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Building the Early Intervention Workforce: Presentation to the NY State Early Intervention Coordinating Council

03/14/24

Brooklyn College The City University of New York

NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
School of Health Professions

I.   Background

II.   Goals

III. Professional National/NYSED Standards and Requirements

- Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

- Occupational Therapy (OT)

- Physical Therapy (PT)

- Speech Language Pathology (SLP)

IV. The Current Reality - Professions and Workforce

V. Recommendations to New York State Department of Health

VI. Next Steps/Future Considerations

The NYC Early Childhood Research Network is a project of the New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute (PDI) and the City University of New York:

- Bridges research, policy, and practice for early childhood.

- The Heising-Simons Foundation is a funding partner that is supporting this research project.

- Special acknowledgement for the support of Executive Director, Dona Anderson, Research Network Director, Lindsey Bravo, and Research Associate Erica Yardy and their team at PDI.

- Current **NYSED Office of Higher Education** and **NYSED Office of the Professions** regulations - standard curricula in Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) <u>do not require</u> students to learn about Early Intervention (EI) core competencies or to engage in clinical experiences with infants/toddlers and their families (Bruder et al., 2005; Gilken et al., 2022).

- As a result:
  - Lack of college-level EI course content and limited to no clinical experiences devoted to EI and the birth to 3 years population (Bruder, et al., 2019, Elenko, 2019; Gilken et al., 2022; McFadden et al., 2020).

  - Internships and fieldwork experiences in home and community settings do not typically occur and/or are neither required nor counted toward students' licensure or certification – counter to building a quality workforce capacity for EI.

Closely examine and research the NYS Institutes of Higher Education's (IHE) requirements and regulations with the **NYSED Office of Higher Education** and **NYSED Office of the Professions.**

- Enhance the quality of the educational preparation of current and future early interventionists across four key disciplines authorized to provide EI in New York - **ECSE, OT, PT,** and **SLP**.

- Address NYS's shortage of early interventionists, including professionals from linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to build the early intervention workforce capacity across the four key disciplines above**.**

- Recommendations to include EI competencies and related experiences in credentialing requirements for *NYSED Office of Higher Education* and *NYSED Office of the Professions* will **significantly increase quantity and improve quality of NYS EI services**.

- Pre-service college students in *ECSE, OT, PT,* and *SLP* will develop knowledge of EI competencies, while gaining experiential learning in EI settings, resulting in **increased fieldwork placement opportunities**.

- Students will obtain clinical experiences working with infants, toddlers, and their families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, helping to **further build a high-quality, diverse EI workforce**.

- Closely reviewed and analyzed various NYSED regulations/requirements and related documents:
  - National professional standards for our disciplines,
  - Policy and technical reports and regulations on EI and Early Childhood (e.g.., NYS Board of Regents EC Work Group's Blue Ribbon Recommendations),
  - Empirical articles including evidence-based practices in EI.
- Examined existing professional tele practice guidelines for educators and therapists in these disciplines (not reported in presentation).
- Conducted a mixed methods research survey design study examining EI Service Providers and Higher Education Professionals experiences/credentialing of US EI professionals and academics.

- **Competency #1:** Typical and atypical childhood development (birth to 3 years) to support evaluations, monitoring of progress, and the creation of individualized strategies with parents and caregivers.
- **Competency #2:** Multi-cultural and diversity factors related to engaging and working with EI families, performing evaluations, and providing services.
- **Competency #3**: Support the parent-child dyad and enhance the family's capacity to help their children develop.
- **Competency #4**: Use of family-centered best practices via collaboration, coaching and strengthening their capacities.
- **Competency #5**: Reflective practices and reflective supervision for on-going professional development.

Fieldwork placements: *Support greater clinical fieldwork placements with infants, toddlers, and their families across settings.*

National Professional Standards and NYSED Requirements reviewed

- **Early Childhood Special Education/Early Intervention and Early Childhood Education**
  - National Education Standards
  - NYSED Higher Ed. Office of Teaching Initiatives requirements including types and pathways to certification
    - Extensions and Annotations
  - NYS Board of Regents EC Work Group's Blue Ribbon Recommendations
- **Allied Health - OT, PT, and SLP**
  - National Certification Standards
  - NYSED Office of the Professions Licensure Requirements
    - Extensions

Current Professional Standards & Regulations

- Division of Early Childhood (DEC) and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards for bachelor's and master's programs prepare ECSE/EC to work with children (birth to 8 years) and their families. (EI/ECSE Standards (2020) | DEC ; dec-sped.org)Crosswalk-EI.ECSE-and-ECE-Standards-Final.pdf (ecpcta.org)

- *NYSDOH Five Competency Areas for Early Interventionists* are in alignment with DEC/NAEYC standards (EI/ECSE Standards (2020) | DEC ; dec-sped.org)Crosswalk-EI.ECSE-and-ECE-Standards-Final.pdf (ecpcta.org)

- By incorporating the *NYSDOH Five Competency Areas for EI*, NYS Education Department standards will move toward alignment with the national standards.

Current Professional Standards & Regulations

New York State Regulations - *General & Program-Specific Regulations for Teaching Students with Disabilities in Early Childhood (SWD-EC; B- 2nd*)
- Content Core (e.g., liberal arts concentration, such as math, art),
- General Pedagogical Core (e.g., broad pedagogy across PK-12),
- Program-Specific Pedagogical Core - SWD-EC; 13 sub-categories
  - Bulk of recommended changes to incorporate EI competencies
- Field Experiences, Student-Teaching, and Practica Requirements
  - "*Address the full range of student developmental levels in early childhood students with disabilities, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and grades 1 through 2.*"
    - Birth to 3 years are NOT included.
- NYSED SWD-EC regulations are NOT consistent with DEC/NAEYC standards for professional practice birth to 3 years or birth to 2nd.
  https://www.nysed.gov/college-university-evaluation/general-and-program-specific-requirements-teaching-students

New York State Regulations - *Certification Types (some key examples)*

- **Initial Certificate:** entry level (bachelor's or master's degree)
- **Professional Certificate:** advanced level; obtain master's within 5 years
- **Cross-Disciplinary/Developmental Age Extensions**
  - Bilingual Extension Certificate
    - Extra 12 credits (e.g., psycho- & sociolinguistics) and pass exam
    - Added to base of existing certificate (e.g., SWD-EC or SLP)

    General and Program Specific Requirements for Bilingual Education Extensions* | New York State Education Department (nysed.gov)
  - Annotation
    - Only available title - Extension in Severe or Multiple Disabilities
    - Extra 4-5 courses (e.g., assistive & instructional technology)
    - Not required, but can be added to certification base; showing a depth of knowledge and skills Annotation : Types of Certificates and Licenses:OTI:NYSED

New York State Regulations - *Certification Pathways (some key examples)*

- Approved Teacher Preparation Program
  - ECSE degree (bachelor's or master's) in a teacher education program in a NYS college or university
- Approved Teacher Preparation Program - Additional certificate
- Individual Evaluation
  - Coursework from college transcripts and experience reviewed
    - Initial Certification
    - Extension & Certificate in EC Bilingual
- Additional Classroom Teaching Certification (hold valid certificate)
  - Additional pedagogy in ECE/SWD-EC

The Current Reality:

- NYSED Program-Specific Pedagogy to Teaching SWD in EC (B-2nd):
  - Uses "*student"* language throughout, but "*child*" language is missing.
  - Certification is Birth to 2nd Grade; Includes - developmental processes, language acquisition, co-teaching, collaboration, family, culturally and linguistically diverse students; developmental emphasis is PreK-2nd
    - Key elements of *NYSDOH Five Competency Areas for Early Interventionists* missing include:
      - culturally and linguistically responsive practices, family-centered, coaching, strengths-based, parent-child dyad, reflective practice
  - Field, student-teaching and practica requirements begin at PreK, but "birth to 3 years" *specific* requirements are missing.
    - https://www.nysed.gov/college-university-evaluation/general-and-program-specific-requirements-teaching-students
- Workforce shortages in birth to three.

Current Professional Standards & Regulations

Accreditation Council of Occupational Therapy Educators (ACOTE)

- Master's & doctoral programs prepare entry level generalist to work with clients across the lifespan. ACOTE Standards

- Standards are relative to professional practice across the lifespan, but include:
  - Typical/atypical development,
  - Diversity,
  - Working with families/caregivers,
  - Team collaboration but are generic across lifespan.

Current Professional Standards & Regulations

New York State Regulations

- Entry level - master's (MS) & clinical doctorate (OTD) level practitioners are licensed in NYS as generalists to serve individuals throughout the lifespan.

- NYS Education Law, 156, Occupational Therapy provides for general OT guidelines for practice.
    NYS Occupational Therapy: Laws, Rules & Regulations: Article 156 (nysed.gov)

- Academic guidelines are consistent with American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) standards for professional practice throughout the lifespan. NYS Occupational Therapy:License Requirements (nysed.gov)

The Current Reality:

- OT academic education prepares entry level generalist across the lifespan focusing on client-centered practice.

- "Birth to 3 years" *specific* educational/clinical requirements are missing.

- AOTA and NYS continuing education requirements additionally focus across the lifespan, but do not *specify* content requirements.

- AOTA Guidelines for Practice in EI for Practitioners based on current evidence, not necessarily known by practitioners.
  Occupational Therapy Practice Guidelines for Early Childhood: Birth–5 Years | The American Journal of Occupational Therapy | American Occupational Therapy Association (aota.org)

- Workforce shortages.

Current Professional Standards & Regulations

Commission on Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE)

- Doctoral level education is across the lifespan and for the entry- level generalist. CAPTE standards

- Standards are relative to professional practice across the lifespan, but include:
  - skills for patient, caregivers and families,
  - cover knowledge and skills across the lifespan,
  - typical/atypical development,
  - diversity,
  - team collaboration.

Current Professional Standards & Regulations

New York State Regulations

- Entry level (Doctoral level) practitioners are licensed in NYS as generalists to serve individuals throughout the lifespan.

- NYS Education Law, Part 77, Physical Therapy provides for general PT guidelines for practice. NYS Education Law Part 77

- Academic guidelines are consistent with CAPTE standards for professional practice throughout the lifespan. https://www.op.nysed.gov/professions/physical-therapists/license-requirements

The Current Reality:

- CAPTE provides entry level academic preparation for generalist across the lifespan.

- "Birth to 3 years" *specific* educational/clinical requirements are missing.

- CAPTE and NYS continuing education requirements additionally focus across the lifespan, but do not *specify* content requirements.

- Academy of Pediatric Physical Therapy (APTA) has fact sheets for EI practice - demonstrating some recognition of specific skills needed in EI. FactSheet_EarlyInterventionPhysicalTherapy-IDEAPartC

- Workforce shortages.

Current Professional Standards & Regulations

American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA) Council for Clinical Certification (CFCC) standards and Council on Academic Accreditation (CAA).

- Certification implies foundational knowledge for clinical practice covering knowledge and skills across the lifespan.
  https://www.asha.org/certification/2020-slp-certification-standards/

- Standards are relative to professional practice across the lifespan, but include:
  - Typical/atypical development,
  - Diversity,
  - Working with families/caregivers,
  - Team collaboration.

Current Professional Standards & Regulations

New York State Regulations

- Entry level (master's level) practitioners are licensed in NYS as generalists to serve individuals throughout the lifespan.

- NYS Education Law, Part 8209 Speech-Language Pathologists & Audiologists guidelines for practice.

- Academic guidelines are consistent with ASHA CFCC standards for professional practice throughout the lifespan.
  https://www.op.nysed.gov/professions/speech-language-pathology/license-requirements

The Current Reality:

- ASHA and NYS regs provide entry level academic preparation for generalists across the lifespan.

- "Birth to 3 years" *specific* educational/clinical requirements are missing.

- ASHA and NYS continuing education requirements additionally focus across the lifespan, but do not specify content requirements.

- Workforce shortages.

Workforce shortages across the disciplines due to:

- Lack of awareness of EI content and skills needed to be an effective EI provider
- Scope of competence mismatched with scope of practice
- Reimbursement rates, lack of pay equity
- Travel expense

Proposed Recommended Amendments to NYSED & NYSDOH

Regulations & Requirements for *ECSE (B-2nd)*

- Propose incorporating "birth to 3 years" *specific* language and NYSDOH EI content into regulations of Students with Disabilities in Early Childhood (SWD-EC; B - grade 2).

- Consider general & program-specific revisions
  - Incorporate "*child*" language throughout regulations (see Appendices).
  - Incorporate the *NYSDOH Five Competencies for Early Interventionists* within Program-Specific NYSED Regulations for Teaching SWD in EC (see Appendices).
  - Include "*birth to 3 years*" fieldwork and/or student-teaching experiences as a requirement for both SWD in EC and General Early Childhood Education (see Appendices).

Regulations & Requirements for A*llied Health Disciplines (OT, PT, SLP)*

- Consider recommended "birth to 3 years" *specific* language, above the entry requirements for allied health professions, via proposed memoranda. This model already exists within the field of speech-language pathology in NYSED (OP.NYSED/FEES, OP.NYSED/Suctioning)

- Consider incorporating language into NYS regulations, specific to mandatory continuing education requirements (see Appendices).
  - NYS Regulations Part 156.2, Occupational Therapists
  - NYS Regulations Part 77, 2a., Physical Therapists
  - NYS Regulations Part 8209, Speech-Language Pathologists & Audiologists

- Early Interventionists across disciplines should be required to demonstrate knowledge and skills in the *Five NYSDOH Competencies for Early Interventionists* to be approved as a qualified NYS EI provider.

- Based on current literature, evidence-based best practice, and professional association guidelines, consider infusing the *Five NYSDOH Competencies for Early Interventionists* into all recommendations highlighted in the next slide.

- Consider developing one or more of the following pathways to demonstrate competency for provider eligibility in EI. Each of the pathways identified in the next slide provide opportunities to increase EI workforce capacity.

- **Memoranda - "Dear Colleague" - Clarification of Existing Policy** - from NYSDOH to inform all potential EI practitioners of requirements to become NYS approved providers.

- Create an **Interdisciplinary Extension in Early Intervention**, similar to existing programs (e.g. Bilingual Extension) via NYSED: https://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/typesofcerts/extbil.html

- Introduce an **Annotation for Teaching-Supporting Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities in Early Intervention**, similar to the existing Annotation for teaching students with Severe Disabilities and Multiple Disabilities.

- Develop **Individual Evaluation pathways** for professionals to access and learn the EI competencies necessary to become an EI provider, including:

  - Credit-bearing college EI/ECSE courses/programs,

  - Continuing Education courses:
    - Micro Credentialing courses
    - Continuing Education Units
    - Continuing Education Teacher and Leader Units,

  - Modules/Trainings from NYSDOH.

These proposed recommendations have the potential for NYS to recruit and retain a highly effective, culturally, linguistically, and geographically-diverse EI Workforce:

- Develop and increase diverse EI workforce across a relatively *large existing pool* of licensed/certified professionals across disciplines not currently working in EI.
- Provide potential fast-track educational opportunities.
- Increase fieldwork placements and supervisors in diverse birth-to-three settings, which will create additional opportunities for entry-level practitioners to join the EI workforce.
- Increase the number of EI providers throughout communities - reducing EI shortages and decreasing wait time for services for children with disabilities and families.

Next Steps

- Present the proposed certification/licensing amendments and recommendations to enhance EI workforce to various stakeholders at the state and national levels.
- Finalize analysis and manuscript to submit survey: *Early Intervention Service Providers and Higher Education Professionals* for publication and future presentations at professional conferences.

Future Considerations

- Assess and prioritize each of the proposed amendments.
- Examine NYSED regulations/requirements in general early childhood education to support inclusive practice.
- Expand the examination of NYSED regulations/requirements to include other qualified NYS EI disciplines (e.g., social work, audiology).

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ECPC Systematic Review of Models of State Agency and Institutions of Higher Education Practices Leading to Alignment of State Personnel Standards and Competencies with Curricula at Institutions of Higher Education; Systematic Review of Models of State Agency and Institutions of Higher Education Practices Leading to Alignment of Preservice and Inservice Training for Early Childhood Interventionists; Literature Synthesis 1 https://ecpcta.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2810/2020/08/Literature-Synthesis-1.pdf

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Questions?