

DEVELOPMENTAL SPECIALIST CERTIFICATION GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

This manual covers the certification, re-certification and the exemption process for Developmental Specialists working within the Family Infant Toddler Program in New Mexico.

The Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that states determine the personnel standards (§303.361) for individuals providing early intervention services. New Mexico FIT regulations (NMAC 7.30.8.9) require certification for individuals functioning in the position of Developmental Specialist.

The Family Infant Toddler (FIT) Program of the NM Department of Health (DOH), Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) in collaboration with the Children Youth & Families Department (CYFD), Office of Child Development (OCD) created a system for certification of Developmental Specialists (DS) levels I, II and III, in December 2001, under LTSD Policy # 01-6.1. The current guidelines and Developmental Specialist Policy were updated in January 2008.

This manual will assist Developmental Specialists in the practical steps to become certified and re-certified according to the DDSD Certification and Re-certification Requirements for Developmental Specialist Policy (2008). This policy should be referred to when using this manual.

This manual will clarify the following:

- Certification and re-certification procedures;
- The supervisor's role in the re-certification process;
- Procedures for submitting documentation of professional development activities and contact hours for Developmental Specialists working in a FIT Program agency;
- Procedures for submission of documentation of professional development activities and contact hours for Developmental Specialists who are working in Administration or Training/Technical assistance within the FIT system (i.e., FIT Program staff, Early Childhood Network consultants.)
- Requests for exemptions for Developmental Specialists who do not currently meet the necessary requirements.

This manual also includes both blank and sample forms used in the certification process and re-certification process, as well as a list of resources for training and education.

The FIT Program believes that the new certification process, with a greater emphasis on gaining competencies that are central to providing early intervention services, will enhance the ability of Developmental Specialists to meet the diverse needs of the infants, toddlers and families that we serve.

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WHO NEEDS DEVELOPMENTAL SPECIALIST CERTIFICATION?

The NM FIT Regulations (NMAC 7.30.8.9) require the certification of all staff providing early intervention services and who function in the role of Developmental Specialist.

Certification as a Developmental Specialist is required for individuals employed in Early Intervention in the State of New Mexico who:

- Work in the role of Developmental Specialist; and/or
- Supervise staff who work as Developmental Specialists; and/or
- Hold a professional license or certificate from an approved discipline, listed in Developmental Specialist Certification Policy (2005), and who spend at least 60% of their time employed in the role of Developmental Specialist.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR INITIAL DEVELOPMENTAL SPECIALIST CERTIFICATION?

1. Within thirty (30) days of hire, all Developmental Specialists need to apply to the Family Infant Toddler Program for a certificate as Developmental Specialist I, II, or III. Application forms can be obtained from the FIT Program (505-476-2416) or the FIT website: www.health.state.nm.us/ddsd/fit.
2. Submit the application form and all required documentation to the Family Infant Toddler Program. (Use the address listed on the form)
3. The following is a list of required documentation required for certification at different levels:

Developmental Specialist I Basic:

A photocopy of your high School Diploma or GED. A photocopy of your certificate of completion of the 45-hour entry-level course. If you are a new employee, a statement of when and where you will complete the 45-hour entry level course, if not already completed.

Developmental Specialist I Advanced:

A photocopy of your professional license, if applicable, in a related field, and an original OFFICIAL (certified or with a seal) two year Associate level college transcript in Early Childhood or related fields listed in Developmental Specialist Certification Policy (2008), section J. The official transcript from the college awarding your degree is satisfactory if transferring credits are noted.

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Developmental Specialist II:

A photocopy of your professional license, if applicable, in a related field, and an original OFFICIAL (certified or with a seal) four year Bachelor's level college transcript in Early Childhood or related fields listed in Developmental Specialist Certification Policy (2008), section J. The official transcript from the college awarding your degree is satisfactory if transferring credits are noted.

Developmental Specialist III:

A photocopy of your professional license, if applicable, in a related field, and an original OFFICIAL (certified or with a seal) advanced degree Master's level or above college transcript in Early Childhood or related fields listed in Developmental Specialist Certification Policy (2008), section J. The official transcript from the college awarding your degree is satisfactory if transferring credits are noted.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO BE RE-CERTIFIED AS A DEVELOPMENTAL SPECIALIST?

Each Developmental Specialist must have an Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP) in place each year, and approved by his/her supervisor. An IPDP is an ongoing plan that identifies the knowledge and skills the Developmental Specialist 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 Supervisor must meet with the Developmental Specialist to develop the IPDP within three (3) months of hire and reviews progress on the IPDP with the Developmental Specialist every 6 months.

The IPDP includes the developmental specialist's goals, strategies to obtain knowledge/skills, and timelines for each year. The IPDP must include the completed forms listed below:

1. Self-Assessment Tool:

The purpose of the Self-Assessment Tool is to assist Developmental Specialists in determining areas of their practice where they need to increase their knowledge and skills related to the Family Infant Toddler competencies.

The Self-Assessment is a TOOL, not a plan, which helps the Developmental Specialist and supervisor enter into a meaningful conversation in order to identify professional development goals when writing the Individualized Professional Developmental Plan (IPDP).

Each competency indicator on the Self-Assessment Tool has an "x" in the competency area box to which it relates (see Fig. 1.). A description of all six (6) FIT competency areas can be found in Appendix A. These

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competencies relate to the statewide system of common core content for personnel preparation in Early Childhood Education and Family Support in New Mexico.

Fig. 1

Developmental Specialist Self-Assessment Tool

Individual and Professional Development Plan (IPDP)

Name: _____ Developmental Specialist Level: _____

Complete this form by filling in the Rating Scale column with the number from the Rating Scale below. Each indicator has an "X" in the competency box to which it relates.

RATING SCALE

- 1=Very Competent
- 2=Somewhat competent and need to improve
- 3=Need to develop competency
- 4=N/A (does not apply)

COMPETENCY INDICATORS

1.- Foundation of Early Intervention

COMPETENCY AREA	COMPETENCY AREAS						RATING SCALE	Notes
	Child Development Learning	Health & Safety Skills	Family Community Collaboration	Child Development Program	Measurement/Child Assessment	Professionalism		
1.1- Respect, understand and be responsive to the family within the context of their culture, language, ethnicity and unique family circumstances, as a parent with disabilities, for parents, grandparents as parent, stepparent, gay/lesbian parent, a								
1.2- Demonstrate knowledge of relationships and regulations impacting eligible infants and toddlers and their families including, but not limited to: individuals with disabilities Education Act (IDEA Part C); Requirements for Family Infant/Toddler-Early Intervention Services (2013 NMIC) and the NM-DOH Long Term Service, Benefits and Supports								
1.3- Demonstrate the ability to recognize and establish personal and professional boundaries.								
1.4- Demonstrate the ability to promote positive caregiver/child interactions.								
1.5- Demonstrate professional work habits including dependability, time management, independence, teamwork, confidentiality and responsibility.								
1.6- Demonstrate flexibility in response to diverse learning and interactions.								
1.7- Engage in ongoing self-assessment and reflective practice.								

Competency area

The Developmental Specialist completes the Self-Assessment Tool by filling in the rating scale column (see Fig. 2.) with the appropriate numbers from the Rating Scale:

1. Adequate level of competency for DS certification
2. Priority area for professional growth & development
3. Other areas for professional growth & development
4. N/A (not applicable)

Fig. 2

Developmental Specialist Self-Assessment Tool

Individual and Professional Development Plan (IPDP)

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Write rating scale numbers here

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After completing the Self-Assessment Tool, the supervisor and Developmental Specialist both sign the tool and then discuss which competency indicators would be most beneficial to choose in developing goals for the year.

The Self-Assessment Tool is updated each year when completing the yearly IPDP.

2. Cover Page:

This page is completed when the Developmental Specialist initially develops his/her Individualized Professional Development Plan. A new cover page is completed and signed by the Developmental Specialist and the supervisor each year when developing the new IPDP.

Fig. 3.

Developmental Specialist Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP)		COVER PAGE	
I			
Name: <i>Sandy Sanchez</i>		Current Developmental Specialist Certification Level (check one)	
Provider Agency: <i>ACORN EARLY INTERVENTION</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> DS I (Basic) <input type="checkbox"/> DS I (Advanced) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DS II <input type="checkbox"/> DS III	
Date of Initial Certification: <i>1-20-04</i>		Date of Anticipated Re-Certification: <i>1-20-07</i>	
IPDP Start Date: <i>12-15-03</i>	IPDP 6-month Review Date: <i>6-15-04</i>	IPDP End Date: <i>12-15-04</i>	
(A new IPDP is required annually)			
Developmental Specialist Signature: <i>Sandy Sanchez</i>		Supervisor Signature: <i>Martha C. Brown</i>	

DS and Supervisor Signature

3. Goals and Strategies Page:

The competency area that the Developmental Specialist identified on the Self-Assessment Tool as either “Somewhat competent and need to improve”, or “Need to develop competency” guides the discussion with his/her supervisor regarding the goals to focus on for the next year.

- i) Choose 2-5 goals **per year** (some goals can be carried over, for example, taking college level courses to earn a degree in Early Childhood).
- ii) Write the Competency Indicator number that the goal addresses (see Fig. 4.) in the indicator column e.g. 1.5, 2.2, 3.5, etc. Each goal can address several competency indicators (see Tab: Sample IPDP)
- iii) Timeline: estimate the length of time it will take to complete the goal, for example: from July 2008 to Jan. 2009.
- iv) Date Completed: fill in after goal is achieved.

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Fig. 4.

Developmental Specialist → → → → → GOALS & STRATEGY PAGE

Individual and Professional Development Plan (IPDP)

Name: Christy Johnson Developmental Specialist Level: Advanced IPDP Start Date: 8-16-08

Professional Development Goal (general objective to be learned)	Competency Indicator	Strategies to obtain knowledge/skill (e.g., read, view, video, lecture, observe, shadow, mentor, etc.)	Support Needed	Time	Date Goal Completed
I want to learn more about infant mental health and how it affects development, and how to explain this to Spanish speaking families	1.11 1.41 1.51 5.71	Attend workshop provided by EC network	Time to attend workshop	7/02-22/08	22/22/08
		Obtain and read articles from CDD Library on IMHO	Permission to go to library during workshop	7/02-22/08	2/2/08
		Will observe DS II interacting with Spanish speaking families in promoting positive IMHO	Time for observations	7/02-4/08	4/22/08

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Insert competency indicator(s) number here

Samples of completed IPDPs are enclosed in this manual. (see Tab: Sample IPDP)

Recommended practice: Developmental Specialist and supervisor meet every 6 months to review progress on the IPDP, add or change goals, activities or strategies.

HOW DO I DOCUMENT THE CONTACT HOURS I COMPLETED?

The Re-certification Tracking Page is used to track and document the contact hours the Developmental Specialist accrues toward the goals stated on his/her IPDP. Regular meetings (at least every six months) with the Supervisor will assure that Developmental Specialists are staying on track, and will allow for changes and modifications in goals and strategies.

Re-certification Tracking Page:

A separate Re-certification Tracking Page is used for each goal on the IPDP and is filled in after the Developmental Specialist completes each of the strategies towards that goal.

- i) Professional development goal: write the professional development goal from the IPDP Goals and Strategies Page (one professional goal per page)
- ii) Activities completed: be very specific; for example, identify the name of workshop, college course, book, article, video, etc. (see Tab: Sample IPDP)
- iii) Competency Indicator(s): write the competency indicator number(s) that the activity addresses.
- iv) Write the date that the class, workshop or activity was completed.

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- v) Write the number of contact hours completed for each class, workshop, activity, etc.
- vi) Supervisor initials this column (see Fig. 5) after the activity is completed.
- vii) Developmental Specialist signs and dates this page once all the activities towards the goal have been completed.

Fig. 5

RE-CERTIFICATION TRACKING PAGE

Developmental Specialist Individual and Professional Development Plan (IPDP)

Name: Christy Johnson Developmental Specialist Level: 2 Advanced Initial Certification Date: 02-02

Professional Development Goal: I want to learn more about infant mental health and how it affects development, and how to explain this to Spanish speaking families

Activities completed (classes, workshops, self study, etc.)	Competency Indicator(s)	Date Completed	Contact Hours	Supervisor Initials
Attended workshop on IFM 12/15/03, provided by EC Network (certificate on file)	1.4 1.8 5.5	12/15/03	8	MCB
Read booklet entitled "Learning & Growing Together" (Zero to Three, 2000). Discussed at staff meeting (2-15-04) use of the information in booklet to promote healthy social/emotional development. Requested another booklet be ordered in Spanish to assist work with families	1.1 1.4 1.8	2/9/04	2	MCB
Spoke at DS II on Jan 12, Mar 17, Apr 10, and discussed practice implications with Spanish speaking families	5.5 5.7	4/30/04	10	MCB
Total Hours			19	

The contact hours recorded here are a true reflection of the professional development activities I have completed

Developmental Specialist Signature: Christy Johnson Date: 8-10-04

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Write professional development goal here

Supervisor initials when activity is completed

Indicate total number of hours completed towards this goal

A copy of each Re-certification Tracking Page is sent to the Family Infant Toddler Program, along with the Re-certification Application in order to be re-certified.

Certificates of completion/attendance at workshops and conferences do not have to be submitted for re-certification, but need to be kept on file within the FIT Provider agency for audit purposes.

Note: If a professional development goal is carried forward from one IPDP to the following year, the same Re-certification Tracking page can be used.

WHAT CAN I COUNT AS CONTACT HOURS TOWARD RE-CERTIFICATION AS A DEVELOPMENTAL SPECIALIST?

- The Developmental Specialist can count hour-for-hour of workshop/conference attendance, in-service training, one-on-one mentoring, college courses, distance learning, web-based courses, and other strategies identified on the IPDP that are accrued to meet the 75-hour minimum for a 3-year period. All contact hours need to relate to the FIT competencies and the goals identified in the IPDP. Description of the FIT competencies can be found in Appendix A.

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- One college credit is equivalent to 15 contact hours for re-certification. For example a 3-credit college course in Early Childhood that relates to the FIT competencies can count as 45 contact hours toward DS re-certification.
- Developmental Specialists can count five (5) hours maximum each year for participation in formal Reflective Supervision if identified as a strategy in the IPDP. Formal Reflective Supervision, according to best practice, is held regularly and is both collaborative and reflective.
- Developmental Specialists can count five (5) hours maximum each year in conducting a presentation or workshop on topics related to infants, toddlers and their families, if identified as a strategy in the IPDP.
- Developmental Specialists can count ten (10) hours maximum each year for Self-Study, if identified as a strategy in the IPDP.
- Developmental Specialists can also count ten (10) hours each year for time involved in a task force or work group related to Early Intervention, if identified as a strategy in the IPDP.
- A written plan is developed if mentorship is one of the strategies listed in the IPDP. (see Appendix D)

WHAT CAN NOT BE COUNTED AS HOURS TOWARD RE-CERTIFICATION AS A DEVELOPMENTAL SPECIALIST?

- Hours spent developing your IPDP.
- College courses, books, videos, web classes, or other workshops that do not relate to the FIT competencies; for example, if you take a computer course or first aid CPR class.

WHAT FORMS DO I NEED TO COMPLETE TO BECOME RE-CERTIFIED?

The following two forms need to be completed and submitted to the FIT Program, 30 days prior to the expiration date on the Developmental Specialist Certificate:

1. **Re-Certification Application:** complete and mail to the Family Infant Toddler Program (address listed on the form).
2. **Re-Certification Tracking Page(s):** complete this page(s) with the total number of required contact hours, sign and attach it to the Re-certification Application.

The above forms can be obtained by contacting the FIT Program (476-2416) or from the FIT website: www.health.state.nm.us/ddsd/fit.

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WHEN DO I NEED TO SUBMIT MY RE-CERTIFICATION PAPERWORK?

Re-certification paperwork needs to be submitted to the FIT Program at least 30 days prior to the expiration date on your certificate.

WHAT FORMS DO I NEED TO COMPLETE TO BECOME RE-CERTIFIED IF I AM WORKING IN ADMINISTRATION OR TRAINING/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE WITHIN THE FIT SYSTEM?

Developmental Specialists, who are in administrative or training/technical assistance positions within the FIT system, must follow the above procedure with the following changes:

- Supervisor's initials on the Re-certification Tracking Page are not necessary.
- Certificates of completion/attendance at workshops and conferences must be submitted for re-certification (along with the Re-certification Application) and must be related to the FIT competency areas and the goals identified in the IPDP.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DO NOT MEET THE REQUIRED HOURS FOR RE-CERTIFICATION?

You will not receive a certificate of re-certification and you will be out of compliance with the standards set in the FIT regulations.

Early Intervention providers cannot bill for early intervention services delivered by a non-certified Developmental Specialist. (see section I, DS Certification Policy, 2008)

If the Developmental Specialist has not met the required hours for re-certification, he/she must develop and submit a Professional Development Corrective Action Plan, which is sent to the FIT Program Review Team, detailing the strategies and timeframes for obtaining the missing contact hours.

These contact hours cannot be counted toward the next three (3) year certification period.

The Professional Development Corrective Action Plan will be reviewed and approved/denied by the FIT Program Review Team.

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WHAT IS AN EXEMPTION FROM DEVELOPMENTAL SPECIALIST CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS?

An exemption from Developmental Specialist certification requirements may be issued to permit a FIT Program agency to employ an individual to work as a Developmental Specialist I, II, or III, who does not meet all the qualifications for the Developmental Specialist certification for which he/she is applying.

The Family Infant Toddler Program may issue an exemption if an agency can demonstrate that it has actively attempted to recruit personnel who meet the certification requirements but is currently unable to locate qualified personnel. The exemption will be issued to the agency; however, if the individual leaves the program and takes a position with another agency, the exemption does not transfer with the employee to the other agency.

WHAT ARE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MAY REQUIRE AN EXEMPTION FROM DEVELOPMENTAL SPECIALIST CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS?

An agency can apply for an exemption if any of the following situations occur:

- A position that has been vacant for several months, despite documented efforts to hire qualified staff.
- Repeated inability to keep a position filled for longer than one year.
- Lack of qualified applicants.
- An applicant who is close to meeting the qualifications for the certification.
- An individual with a degree not listed in Section J of the Developmental Specialist Certification Policy, 2008.

HOW DO I REQUEST AN EXEMPTION?

Provider agencies should request an exemption when the agencies' need for exemption is identified. Once identified, the agency must request an exemption within 30 days. An exemption may be requested by:

1. Contacting the Personnel Coordinator of the FIT Program to discuss the request for an exemption for the new or existing staff member who does not meet the standards required for a specific Developmental Specialist level; and
2. Submitting a formal letter on Agency letterhead to the Family Infant Toddler Program which includes:
 - a. The name of the individual(s) for whom the exemption is sought
 - b. The Developmental Specialist certification exemption level requested.
 - c. Details of the circumstances justifying the agency's request for the exemption.
 - d. The qualifications and experience of the individual that deems him or her a suitable candidate for exemption.

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- e. An IPDP that includes a description of the current and planned courses that the individual is taking to meet the requirements of the Developmental Specialist Certification level under which the individual is working.
- f. The frequency and intensity of the training and timelines for completion.
- g. A description of the amount and type of supervision that will be provided to the person working in a position under an exemption and the developmental specialist level and skills of the supervisor providing support.
- h. Official transcript
- i. Completed Developmental Specialist application
- j. Resume, if possible

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR APPROVAL OR DENIAL OF AN EXEMPTION?

The FIT Program reviews each request for exemption and responds within 30 days.

If approved, the letter of exemption from the FIT Program describes the courses that the individual must take during the period of the exemption in order to meet the Developmental Specialist certification level for which he/she is requesting.

The Developmental Specialist receives a certificate (identified as “exempt”) at the Developmental Specialist level for which the exemption is granted. The exemption period is no more than one (1) year and agencies can re-apply for an exemption for a maximum of three (3) years for one individual. Upon successful completion of the required courses/classes, the individual is granted full certification.

If the exemption request is denied, the agency receives a letter stating the reasons for the denial within 30 days that includes the agency’s right to request a review.