



DEC Position Statement: Personnel Standards in Early Childhood Special Education

Executive Summary

Division for Early Childhood (DEC)
September 2017

What is the purpose of this DEC position statement?

The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) considers high quality personnel preparation to be essential to positive outcomes for young children, birth-through-eight years, at risk for or with developmental delays or disabilities and their families. Therefore, this position statement provides guidance for the personnel preparation of educators who work with children birth-through-two years in Early Intervention (EI) and children from three-through-five and six-through-eight years in Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). Throughout the position statement, the term ECSE refers to both EI and ECSE educators who possess a state license/certificate in one or more of the above age categories or state equivalent.

Why is DEC taking a position on Personnel Standards?

- Outcomes for children and families are impacted by the quality of services and the preparation of individuals who provide those services.
- The required education and licensure/certification requirements for ECSE vary across the United States, its territories, and other countries.
- A primary role of DEC in addressing its mission is to provide guidance regarding personnel standards, personnel preparation, and certification/licensure policies.

Who is this for?

This position statement provides direction for individuals in a variety of professional roles related to ECSE personnel preparation including, but not limited to, faculty and staff at Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs); professional development (PD) and technical assistance providers at local, regional, state, and national levels; and state level certification/licensure and policy administrators for ECSE.

DEC's Position and Recommendations

Content of Personnel Preparation and Certification/Licensure Programs

The content of ECSE personnel preparation curricula, as well as certification/licensure requirements, should reflect articulated key concepts and the spirit and letter of state and federal legislation related to young children with delays or disabilities and their families. Specific content areas that are critical to ensure competency include the following: (a) child development and learning, (b) assessment, (c) natural environments/inclusive settings, (d) partnerships with families, (e) transition, (f) collaboration among professionals, (g) health/medical considerations,

and (h) curriculum and instructional strategies. Specific to the content of ECSE personnel preparation, DEC recommends the following:

- Align initial and advanced ECSE personnel preparation programs and state licensure/certification with relevant professional association standards to ensure consistency.
- Utilize current evidence-based recommended practices;
- Address the dispositions of ECSE educators in the expectations of both initial and advanced programs;
- Incorporate performance- and outcome-based measures of knowledge and skills;
- Align field experiences with courses and their required performance- and outcome-based measures in both initial and advanced programs; and
- Provide mentoring/coaching that promotes increased understanding, skills, and implementation of practices through self-reflection.

Structure of Personnel Preparation and Certification/Licensure Programs

DEC also recognizes particular aspects important to the structure of ECSE personnel preparation programs that reflect the variety of roles fulfilled by ECSE educators, the range of personnel preparation goals and their foci, and the wide range of contexts in which ECSE educators work with and on behalf of young children and families. DEC recommends the following elements to inform the structure of ECSE personnel preparation programs:

- Recognize the differences between initial and advanced personnel preparation programs;
- Consider the variation in the age ranges of licensure/certification programs;
- Consider freestanding certification/licensure requirements specific to ECSE;
- Recognize and support a potential career ladder for paraprofessionals and professionals working in the ECSE programs; and
- Address the relationship between the preparation and roles of ECSE and related services professionals (e.g., speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists).

Access the full position statement at:
<http://www.dec-sped.org/position-statements>