuals fared the same way in society regardless of race, gender, class, language, disability, or any other social or cultural characteristic. In practice, equity means all children and families receive necessary supports in a timely fashion so they can develop their full intellectual, social, and physical potential.*

OCDEL's equity statement is:

*The Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) is committed to ensuring equitable experiences for young children and their families. To achieve this, OCDEL needs to engage in an intentional process to develop and maintain*

*a climate within our organization that serves as a foundation to ensure equity within the programs and services OCDEL administers.*

*It is our intent for every child to reach their full potential and to experience optimal well-being and quality of life. To do this, OCDEL will promote environments and services that are inclusive of race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, family background and/or family income. Through a systematic process, involving all Bureaus and business partners, informed through data and stakeholder input, OCDEL will identify and eliminate internal systemic barriers preventing children, families, and communities from full access to resources. OCDEL will also leverage relationships with statewide agencies and external partners to advocate for equitable opportunities and to create collaboration and systems that value, respect, and appreciate diverse experiences through a lens of cultural awareness, responsiveness, and humility.*

Examples of how the Part C EI program implements the mission, vision, and equity statements to ensure equitable access include, but are not limited to:

- Local Part C EI programs are required to develop Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) and state funded home visiting programs that serve pregnant and parenting families who are at-risk. The MOUs ensure that children in home visiting programs are screened and referred to Part C EI programs as appropriate (*Announcement ELS/MIECHV 15-13 – Coordination with Early Intervention Agencies*).
- BEISFS provided funding for purchase of screening tools (ex., ASQ, ASQ-SE in English and Spanish) and the support for use of the online version of the screening tools to both Part C EI and home visiting programs. The online version allows families to directly access the screening tool, complete a screening, or review screening results. Training was provided to Part C EI and home visiting personnel on the use of the screening tool online components.
- BEISFS and the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention program developed a data sharing agreement that allowed for newborns who need additional follow-up after hearing screenings at birthing hospitals to be referred to local Part C EI programs.
- In conjunction with Pennsylvania Departments of Drug and Alcohol Programs, Health, and Human Services, BEISFS provided regional sessions to support the development of Plans of Safe Care for newborns affected by prenatal substance exposure. The goal of the regional sessions was to develop a cross system process for supporting the infant and family. Families with lived experience shared their stories with local teams, including what happened, what helped, what did not help, and what supports they needed.
- BEISFS funds statewide Part C EI child find materials that are in multiple languages. Funding is available for the CONNECT child find referral line to use interpreter services for referrals to the Part C EI program.
- In conjunction with the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, BEISFS sponsored a series of webinars on intimate partner violence. The series included topics such as: LGBTQ+ Survivors of Domestic Violence, Birthing People and Domestic Violence, and Domestic Violence and Children. Webinar audiences included Part C EI service coordinators, therapy staff, and administrators and home visitors and administrative staff from home visiting and family support programs.

Examples of how the Part C EI program implements the mission, vision, and equity statements to ensure equitable participation include, but are not limited to:

- The development and maintenance of the PELICAN-EI data systems ensures that BEISFS has a robust information system that collects statewide demographic and programmatic data. PELICAN-EI information allows BEISFS to monitor and report on the equitable participation of Pennsylvania's infants, toddlers, and their families in the Part C EI program.
- BEISFS funds the translation of EI forms and publications into languages that are accessible for families in the Part C EI program. Additional translations of materials are available upon request.
- BEISFS has developed policies related to infants, toddlers, and families who are homeless or experiencing housing insecurity to participating in developmental tracking services (*EI Announcement 14-01: At-Risk Tracking for Infants and Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness*) and (*EI Announcement 13-01: Children Experiencing Homelessness*).
- BEISFS, through the funding of Early Intervention Technical Assistance, a statewide professional development system, supported a webinar series to educate EI providers and service coordinators on the needs of infants, toddlers, and families who are homeless or experiencing housing insecurity.
- In order to ensure that there is equity in a family's access to services provided by high-quality Part C EI therapists, early childhood educators, service coordinators, and other personnel, BEISFS funded the development and use of the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Provider's Registry. BEISFS and local Part C EI programs are able to monitor the qualifications and professional development activities of all Part C EI providers.
- Pennsylvania's Part C EI regulations, 55 Pa. Code Chapter 4226. Early Intervention Services, require that all Part C EI personnel who work directly with at-risk children and infants and toddlers with disabilities, must participate in at least 24 hours of training annually. Cultural competence is specifically identified as a training area for annual training hours.

**2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?**

Pennsylvania's Part C EI program has not identified systemic barriers that have impeded equitable access and participation of infants, toddlers, and their families in the Part C EI program.

Pennsylvania's Part C EI program supports ongoing quality improvement activities in all aspects of the EI system. The Part C EI program uses ongoing data analysis to identify potential concerns to equitable access and participation, identifies root causes for concerns, implements quality improvement activities, and evaluates the outcomes of those activities. Through this process, the Part C EI program works to ensure that barriers that are identified are solved before there can be an impact on equitable access and participation.

As an ongoing measure of equitable access and participation, the Part C EI program uses an annual family survey to gather data on families' satisfaction with Pennsylvania's Part C EI program. Measures from the family survey include the percentage of families who agree with statements about their access to and participation, to include measures of cultural sensitivity, in the Part C EI program. Demographic data and survey return rates are gathered and analyzed to ensure representativeness of the family survey returns.

Data from the annual family survey is used to identify potential barriers as part of the local Part C EI determination process and monitoring of local Part C EI programs. Quality Enhancement Plans are developed and implemented by local Part C EI programs if barriers to equitable access and participation are identified.

**3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?**

While no barriers have been identified in the equitable access to and participation in the Part C EI program for infants, toddlers, and families, Pennsylvania's quality improvement activities related to equity, diversity, and inclusion are focused on the following goals:

1. Increase the Part C EI services that are provided by high-quality personnel who reflect the communities in which they provide services.
2. Provide funding to support training of Part C EI personnel in needs related to equity, diversity, and inclusion.
3. Support local Part C EI services in better solving barriers to equity, diversity, and inclusion in their communities through the determination and verification processes.

**4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?**

While no barriers have been identified, Pennsylvania is in the process of developing a multi-year, quality improvement plan related to equity, diversity, and inclusion. The three goals of the plan and the proposed major activities related to each goal are below.

The improvement plan process will include input and feedback from Pennsylvania's primary advisory groups (e.g., State Interagency Coordinating Council and State Education Advisory Panel), families of children who are currently in or who had participated in the EI program, Parent Information Training Center representatives, EI leaders, EI therapists, educators, service coordinators, representatives from Institutes of Higher Education, and other interested parties. Steps will be taken to ensure that there is equitable access to participation in the improvement plan process.

The improvement plan, to be completed by the end of FFY 2023-24, will include specific improvement activities with targeted milestones and deliverable dates.

- 1) Increase the Part C EI services that are provided by high-quality personnel who reflect the communities in which they provide services.
  - a) Identify and implement additional data collection enhancements to ensure that Part C EI personnel reflect the communities that they serve in the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Provider Registry.

- 2) Provide funding to support training of Part C EI personnel in needs related to equity, diversity, and inclusion.
  - a) Provide additional professional development funds to local Part C EI programs.
  - b) Revise guidance for use of professional development funds to focus on training needs related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- 3) Support local Part C EI services in better solving barriers to equity, diversity, and inclusion in their communities through the determination and verification processes.
  - a) Enhance the family survey data used in the measurement of equitable access to and participation in the Part C EI program in the determination processes.
  - b) Develop and implement additional strategies to measure and track progress in ensuring equitable access to and participation in Part C EI programs in the determination and verification process.

**Notes:**

1. Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity in order to submit an application.
2. Applicants may identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
3. Applicants may have already included some or all of this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) and page number(s) in their applications or State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.

**Paperwork Burden Statement**

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1894-0005. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain a benefit. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving this individual collection, send your comments to [ICDocketMgr@ed.gov](mailto:ICDocketMgr@ed.gov) and reference OMB Control Number 1894-0005. All other comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual form may be addressed to either (a) the person listed in the FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT section in the competition Notice Inviting Applications, or (b) your assigned program officer.