

General Information

Lead Agency (34 CFR §303.120 & §303.201)

The Alabama State Department of Education was designated in 1987 by the Governor as the lead agency for Alabama's Early Intervention System (AEIS). In 1995, the Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) was designated as the Lead Agency for AEIS by Governor Jim Folsom in accordance with Alabama Act 94-824. As the designated Lead Agency, ADRS has been designated with the single line of responsibility for the administration of the system.

Within the ADRS, the Division of Early Intervention has been delegated the responsibility of administering the funds provided under Part C and is responsible for the day-to-day monitoring and recommendations regarding the disbursements of Part C funds.

These funds have been and will continue to be used for the planning, development, and implementation of the required statewide system. In addition to the designated responsibility of administering the funds provided under Part C, the ADRS, as the Lead Agency, is the State's entity responsible for the assignment of financial responsibility among the appropriate agencies.

Equitable Distribution of Funds (34 CFR §303.207)

The Lead Agency, ADRS, ensures the equitable distribution of resources and the accountability of need among all geographic areas within the State by utilizing the following descriptive procedures:

1. A written federal grant application encompassing all geographical areas of the state and the needs demonstrated within the state.
2. Allocation of fiscal resources to the local level for the provision of early intervention services facilitated through the AEIS Financial Plan.
3. Part C funds are designated as payor of last resort for services to eligible children and their families that are not otherwise provided from other public/private sources.

Other procedures used to ensure equitable resources and need accountability among all geographic **areas** within the state include the following:

1. A broad geographical representation on the ICC.
2. Day-to-day interaction between the Division of Early Intervention staff and providers at the local level.
3. Supervise and monitor activities to identify technical assistance needs.
4. Provision of technical assistance.

General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (34 CFR §303.212(a))

ADRS ensures equitable access to services under Part C in the following ways:

1. By developing public awareness campaigns to reach Alabama's traditionally underserved population.
2. Funds for early intervention are disseminated statewide.
3. Sign language interpreters are available for any public meeting when a request for this accommodation is made.
4. CSPD training flyers that are disseminated to the community are required to have an accommodation statement which includes instructions for requesting needed accommodations.
5. Requests for written information in large print or Braille would be provided upon request.

Head Start (34 CFR §303.210)

Coordination with Head Start and Early Head Start, early education, and childcare programs

- a) Each application must contain a description of State efforts to promote collaboration among Head Start and Early Head Start programs under the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9801, *et seq.*, as amended), early education and child care programs, and services under this part.
- b) ADRS participates, consistent with section 642B(b)(l)(C)(viii) of the Head Start Act, on the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care established under the Head Start Act.

Alabama's efforts to promote collaboration include:

Head Start, Early Head Start and East Coast Migrant programs continue to be important and integral partners in serving infants and toddlers with developmental delays in Alabama. Head Start has served for many years on the Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) in an effort to increase collaboration, communication and coordination of services to young children being served through these programs. AEIS also serves on the Alabama Head Start Disability Advisory Committee and on local regional councils throughout the state. AEIS has been working with Head Start to: identify and serve children with disabilities from birth to age three and their families; to coordinate the delivery of high quality, comprehensive, family-centered, culturally competent systems of community-based services; promote inclusive learning environments and experiences for all children; foster developmental gains for all children and utilize resources efficiently and effectively by minimizing duplication of services. AEIS works with Head Start on public awareness activities, identification and referral, participation in IFSP meetings, transition planning and joint training opportunities. Head Start staff are actively attending local EI district council meetings, members of the annual EI/Preschool Conference planning team and participate in mutually beneficial personnel training/technical assistance opportunities. The strong and historical partnership between AEIS and Head Start continues to assist and support infants, toddlers and families in Alabama.

Governor's State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECAC). Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 requires the Governor of all States to designate

and establish a council to serve as the ECAC for children birth to school entry. The Council members are appointed by the Governor and AEIS is an active, appointed member. The Council's responsibilities are:

1. Conduct a periodic statewide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs and services for children from birth to school entry, including an assessment of the availability of high-quality pre-kindergarten services for low-income children in the state.
2. Identify opportunities for and barriers to collaboration and coordination among Federally funded and State-funded child development, child care, and early childhood education programs and services, including collaboration and coordination among State agencies responsible for administering such programs.
3. Develop recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in exiting Federal, State, and local child care and early childhood education programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations.
4. Develop recommendations regarding the establishment of a unified data collection system of early childhood education and development programs and services throughout the State.
5. Develop recommendations regarding statewide professional development and career advancement plans for early childhood educators in the State.
6. Assess the capacity and effectiveness of 2 or 4 year public and private institutions of higher education in the State toward supporting the development of early childhood educators, including the extent to which such institutions have in place articulation agreements, professional development and career advancement plans, and practice or internships for students to spend time in a Head Start or pre-kindergarten program.
7. Make recommendations for improvements in State early learning standards and undertake efforts to develop high-quality, comprehensive early learning standards.

AEIS participates in the ECAC committees: Special Projects, Longitudinal Data Systems; Assessments and Analysis; Outreach, Recruitment and Sustainability; and Program and Professional Development. The committees have been actively developing short and long-range goals, as well as strategic work plans to meet_ the objectives. There have been numerous collaborative activities targeted at improving the systems for children from birth to the age of five. AEIS continues to work in partnership with ECAC to develop a strong early childhood system for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.

Alabama Partnership for Children (APC): AEIS continues to work on collaborative projects with the APC to improve early childhood service systems. The mission of the APC is to partner with public and private entities to maintain an effective state and local system of resources and support that enables parents, families and others who care for young children to ensure that they are healthy, protected, nurtured and offered every opportunity to succeed in life. We are active partners in developing, designing and implementing a unified approach for improving the outcomes of children from birth to age five in Alabama. This public/private partnership is a distinct initiative to develop and strengthen systems, forge strategies and increase public awareness for all early childhood programs in Alabama. Smart Start Alabama is the encompassing identity for all projects of the APC. AEIS has been involved on the Board of Directors since its creation and has worked on several collaborative projects with key Stakeholders, which include:

- 1) TEACH - a scholarship program that was developed to increase the level of education and effectiveness of early learning professionals by making the education process more affordable, increasing wages and reducing staff turnover.
- 2) Blueprint for Zero to Five - developed through the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative as a structure to assist in planning, funding advocacy, accountability and policy decisions for young children.
- 3) Zero to Five Matters - a statewide comprehensive early care and education campaign targeting business leaders and policymakers emphasized the importance of the first five years of life. AEIS continues to be an active partner with the APC and affiliates to improve the outcomes for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families in Alabama.

Referral procedures {34 CFR §303.303}

CAPTA

(b) Referral of specific at-risk infants and toddlers. The procedures required in paragraph (a) of this section must provide for requiring the referral of a child under the age of three who-

- (1) Is the subject of a substantiated case of child abuse or neglect, or
- (2) Is identified as directly affected by illegal substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure.

AEIS collaborates and coordinates with the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) on those infants and toddlers under the age of three who are found to have a substantiated case of abuse and/or neglect within their home. At that time, a DHR/CAPTA referral form is completed by the OHR social worker and forwarded straight to a designated specialist at the AEIS State Office who receives all DHR/CAPTA referrals. The DHR/CAPTA referral must indicate whether or not there is a developmental concern and in which area of development. If the OHR Social Worker has indicated that there is a concern, the EI Specialist processes the DHR/CAPTA referral as a Child Find referral and sends it to the appropriate district where the child resides. The District Early Intervention Coordinator from the appropriate district makes contact with the parent or guardian listed for that child and then proceeds through the process to determine eligibility. If the OHR Social Worker has indicated that there are "no concerns," the DHR/CAPTA referral is kept on file at the state office.