



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES
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To: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Schools
Presidents of Boards of Education
New York City Board of Education
Principals of Public Schools
Organizations, Parents and Individuals Concerned with Special Education
Impartial Hearing Officers
Commissioner's Advisory Panel for Special Education Services
SETRC Professional Development Specialists
Regional School Support Centers
Municipality Representatives for Preschool Special Education
Early Intervention Officials
Approved Preschool Special Education Programs
Special Education Quality Assurance Offices

From: James P. DeLorenzo *James P. DeLorenzo*

Subject: Early Childhood Direction Centers (ECDCs)

This memorandum provides important information regarding the role and responsibilities of the statewide Early Childhood Direction Center (ECDC) Network. This network was established in the mid-1970s to provide information and assistance in obtaining community services and supports at no cost to parents and professionals involved with young children with disabilities from birth to age five. In the past 30 years the field of preschool special education and early intervention has grown extensively in response to evidenced-based research citing the impact of early education and intervention for young children with disabilities on school success and preparation for independent adult life. ECDCs provide a valuable resource and partner for New York State (NYS) to support the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities' (VESID) work in preschool special education.

Each ECDC has staff who can assist parents in the referral of their children for special education and who provide training and parent education on the special education process. They provide important assistance to ensure the timely evaluation and provision of services to preschool children with disabilities, including providing assistance to school



districts in identifying approved evaluators for children with limited English proficiency. ECDCs also link families, including those who are homeless or who care for foster children, to community supports such as respite, child care, Medicaid and other social services. They have a strategic role in addressing a number of activities to support the implementation of preschool special education in NYS and are engaged in the following activities.

- Transition of Children from Early Intervention: ECDCs currently support parents in obtaining Early Intervention (EI) services, attend meetings of the Local Early Intervention Coordinating Councils (LEICCs) and assist EI service coordinators and parents with meeting timelines and requirements for children's smooth transition to preschool special education.
- Parent Involvement: ECDC staff assume a role similar to service coordinators for children and families moving into preschool special education by providing parents with technical assistance and information about the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) process, least restrictive environment, the continuum of service and due process rights.
- Program Development: ECDCs provide information and expertise to foster the development of integrated programs for preschool children with disabilities in Head Start, Universal Pre-kindergarten (UPK) programs, nursery schools and early care settings.
- CPSE Training: ECDCs provide technical assistance and support to CPSE chairpersons in working with parents, accessing guidance materials and implementing procedures to address State Performance Plan (SPP) requirements for data collection and reporting.

As identified by the Temporary Task Force on Preschool Special Education, VESID recognizes and supports ECDCs as primary and essential partners to reach out and coordinate preschool special education activities among parents, school districts, approved programs and counties at the local and regional levels (www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/preschool/taskforce/finalreport1107.pdf). I encourage you to contact your regional ECDC as a primary resource for preschool special education in your area. For information on the ECDC serving your county and region see <http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/lsn/ecdc/>. General questions about ECDC projects may be directed to VESID Special Education Policy and Program Development Support Services Unit at 518-486-7462.

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