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Itinerant Team Educational Service Provision in Child Care Programs

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Applicability: All Licensed and Funded Child Care Programs Participating in Public School Itinerant Team Services

BACKGROUND

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) supports the full inclusion of children with disabilities across all settings regulated by the agency, ensuring that children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) have access to required supports without barriers through itinerant services.

EEC promotes collaborative partnerships between child care programs and local school districts through Itinerant Teams, professionals who provide services to preschool-aged children with IEPs and support inclusive learning environments in community-based child care programs[1]. In addition to providing IEP-based services tailored to meet the needs of an individual child, Itinerant Teams often provide general education support and instruction for the full group of children during their child care program visits.

The following policy outlines the requirements that school districts, Itinerant Teams, and community-based child care programs must follow as they facilitate itinerant services.

[1] This policy applies to community-based child care programs that have opted to participate in the itinerant model and the public school districts that deploy itinerant services in such child care programs. Community-based programs may include Group and School Age programs (often known as centers or center-based programs) and family child care.

AUTHORITY

- 606 CMR 7.04: Administration
  - (2) Unauthorized Activities
  - (4) Record Requirements
- 606 CMR 7.05: Interactions Among Adults and Children
- 606 CMR 7.10: Ratios, Group Sizes and Supervision of Children
- 606 CMR 7.11: Health and Safety
  - (4) Abuse and Neglect
  - (18) Additional Requirements for Small Group and School Age and Large Group and School Age Child Care
- 606 CMR 14.05(1)(d): Background Record Check

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions are used:

- **Public School Itinerant Team**: A group of professionals employed or contracted by a public school district who provide inclusive learning supports and educational services to preschool-aged children with IEPs in community-based child care programs. The Public School Itinerant Team may include specialists such as speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, behavioral specialists, inclusion coaches, and special education certified teachers[2]. Public School Itinerant Team members may work across multiple settings, with the goal of providing services to a child in the settings that they spend time in regularly. They may work with children both one-on-one and in group formats (i.e., more than one child working together within the same space).
- **Sponsoring School District**: The public school district that employs/contracts and oversees a Public School Itinerant Team.
- **Host Child Care Program**: A community-based child care program that hosts a Public School Itinerant Team. These programs include Group and School Age (also known as "centers" or "center-based programs") and Family Child Care.
- **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**: A written statement that identifies a child's special education needs and describes the services a school district must provide to meet those needs. An IEP is developed by a public school system in accordance with federal and state special education law and in partnership with

[2] This policy does not currently apply to Early Intervention (EI) and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) specialists.

the child's family. An IEP may specify that services are provided in a group setting and/or one-on-one.

- **Child Receiving IEP Services**: A child who is enrolled in a community-based child care program and who has an IEP that is the basis for itinerant services.

POLICY STATEMENT

Memorandum of Understanding Requirements

Prior to Public School Itinerant Team service provision in a community-based child care program, a Sponsoring School District must create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a Host Child Care Program. This MOU document must include:

- Who will execute the EEC Background Record Check (BRC) process for each Itinerant Team member prior to service provision in the Host Child Care Program (see BRC Suitability section);
- If applicable, Host Child Care Program consent to the Sponsoring School District executing EEC BRC processes;
- The services that will be provided by the Public School Itinerant Team in the Host Child Care Program; and,
- Acknowledgement and acceptance of EEC's child abuse and neglect complaint regulations, per 606 CMR 7.11 (see Abuse and Neglect Complaints section).

The Host Child Care Program must retain a copy of the current MOU document and provide it to an EEC licensor upon request.

The Sponsoring School District is responsible for renewing the MOU with the Host Child Care Program annually.

BRC Suitability

Prior to working in a Host Child Care Program, all Public School Itinerant Team members must be found suitable according to EEC's BRC process.[3]

If a Sponsoring School District receives funding from EEC to support itinerant service provision (e.g., through a Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative grant), the **Sponsoring School District** must:

[3] This EEC BRC suitability requirement does not negate or override any Sponsoring School District obligations to make or obtain a suitability determination and execute an employer background record check, per M.G.L. c. 71, § 38R and 603 CMR 51.00.

- Manage and execute EEC's BRC process and confirm suitability for each Itinerant Team member; and
- Send a copy of the EEC Suitability Determination Letter to each Host Child Care Program prior to the Itinerant Team member's first visit to the program.

In this instance, the Host Child Care Program must retain a copy of the EEC Suitability Determination Letter for each Itinerant Team member and provide it to an EEC licensor upon request.

If a Sponsoring School District does <u>not</u> receive funding from EEC to support itinerant service provision, the **Host Child Care Program** must:

- Manage and execute EEC's BRC process and confirm suitability for each Itinerant Team member.

Parent/Guardian Consent and Notification

Prior to itinerant team service provision, the Host Child Care Program is required to:

1. Obtain required documentation for the Child Receiving IEP Services;
2. Notify the parents/guardians of all children present during Itinerant Team visits of Itinerant Services; and
3. Provide the parents/guardians of all children present during Itinerant Team visits the option to opt out of their child's participation in group activities with Itinerant Team members.

<u>Required documentation from the Child Receiving IEP Services:</u>

- A current copy of the child's IEP from the Sponsoring School District; or
- A completed consent form signed by the parent/guardian. (See "Consent Form for Parent/Guardian" in the Additional Information section).

<u>Required Notification and Opt-Out Option for all children present during Itinerant Team visits:</u>

- Host Child Care Program must send a notification to the parents/guardians of all children present during Itinerant Team visits. (See "Notification and Opt-Out Form for Parent/Guardian" in the Additional Information section).
- The notification must include:
  - An explanation of Itinerant Team services;
  - The name of the Host Child Care Program;
  - The name of the partnering Public School;

    - The date; and
    - An Opt-Out Section.
- The parent/guardian may opt out of their child's participation in group activities with Itinerant Team members. The parent/guardian notification must include a section where they indicate that they are opting out their child's participation. This section must include the name of child, the name and signature of parent/guardian, and date of signature.
- The notification does not need to be returned unless the parent/guardian has opted out of their child's participation.

The above notification and signed consent forms are valid for one year and must be renewed by the Host Child Care Program annually.

The Host Child Care Program must retain the above documents in a secure location and provide them to an EEC licensor upon request.

Providing Itinerant Team Services

During Itinerant Team visits the Host Child Care Program must maintain accurate attendance records for the visiting Itinerant Team members, per 606 CMR 7.04 (4).

Some IEPs require that a child receives one-on-one services. Provided that the parent/guardian has given consent (see Parent/Guardian Consent and Notification section), the Itinerant Team member may work one-on-one with the child in an alternate space. This alternate space must be within the approved licensed area of the Host Child Care Program.

In all child care settings, the Itinerant Team member must notify the Host Child Care Program educator(s) prior to moving the Child Receiving IEP Services to an alternate space. In a center-based setting, the Itinerant Team member must also sign the child out of and into the classroom.

For all itinerant team visits, the Host Child Care Program must document:

- The name of the Itinerant Team member;
- The name of the Child Receiving IEP Services;
- The duration of the itinerant service session; and
- For a child working one-on-one with an Itinerant Team member in a center-based setting, the times that the child left and reentered the classroom.

In center-based settings, the Host Child Care Program must add all Public School Itinerant Team members to the Staff Records Checklist (See Additional Information section).

The Host Child Care Program must retain the above documents and an attendance log in a secure location and provide them to an EEC licensor upon request.

The Host Child Care Program must also orient the Itinerant Team members to the program's emergency procedures, including but not limited to the location of the First Aid kit, the location of a child's emergency medication if applicable, and program evacuation procedures.

Abuse and Neglect Complaints

Per 606 CMR 7.11(4), all Public School Itinerant Team members providing services in community-based child care programs are educators subject to EEC regulations and policies related to abuse and neglect complaints. If an abuse and neglect complaint is filed against a Public School Itinerant Team member:

- They cannot work directly with children, pending the completion of an investigation by the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF), per 606 CMR 7.11(18); and,
- The Sponsoring School District or Host Child Care Program must execute a new EEC BRC as soon as possible (see BRC Suitability section).

If the Sponsoring School District receives an abuse and neglect complaint against a Public School Itinerant Team member, they must immediately notify the Host Child Care Program and EEC.

COMPLIANCE

EEC licensors may measure compliance by reviewing the following documentation:

- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Sponsoring School District and Host Child Care Program
- EEC BRC Suitability Determination Letters for Itinerant Team members, when applicable
- IEP or Consent Form for the Child Receiving IEP Services
- Notification/Opt-Out Form for children present during Itinerant Team visits
- Host Child Care Program's attendance log(s)
- Staff Records Checklist (center-based programs only)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Licensed Group and School Age Program Staff Records Checklist (September 2025 update forthcoming)
- Funded Center-Based Program Staff Records Checklist (September 2025 update forthcoming)
- Consent Form for Parent/Guardian: Child Receiving IEP Services from an Itinerant Team (child care providers may adapt this sample Consent Form for their program
- Notification and Opt-Out Form for Parent/Guardian: Itinerant Team Services (child care providers may adapt this sample Notification and Opt-Out Form for their program)