

Family Support Specialist Comprehensive Certification:

The Candidates' presentations and interviews will take place in the Fall or Spring via virtual means.

Submit three copies of the portfolio in a binder no larger than 2 inches to:

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Why? *Montana's Part C Compliance Document: Conformity with the Federal Rules and Regulations for the Early Intervention Program of Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (Part C of the IDEA), After two years of Primary Certification, a Family Support Specialist must meet the Comprehensive Certification requirements.*

DEC Recommended Practices:

Montana adopted the DEC Recommended Practices to provide guidance to Family Support Specialists and families about ways to improve learning outcomes and promote development of children (0-5) who have or are at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities. The DEC Recommended Practices help bridge the gap between research and practice by highlighting practices that have been shown to result in better outcomes for children, their families, and the personnel who serve them. The DEC Recommended Practices also form the knowledge base for Family Support Specialists seeking Comprehensive Certification.

What resources are available to help with implementation of the Recommended Practices?

The ECTA Center, funded by OSEP, has developed a suite of resources available at no cost. Key technical assistance products available from <http://ectacenter.org/decrp> include Recommended Practice Guides and Performance Checklists.

Portfolio Guidelines: Candidates submit **three copies** of a portfolio for three reviewers. The portfolio binder size may not exceed 2 inches.

Portfolio Content Guidance: The portfolio includes relevant representations of the Family Support Specialist's capability in each of the eight DEC Recommended Practices. When choosing work examples to include, the Family Support Specialist must also include brief statements of why the example represents his or her capacity for implementing the specific practices. If a candidate's portfolio does not include representation of his/her work related to each recommended practice, the portfolio will be returned to the Candidate. They are self-evaluation tools for the Family Support Specialist's practice implementation and guide the content of the portfolio:

- 1) Leadership Checklists:** Collaboration in Leadership; Motivation and Guidance in Leadership; Vision and Direction in Leadership
- 2) Assessment Checklists:** Informed Clinical Reasoning; Engaging Families as Partners in Their Child's Assessment; Authentic Child Assessment Practices; Building on Child Strengths
- 3) Environment Checklists:** Natural Environment Learning Opportunities; Environmental Arrangements; Child Physical Activity; Environmental Adaptations; Assistive Technology
- 4) Family Checklists:** Family-Centered Practices; Informed Family Decision-Making Practices; Family Engagement; Family Capacity-Building

- 5) **Instruction Checklists:** Naturalistic Instructional Practices; Embedded Instructional Practices; Systematic Instructional Practices
- 6) **Interaction Checklists:** Adult-Child Interactions; Child Social-Communication Interaction; Child Social-Emotional Competence; Child-Child Interaction
- 7) **Teaming and Collaboration:** Families are Full Members; Communication for Teaming and Collaboration; Collaboration to Learn and Grow
- 8) **Transition Checklists:** Transition from Hospital to Early Intervention; Transition from Early Intervention Services to Part B

Family Engagement: Throughout the portfolio, candidates must demonstrate meaningful family engagement practices including:

- 1) Families and providers are engaged in regular two-way communication.
- 2) Families are honored as the expert of their child and recognized as the child's first and most influential teacher.
- 3) All families have the capacity to support their child and are respected for their individual strengths.
- 4) Partnerships with families are based on mutual trust, respect, and appreciation for individual cultures, values, and languages.
- 5) Families are invited to actively participate in meaningful experiences and are included in goal-setting and decision-making for their child.

Portfolio Presentation Guidelines: Candidates present their portfolios making effort to highlight their skill in each practice and may include descriptions of practices the Candidate seeks to improve.

Interview Guidelines: The Panel members independently review and evaluate the portfolio prior to the interview. The interview is an opportunity for the Panel to obtain additional evidence of the Candidate's competence if the portfolio and presentation content was insufficient to evaluate. Please note: if a candidate is late (5 minutes) for the virtual interview, the portfolio will be returned and the candidate must wait until the next round of interviews to resubmit.

Recommendations for Success:

- 1) The eight practices are adopted from the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices – 66 evidence-informed practices for early intervention. The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (<http://ectacenter.org/decrp/>) includes multiple tools and resources for practitioners, such as Family Support Specialists, including performance checklists, practice guides, illustrations of the practices, and guidance materials. The products are intended to illustrate the way different recommended practices can be used by different types of practitioners such as Family Support Specialists/Service Coordinators and parents and to assist professional development and program improvement efforts. These resources are available to all, on-demand.
- 2) Align the portfolio with the eight practices and corresponding checklists and use the resources to support the content of the portfolio.
- 3) Ensure ease of readability for a Panel member who may not have extensive intervention experience.
- 4) Have a mentor or supervisor review the portfolio prior to submission.

If you have questions, please contact Felina Lee, Part C Program Specialist, at felina.lee@mt.gov.