

Department of Health Developmental Disabilities Supports Division Policy	Policy Number: Supersedes: Policy 01-6.1 Certification Requirements for Developmental Specialists Policy 00-6.1 Exemption from Personnel Certification
Policy Title: Certification and Re-certification Requirements for Developmental Specialists Policy	
Effective Date: January 1, 2008	
Approved:	Date: updated March 31, 2009

I. PURPOSE

This policy establishes Certification and Re-certification requirements of the New Mexico Family Infant Toddler (FIT) Program for Developmental Specialists (DS) in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C, and the Requirements for Family Infant Toddler Intervention Services, Title 7, Chapter 30, Part 8, New Mexico Administrative Code (7.30.8 NMAC).

II. POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the Developmental Disabilities Supports Division to maintain a certification system for Developmental Specialists to promote acquisition of and improvement in the knowledge, experience and skills needed to be able to provide and support quality early intervention services for families of eligible infants and toddlers.

A. Developmental Specialist Certification Requirements

1. Initial Application for Developmental Specialist Certification shall be made when:
 - a. entering the early intervention system for the first time (within 30 days of hire)
 - b. moving up a level (e.g. from DS I Advanced to DS II, upon obtaining a Bachelor's degree in a listed field in section J of this policy)
2. Re-entering the early intervention system after a lapse in completed hours, due to working outside the FIT system. Developmental Specialists must petition the FIT Program Review Team who will make a decision, case by case, for granting or denying re-entry.
3. All DS Certificates will be dated the 1st day of the month in which the application was received; and/or back dated if the DS Certificate has expired.

B. Developmental Specialist I Basic Requirements

1. Roles of the Developmental Specialist I Basic:

- a. A certified Developmental Specialist I Basic can provide the following services to eligible infants, toddlers, and their families:
 - 1) Complete duties that contribute to the functioning of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team and other staff; these duties are to be assigned by the supervisor;
 - 2) Support the ability of families and other primary caregivers to implement activities outlined in the IFSP; these activities will be designed by the Developmental Specialist II or III or another qualified team member; and
 - 3) Participate in the IFSP meeting.
- b. A certified Developmental Specialist I Basic cannot provide the following services to eligible infants, toddlers, and their families:
 - 1) Conduct a comprehensive multidisciplinary evaluation.
 - 2) Write the evaluation report.
 - 3) Develop the IFSP, including writing outcomes and strategies.
 - 4) Conduct a home visit without the presence of a DS II or DS III or other qualified early intervention personnel; e.g. nurse, therapist.

2. Supervision of the Developmental Specialist I Basic:

- a. A Developmental Specialist I Basic shall be supervised by a Developmental Specialist II or III. Supervision is required at least monthly.

3. Initial Certification of the Developmental Specialist I Basic:

- a. Has a High School Diploma or a GED, is at least 18 years of age, and has completed the 45-hour entry-level course within the first six months of employment.
- b. Application forms for initial certification can be obtained from the Family Infant Toddler Program or on the website: www.fitprogram.com.

4. Re-certification of the Developmental Specialist I Basic:

All contact hours must relate to the Developmental Specialist competencies listed in the Self-Assessment tool and the goals agreed upon in the Developmental Specialist's Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP).

- a. Completion of 25 hours per year of contact hours within a 3-year period, in one or a combination of the following professional development options:
 - 1) academic coursework

- 2) in-service training
 - 3) mentorship
 - 4) self-study (up to 10 hours per year maximum, with approval of supervisor, can be counted for re-certification)
 - 5) formal reflective supervision (up to 5 hours per year maximum can be counted for re-certification)
 - 6) includes other options as identified in the IPDP and must be approved and signed by the supervisor of the Developmental Specialist.
- b. All documents related to re-certification are sent to the FIT Program 30 days prior to the expiration date of the Developmental Specialist certificate.

C. Developmental Specialist I Advanced Requirements

1. Roles of the Developmental Specialist I Advanced:
 - a. A certified Developmental Specialist I Advanced can provide the following services to eligible infants, toddlers, and their families:
 - 1) Conduct a home visit without the presence of a DS II or III;
 - 2) Assist the family in the identification of their concerns, priorities, and resources utilizing a format and questions designed by the Developmental Specialist II and/or III;
 - 3) Assist in the development of the Individualized Family Service Plan;
 - 4) Assist in the comprehensive developmental evaluation; and
 - 5) Support families and/or other primary caregivers to implement activities outlined in the IFSP.
 - b. A certified Developmental Specialist I Advanced cannot provide the following services to eligible infants, toddlers, and their families:
 - 1) Conduct a comprehensive multidisciplinary evaluation.
 - 2) Write the evaluation report.
 - 3) Develop Individualized Family Service Plans, including writing outcomes and strategies.
2. Supervision of the Developmental Specialist I Advanced:
 - a. A Developmental Specialist I Advanced shall be supervised by a Developmental Specialist II or III. Reflective supervision is required at least monthly.
3. Initial certification of the Developmental Specialist I Advanced:
 - a. Has an Associate's Degree with coursework in a field listed in section J of this policy or a One Year Vocational Certificate in Early Childhood issued by CYFD, Office of Child Development *and* three (3) years experience working with children birth to 5 years.

b. Application forms for initial certification can be obtained from the Family Infant Toddler Program or on the website: www.fitprogram.org

4. Re-certification of the Developmental Specialist I Advanced:

All contact hours must relate to the Developmental Specialist competencies, listed in the Self-Assessment tool and the goals agreed upon in the Developmental Specialist's Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP).

- a. Completion of 25 hours per year of contact hours within a 3-year period in one or any combination of the following professional development options:
 - 1) academic coursework
 - 2) in-service training
 - 3) mentorship
 - 4) self-study (up to 10 hours per year maximum, with approval of supervisor, can be counted for re-certification)
 - 5) formal reflective supervision (up to 5 hours per year maximum can be counted for re-certification)
 - 6) includes other options as identified in the IPDP and must be approved by the supervisor of the Developmental Specialist.
- b. All documents related to re-certification are sent to the FIT Program 30 days prior to the expiration date of the Developmental Specialist certificate.

D. Developmental Specialist II Requirements

1. Roles of the Developmental Specialist II:

- a. A certified Developmental Specialist II can provide the following services to eligible infants, toddlers and their families:
 - 1) Provide direct service to eligible children and their families based on an IFSP;
 - 2) Conduct and/or participate in screening, assessment and comprehensive multidisciplinary evaluations with appropriate academic and in-service training in instruments and methodologies; and
 - 3) Supervise other early intervention staff, as appropriate.

2. Supervision of Developmental Specialist II:

- a. A Developmental Specialist II shall be supervised by a Developmental Specialist II or III. Supervision is required at least monthly.
- b. Supervisors who provide direct early intervention services shall be supervised by a Developmental Specialist II or III or the agency director.

3. Initial certification of the Developmental Specialist II:
 - a. Has a Bachelor's degree in a field listed in section J of this policy.
 - b. Application forms for initial certification can be obtained from the Family Infant Toddler Program.

4. Re-certification of the Developmental Specialist II:

All contact hours must relate to the Developmental Specialist competencies listed in the Self-Assessment tool and the goals agreed upon in the Developmental Specialist's Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP).

 - a. Completion 25 hours per year of contact hours within a 3-year period, in one or any combination of the following professional development options:
 - 1) academic coursework
 - 2) in-service training
 - 3) mentorship
 - 4) self-study (up to 10 hours per year maximum, with approval of supervisor, can be counted for re-certification)
 - 5) formal reflective supervision (up to 5 hours per year maximum can be counted for re-certification)
 - 6) includes other options as identified in the IPDP and must be approved by the supervisor of the Developmental Specialist.

 - b. All documents related to re-certification are sent to the FIT Program 30 days prior to the expiration date of the Developmental Specialist certificate.

E. Developmental Specialist III Requirements

1. Roles of the Developmental Specialist III:
 - a. A certified Developmental Specialist III can provide the following services to eligible infants, toddlers, and their families:
 - 1) Provide direct service to eligible children and their families based on an IFSP;
 - 2) Conduct and/or participate in screening, assessment and comprehensive multidisciplinary evaluations with appropriate academic and in-service training in instruments and methodologies used; and
 - 3) Supervise other early intervention staff, as appropriate.

2. Supervision of a Developmental Specialist III:
 - a. A Developmental Specialist III shall be supervised by a Developmental Specialist II or III. Supervision is required at least monthly.
 - b. Supervisors who provide direct early intervention services shall be supervised by a Developmental Specialist II or III or the agency director.

3. Initial certification of the Developmental Specialist III:
 - a. Has a Master's degree or a PhD in a field listed in section J of this policy.
 - b. Application forms for initial certification can be obtained from the Family Infant Toddler Program or on the website: www.fitprogram.org

4. Re-certification of the Developmental Specialist III:

All contact hours must relate to the Developmental Specialist competencies listed in the Self-Assessment tool and the goals agreed upon in the Developmental Specialist's Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP).

 - a. Completes 25 hours per year of contact hours within a 3-year period, in one or any combination of the following professional development options:
 - 1) academic coursework
 - 2) in-service training
 - 3) mentorship
 - 4) self-study (up to 10 hours per year maximum, with approval of supervisor, can be counted for re-certification)
 - 5) formal reflective supervision (up to 5 hours per year maximum can be counted for re-certification)
 - 6) includes other options as identified in the IPDP and must be approved by the supervisor of the Developmental Specialist.
 - b. All documents related to re-certification are sent to the FIT Program 30 days prior to the expiration date of the Developmental Specialist certificate.

F. Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP)

1. An IPDP is required for every Developmental Specialist working in a FIT Program agency and must be implemented and in place within three (3) months of hire.
2. A new IPDP will be developed each year within the 3-year re-certification period.
3. Each Developmental Specialist completes the Self-Assessment Tool, prior to creating the IPDP with the supervisor. The Self-Assessment tool addresses early intervention competencies and assists the Developmental Specialist and supervisor in identifying the goals and knowledge/skills to be addressed on the IPDP.

4. The IPDP will list the professional development goals and strategies to obtain knowledge/skills and the timelines to be completed by the Developmental Specialist in order to re-certify at the desired level in each 3-year re-certification period.
5. At a minimum, the Developmental Specialist and his or her supervisor will review the IPDP every 6 months.

G. Re-certification Process

1. At least 75 contact hours must be documented within the 3-year re-certification period. Approximately twenty-five (25) contact hours should be documented each year.
 - a. There are no maximum number of contact hours for participating in in-service training, academic coursework, or mentoring.
 - b. A maximum number of five (5) contact hours per year for participation in formal reflective supervision.
 - c. A maximum number of ten (10) contact hours per year for participation in self-study.
2. For Developmental Specialists and supervisors working in a FIT Program agency:
 - a. The activities in which the hours were earned must be identified on the Developmental Specialist's Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP).
 - b. Certificates of completion/attendance need to be kept on file within the FIT agency for audit purposes.
 - c. The Re-certification Tracking Page(s), along with required Re-certification Application from the Family Infant Toddler Program, shall be sent to the Family Infant Toddler Program prior to the end of the 3-year re-certification period.
 - d. All course work, workshops, conferences, self-study, etc. must relate to the Family Infant Toddler competencies and identified on the IPDP.
3. For Developmental Specialist personnel working in administration or training/technical assistance within the FIT system:
 - a. Contact hours must be documented in certificates of completion/attendance.
 - b. Photocopies of certificates, documentation/proof of self-study as it relates to infants, toddlers and families, transcripts or letters from entities providing the course, along with the required Re-certification Application from the Family Infant Toddler Program, shall be submitted to the Family Infant Toddler Program prior to the end of the 3-year re-certification period.

- c. Supervisor's initials/signature is not required on the Re-certification Tracking Page(s).
 - d. All course work, workshops, conferences, self-study, etc must relate to the Family Infant Toddler competencies.
4. When required hours for re-certification are not met:
- a. The FIT Review Team will require that a Professional Development Corrective Action Plan be developed and submitted. The plan will detail the strategies and time frames for obtaining the missing contact hours.
 - b. These contact hours cannot be counted toward the next 3-year re-certification period.
 - c. The Corrective Action Plan shall be reviewed and approved by the FIT Program Review Team.

H. Exemption from Certification

1. Reasons for Exemption:
- a. Early intervention provider agencies, under contract with the DOH, may under certain circumstances request an exemption in order to hire staff who do not meet all the qualifications for the Developmental Specialist certification for which they are applying.
 - b. Circumstances requiring an exemption may include:
 - 1) a position that has been vacant for several months, despite documented efforts to hire qualified staff.
 - 2) repeated inability to keep a position filled for longer than one year.
 - 3) lack of qualified applicants.
 - 4) an applicant who is close to meeting the qualifications for the certification.
 - 5) an individual with a degree not listed in section J of this policy.
2. Requesting an Exemption:
- a. Requests for an exemption shall be made within 30 days of hire or the date that the need for exemption is identified. The agency shall submit a written request for an exemption to the Family Infant Toddler Program that includes the following:
 - 1) name of the individual(s) for whom the exemption is sought.
 - 2) details of the circumstances justifying the agency's request for the exemption.
 - 3) level for which the candidate for exemption is being sought.
 - 4) qualifications and experience of the individual that deems them a suitable candidate for exemption.
 - 5) an IPDP, including current and planned courses, that the individual is taking to meet the requirements of

Developmental Specialist certification at the desired level and the amount and type of supervision.

- 6) official transcript
- 7) completed Developmental Specialist application resume.

3. Approval or Denial of Exemption:

- a) The FIT Program shall review each request for exemption.
- b) If the exemption request is approved, the agency will receive a letter within 30 days detailing the conditions under which the exemption is granted, including the courses that the individual must take during the period of the exemption in order to meet the developmental certification level being applied for.
- c) The individual shall receive a certificate at the Developmental Specialist level for which the exemption is granted. This certificate shall be valid for a period of no more than one (1) year and the certificate shall identify the certified Developmental Specialist as "exempt".
- d) If the exemption request is denied, the agency will receive a letter stating the reasons for the denial within 30 days. The denial notification will also state the agency's rights to request a review.

4. Exemption Period:

- a. Exemption requests shall be granted for a maximum of one (1) year.
- b. Agencies can re-apply for an exemption for a maximum of 3-years for one individual. When granting the renewal of an exemption the FIT Program will determine if the individual has successfully completed the required courses.
- c. Upon successful completion of the required courses/classes, the individual will be granted full certification.
- d. If the individual takes a position with another agency, the exemption does not transfer with the employee.
- e. Extension of the exemption beyond three (3) years will only be made in exceptional circumstances decided upon by the FIT Review Team.

I. Agencies cannot not bill for early intervention services delivered by individuals who do not meet the standards for a specific Developmental Specialist level or whose certification has expired.

J. Approved Fields Of Study For Developmental Specialists/Certification:

Audiology
Art or Music Therapy
Counseling and Guidance
Early Childhood Development and Education
Education of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing
Family Studies
Social Work

Family Therapy and Counseling
Nursing (LPN, RN, Midwife)
Nutrition/Dietetics
Occupational Therapy incl. Certified Occupational Therapy assistant (COTA)
Orientation/Mobility Training
Pediatric or other Medical Specialty (e.g., MD, CNP, PA)
Physical Therapy incl. Physical Therapy Assistant (PTA)
Psychology
Special Education
Speech and Language Pathology
Communication-Language Disorders
Vision Training
Elementary Education

The following degree's will result in an exemption and will require the applicant to take FIT Core modules, the 45 hour Intro to Early Childhood Development and/or Early childhood college credit classes.

Sociology
Public Health
Other Related Fields as determined by the Department of Health

For degree's in non related fields, where the applicant can demonstrate two years of experience in an early childhood setting, this will result in an exemption and will require the applicant to take FIT Core modules, the 45 hour Intro to Early Childhood Development and/or early childhood college credit classes.

III. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all personnel working in the role of Developmental Specialist and providing early intervention services for eligible children and families in accordance with IDEA Part C and 7.30.8. NMAC, Requirements for Family Infant Toddler Early Intervention Services. This policy applies to all personnel working within the role of a Developmental Specialist and individuals who hold a professional license or certificate from an approved discipline, listed in section J, who spend at least sixty (60) percent of their time employed in the role of Developmental Specialist, and for individuals who supervise Developmental Specialists. Personnel in administration or training/technical assistance positions, within the FIT system, may apply to be certified/re-certified under this policy.

IV. DEFINITIONS

Academic Coursework: Means experienced practitioners may take college or university coursework to obtain a degree or an advanced degree, or to increase their knowledge and skills. Such coursework may be in Early Childhood, Special Education or other topics related to working with infants, toddlers and their families.

Contact Hours: Means an equivalent of hour for hour of classroom time, conference or workshop in-service attendance, one-on-one mentoring, formal reflective supervision or self-study. One (1) hour of academic credit is equivalent to fifteen (15) contact hours.

Developmental Specialist: Means an early intervention practitioner who provides special instruction or family training, counseling and home visits for eligible children and their families under the FIT Program. Developmental Specialists address the development of children in the context of their families within everyday routines, activities and places.

Developmental Specialist Certificate: Means an official credential awarded to an individual who meets the qualifications required to serve eligible infants, toddlers and their families in the FIT Program in accordance with defined levels of practice.

Exemption: Means the process an agency can utilize under certain circumstances to request certification of an individual as a Developmental Specialist who does not meet the required qualifications.

In-Service Training: Means professional development activities attended to assist the experienced practitioner in expanding and growing within their practice.

Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP): Means an on-going plan that identifies the knowledge and skills the individual needs to achieve each year so that he or she can be re-certified at the desired level in the 3-year re-certification period. The plan is reviewed every 6 months with the supervisor and a new IPDP is developed annually. The plan includes the Developmental Specialist's goals, strategies to obtain knowledge/skills, and timelines for each year.

Mentorship: Means a professional development strategy to gain competence and address a specific professional development goal. The Developmental Specialist enlists the support of a skilled and knowledgeable individual and establishes a professional relationship with this person. A plan is developed with the mentor to support the Developmental Specialist's growth and learning related to one or more of the goals on his/her Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP).

Reflective Supervision: Means a process of staff support that helps to promote quality practice. Formal reflective supervision, according to best practice, is one-on-one supervision that is provided regularly (every 2-4 weeks). Supervision can occur within or outside the agency. All staff, regardless of educational background and years of experience, need and deserve supportive supervision that provides them with

opportunities to reflect on their job performance in ways that support their continuous professional growth. Supervision that is provided in a collaborative, inquisitive and supportive manner, rather than in a didactic and evaluative manner, results in practitioners who are able to offer this type of support to team members and to families with whom they work.

Self-Study: Means a professional development strategy to gain competence and address a specific professional development goal. Self-study involves conducting a carefully planned review of materials, including, journals/articles, videos, books, websites, and/or others, resulting in a prepared presentation to the supervisor and/or fellow staff members about what has been learned and how it applies to the work of the Developmental Specialist.

Self-Assessment Tool: Means a tool to be completed by each Developmental Specialist in collaboration with his/her supervisor. The Developmental Specialist rates his/her level of competence on a number of competency indicators that are essential to providing early intervention services in New Mexico.

V. REFERENCES

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C, Requirements for Family Infant Toddler Intervention Services, Title 7, Chapter 30, Part 8, New Mexico Administrative Code 7.30.8 NMAC.

January 2005 Developmental Specialist Certification Manual.

New Mexico Department of Health, Developmental Disabilities Supports Division, Service Definitions and Standards, Fiscal Year 2008, early intervention staffing requirements.