



The use of Licensed Therapy Assistants in Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Early Intervention Team (EIT) meetings

The following information is intended to provide clarification on the issue of determining the use of licensed therapy assistants in First Steps IFSP and EIT meetings.

Question 1: What are First Steps guidelines for the participation of licensed therapy assistants in an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting?

Assistants provide service under the direction of a licensed supervising specialist. Assessments, development and modifications of the plan of care (e.g., IFSP) are the sole responsibility of the supervising specialist. Changes or additions to outcomes and/or services in the IFSP are determined by the supervising specialist in collaboration with the IFSP team. For example, if an IFSP meeting is scheduled in order to make changes to the plan of care for physical development, it is expected that the Physical Therapist (PT) attend in person or by conference call in order to modify the plan. At the conclusion of the IFSP meeting, the PT must agree to the plan before the IFSP is finalized or implemented. The Service Coordinator would enter an authorization for IFSP team meeting for the PT to attend the meeting.

Assistants have no authority to authorize changes to an IFSP; however, it is acceptable for assistants to discuss or report on the plan of care in situations where a review of the IFSP is warranted (e.g., 6 month review). For example, the PT is unable to attend an IFSP meeting to review the child's progress. The PT shall discuss the upcoming meeting with the Physical Therapy Assistant (PTA) and the PT would determine if it is appropriate for the PTA to attend the meeting. Assistants may participate in IFSP meetings either in person or by conference call.

Question 2: How are licensed therapy assistants paid for participating in IFSP meetings?

When necessary, the Service Coordinator would enter an authorization for consultation time for the PTA to attend the meeting. The need for both the licensed specialist and assistant to attend IFSP meetings would be on an individual basis and should be the exception rather than the rule.

Question 3: What are First Steps guidelines for the participation of licensed therapy assistants in Early Intervention Team Meetings?

EIT members provide and exchange various professional opinions and strategies about children assigned to the team during meetings; therefore, the participation of an assistant in an EIT meeting is determined by the licensed supervising specialist. Frequently, discussions regarding strategies and activities for the family occur and may result in changes in activities conducted at home visits. While modifications to *strategies and activities* do not require an IFSP meeting, assistants do not have the authority to make modifications, even at an EIT meeting.

Modifications must be made by the supervising specialist; therefore, the only role that assistants have in EIT meetings is to report on the child's progress. Assistants may participate in EIT meetings either in person or by conference call.

Question 4: How are licensed therapy assistants paid for participating in EIT meetings?

The involvement of assistants may vary across the state. In some regions where there are a limited number of specialists, assistants may be a standing EIT member, and in these situations, an assistant is listed as an EIT member in WebSPOE and reimbursed through the EIT meeting function in WebSPOE. In other regions assistants may be utilized in the same fashion as ancillary providers, and in these situations, an assistant is reimbursed through an IFSP authorization for consultation. Regardless of the status of the assistant in the development of teams, assistants only attend the portion of the EIT meeting relevant to the family s/he is authorized for services. The need for both the licensed specialist and assistant to attend the EIT meetings would be on an individual basis and should be the exception rather than the rule.

NOTE: Unlicensed therapy assistants or specialists cannot enroll, attend meetings or be compensated for providing services in the First Steps program.

Further information on the scope of work permitted by professionals licensed by the Division of Professional Registration can be found at Chapter 334.506.RSMo. (Physical Therapists), Chapter 324 RSMo. (Occupational Therapists), and Chapter 345 RSMo. (Speech-Language Pathologists).