



**Ohio Early Intervention COVID-19 Guidelines**  
**March 12, 2020**

The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) is providing the following guidelines to support Early Intervention (EI) service providers in carrying out the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. On March 9, Governor Mike DeWine signed Executive Order 2020-01D declaring a state of emergency in Ohio due to the dangerous effects of COVID-19. Because this is a rapidly changing situation, DODD may update this guidance and provide additional guidance in response to new circumstances.

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) has a dedicated website related to COVID-19: [coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov). Please refer regularly to this website for the latest information about the outbreak and for best practices to keep your staff and the families they serve safe.

*Early Intervention Timelines*

- There are two parent/family reasons for noncompliance with a mandated timeline. These include times when the parent or child is unavailable to complete a required activity (e.g., an evaluation to determine eligibility) or when the parent is unavailable to provide consent despite multiple, documented attempts to contact the parent. If a child or parent is unavailable due to illness, quarantine, or a desire to practice social distancing, this would be parent/family noncompliance reason.
- Illness or a desire to practice social distancing on the part of the EI interventionist or service coordinator, rather than the child or parent, is a system noncompliance reason. However, DODD recognizes that public health concerns must outweigh concerns about being non-compliant with an EI timeline. DODD encourages EI staff to take appropriate and reasonable actions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, even if this results in noncompliance with an EI timeline.
- DODD reminds local EI staff that an interim Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) can be completed for children with a qualifying diagnosis without first completing an assessment tool. See OAC 5123-10-02(M) for more details.
- Continue to ensure that all contact attempts, conversations, and interactions with families are well-documented in case notes.

*Using Technology*

- DODD encourages local EI teams to use technology to the greatest extent possible. Using technology is one way to practice social distancing while still providing needed EI



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services. Teams should first ensure that service delivery via technology is appropriate for a particular family. EI interventionists should also follow any applicable practice laws that detail how and when a service can be provided via technology.

- For the duration of this state of emergency, DODD makes the following waivers related to the use of technology in EI:
  - EI services provided via technology may be provided using audio-only formats.
  - IFSP teams do not need to hold an IFSP review to update the method for service delivery to "technology." Prior Written Notice (form EI-11) should be completed to document the change in delivery method and provided to the family. Teams should update the method at the next naturally occurring IFSP review.
  - Initial and annual IFSP meetings do not need to occur in-person (OAC 5123-10-02(J)(7)). IFSP teams can complete initial and annual IFSP meetings via technology, including audio-only technology.
- DODD reminds local EI teams that developmental screening, where appropriate, can be conducted via technology. During this state of emergency, developmental screening can help EI teams identify those who may not need an evaluation.
- Some counties are already providing services via technology. Two of the platforms used include Zoom and doxy.me. Your EI program consultant can assist you in connecting with counties currently using technology.

### *Best Practices*

- Basic precautions can significantly curtail the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses. DODD recommends that EI staff refer to the prevention resources provided by ODH [here](#).
- Evaluators using the Bayley or Battelle should ensure that any of the evaluation kit materials are disinfected between evaluations to prevent the spread of viruses.
- Your local health department is another resource to provide guidance that may be specific to your community.
- On March 4, the USDOE's Office of Civil Rights advised all educational leaders, including those working in EI, that USDOE was aware of increased reports of "stereotyping, harassment, and bullying directed at persons perceived to be of Chinese American or, more generally, Asian descent." USDOE appreciates educational leaders' efforts to prevent these behaviors. You can read the letter [here](#).

DODD appreciates your patience and flexibility during this time and especially your work to protect families and EI staff members. If you have any questions that are not addressed by the resources provided in these guidelines, please contact your EI program consultant.



## Department of Developmental Disabilities

DODD has set up a dedicated [web page](#) for department communications and links to helpful resources that will advise people with disabilities, their families, service providers, county boards of developmental disabilities, and the community at large.

For specific questions about COVID-19 and additional information and resources, DODD urges you to use the Ohio Department of Health's call center. Call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634), or visit [coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov).