



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

## Personnel Recruitment and Retention

Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families sent this bulletin at 11/08/2021 12:56 PM PST

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*A Message from* The State Office of the

Early Support for Infants  
and Toddlers Program



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

Personnel Recruitment and Retention  
Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) Guidance Document

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To County Lead Agency (CLA) and Direct DCYF-Contracted ESIT Provider Representatives:

**\*CLAs, please share with your contractors\***

### Purpose

The aims of this message are to:

- Report the results of the September 2021 ESIT Provider Agency (PA) Staffing Survey and the October 2021 ESIT Follow-Up Staffing Survey.
- Offer ideas for retaining and recruiting qualified personnel.
- Clarify the obligations of ESIT PAs regarding service provision during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Washington State (WA) ESIT office understands that ESIT PAs are working hard to maintain a high level of service provision for enrolled families in the current labor environment. This resource is intended to offer support in meeting this challenge.

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## Service Provision Requirements

Reports of a nationwide general labor shortage are echoed by many WA ESIT PAs that have reported difficulties retaining and recruiting qualified Part C providers. For these ESIT PAs, the current staffing shortage is creating new challenges in meeting federal regulatory and state contract requirements regarding the provision of Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) services.

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C states:

The IFSP must include a statement of the specific early intervention services...that are necessary to meet the unique needs of the child and the family to achieve the [IFSP] outcomes, including length, duration, frequency, intensity and method of delivering the early interventions services. [34 C.F.R. § 303.344\(d\)\(1\)](#).

The WA ESIT 2021-22 contract states the ESIT PA is responsible for providing services as outlined on the IFSP, with the methods and frequency documented on the plan, regardless of agency closures or staffing shortages.

The Contractor must: Provide all ESIT services as outlined on each child's IFSP (e.g. frequency, intensity, length, and duration) and use effective teaming practices to meet the developmental needs of the child and the needs of the family related to enhancing their child's development. 3.j.(1)(a)

On Oct. 21, 2020, the Office of Special Education (OSEP) published the [Part C Provision of Service in the COVID-19 Environment](#) Q&A Document. The OSEP response to [Question 3](#) outlines required actions, should an ESIT PA's staffing shortage limit its ability to provide services as outlined on a child's IFSP.

When the lead agency or EIS [Early Intervention Services] provider cannot provide IDEA Part C services in accordance with the IFSP, it must provide prior written notice to the parents as soon as possible. The child's IFSP Team, which includes the parents, must then determine which services can be provided to meet the child's needs during this time, and consider other services or alternate means of service delivery, if feasible and consistent with privacy interests, such as through the use of telecommunications, including telephone or videoconferencing, or consultative services to the parent.

On Oct. 29, 2021, the US Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) published the [Return to School Roadmap: Provision of Early Intervention Services](#) policy document. The OSERS response to [Question 3](#) outlines actions required if services on a child's IFSP were not delivered due to circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The State LA [Lead Agency] or EIS provider must review its data and other information, such as information provided by a child's family, to determine whether and which eligible children did not receive services identified on their IFSPs, and take appropriate actions based on the results of the review. If IFSP services have not been provided in conformity with the IFSP, the State LA or EIS provider may need to conduct

a periodic review of the IFSP in order to determine the current needs of the child and family. 34 C.F.R. § 303.342(b). As part of that periodic review by the IFSP Team, under 34 C.F.R. § 303.344(c), the IFSP must include a statement of the child's progress toward achieving the results or outcomes identified in the IFSP and whether modifications to the IFSP are necessary.

Additionally, the IFSP Team may determine whether and to what extent compensatory services may be needed to address service disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The IFSP Team may determine that compensatory services are necessary to mitigate the impact of disruptions and delays in providing appropriate services to the child. IFSP Teams must ensure decisions about compensatory services are individualized based on updated assessment information for the child and family under 34 C.F.R. §§ 303.340 through 303.344.

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## ESIT Provider Agency Staffing Survey Results

### Overview

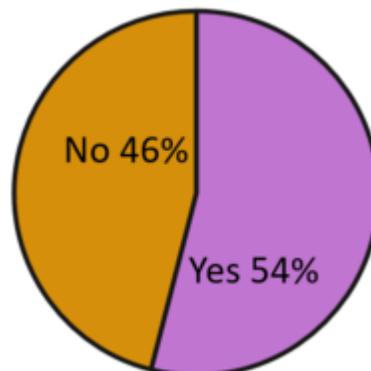
To learn more about the extent of provider shortages and the strategies ESIT PAs are using to meet the needs of enrolled families, the ESIT state office conducted the ESIT Provider Agency Staffing Survey in September 2021. After the analysis of the September survey, the October ESIT Follow-Up Staffing Survey was sent only to those providers who reported that they had lost staff in the prior three months (July-September).

Both surveys had excellent response rates, with 94% (46/49) of ESIT PAs, representing all counties in WA, responding to the first survey and 94% (33/35) of those who lost staff in the last three months responding to the follow-up survey.

### Adequate Staff to Serve All Enrolled Families

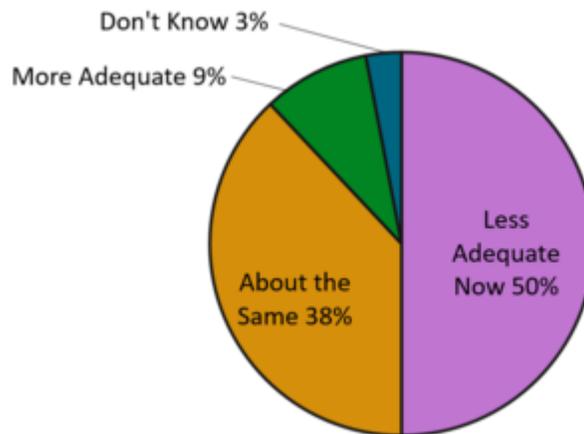
- Of all programs statewide, almost half (46%) reported that they did not have the needed staff to adequately serve all enrolled children.

**ESIT PAs With Adequate Staff to Serve All Enrolled Children**



- Of those who reported losing staff in the three months prior, 50% reported that their current staffing level is less adequate now compared to the staffing level two years ago, in the fall of 2019.

## Staffing Level Compared with Fall of 2019



## Staff Loss July-September 2021

- More than three-quarters (76%) reported losing staff within the last three months, for a statewide total of 103 Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) of ESIT staff lost and not replaced from July-September 2021.
- The losses included a wide range of provider types with the most common being Speech Language Pathologists and Assistants, Other Staff<sup>[1]</sup>, Family Resource Coordinators, Special Educators, and Occupational Therapists.<sup>[2]</sup> <sup>[3]</sup>

Statewide Full-Time Equivalents Lost and Not Replaced  
July-September 2021



<sup>[1]</sup> Respondents reporting losses in the Other Staff category noted the following: Infant Mental Health Specialists, Mental Health Therapists, Early Learning Educators, Chief Programs and Operations Officer, Program Directors, Billing-Collections, IT, Recruiter, Professional Development, Scheduling, and Interpreters.

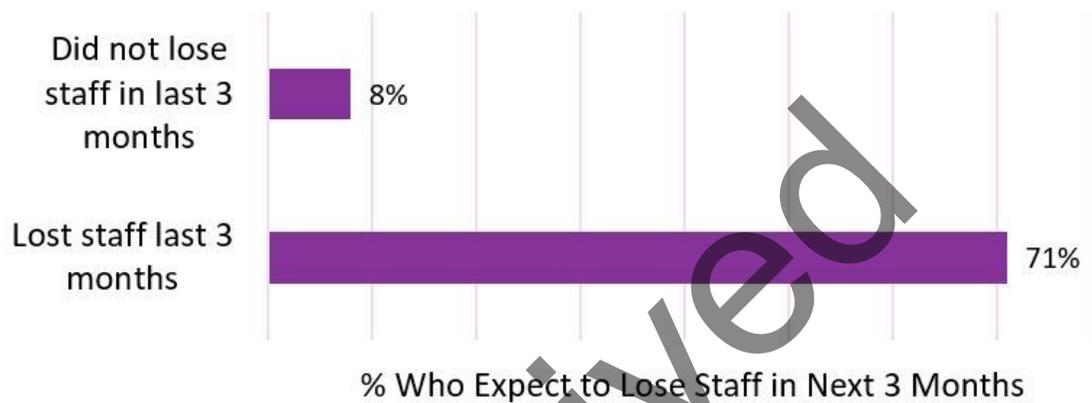
<sup>[2]</sup> Only staff types with more than two FTE total losses reported were included in this chart. Provider types with less than two FTE total losses included Social Work, Nursing, Teacher of the Blind/Visually Impaired, Audiologist, Teacher of the Deaf, Behavior Specialist, and Psychologist.

<sup>[3]</sup> Totals are rounded to the nearest whole number.

## Anticipated Staff Loss for October-December 2021

- More than half (56%) of all respondents anticipated losing staff in the upcoming three months (October-December 2021).
- Staffing loss is unevenly spread, with some agencies experiencing more extensive loss than others.
- Seventy-one percent of those reporting they already had losses, expect *additional* losses in the next three months.
- Among the 33% of ESIT PAs who have *not* experienced staff loss in the last three months, only 8% expect staff loss in the upcoming three months.

### % of ESIT PAs Who Anticipate Staff Losses in Next 3 Months

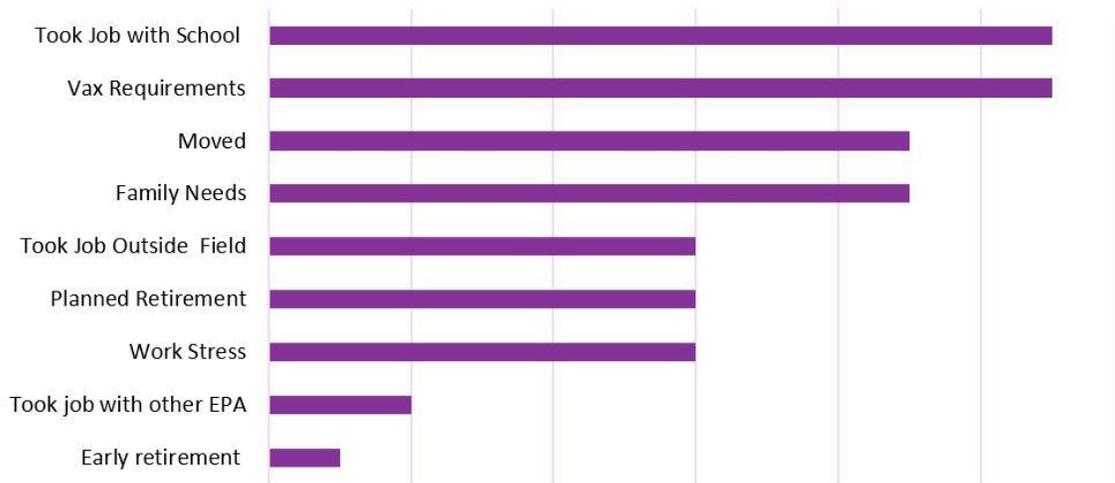


#### Contributors to Staff Loss

The biggest combined contributors to staff turnover in the last three months and to anticipated turnover in the next three months were:

- Taking a school district position.
- Concerns regarding the COVID-19 vaccine requirement.
- Moving to another community.
- Family needs.

## Reasons for Staff Loss



## Recruiting Strategies

Providers have employed a number of strategies to recruit new staff and nearly two-thirds (63%) of agencies reported that their recruitment efforts have been successful. The following are some of the recruitment strategies agencies reported using.

### Financial Compensation

- Match school district salaries.
- Pay for moving expenses.
- Offer sign-on bonuses.

### Schedules and Benefits

- Part-time options.
- Flexible hours.
- Paid continuing education.
- Generous benefit packages.

### Advertising

- Maintain a nimble Human Resources department that can quickly post openings and complete hiring.
- Post openings on:
  - Internet-based job sites like Indeed.com.
  - Social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter).
- Hire a recruiting agency.
- Contact therapy associations.
- Subcontract with out-of-state (or even out-of-country) telepractice providers licensed and able to bill insurance in WA.

- Leverage the ESIT Qualified Personnel Temporary Exemption process to hire more staff able to provide Special Instruction. For more information on the exemption process, contact your regional Technical Assistance Specialist.

### **Employee Referrals**

- Create incentives for current employees to recruit colleagues.
- Maintain a positive workplace culture.

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## **Retention Strategies**

Strategies to retain current staff were reported to be even more successful than recruitment strategies, with 95% of respondents reporting success in retention efforts. The following are some of the retention strategies agencies reported using.

### **Financial Compensation**

- Offer wages comparable to local clinics and school districts.
- Institute a “pay for performance” incentive plan.
- Offer longevity or “stay” bonuses.

### **Schedules and Benefits**

- Allow additional time off to reduce videoconference fatigue.
- Support work-from-home options.
- Increase the professional development fund.
- Offer a four-day work week.
- Offer discipline-specific mentorship.

### **Workplace Culture**

- Work to keep morale high.
- Promote internal movement, opportunities for advancement.
- Support employees’ personal and family lives.
- Be flexible.
- Support what staff say they need in order to feel safe at work.
- Fully value each employee as an important member of the agency.

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## **Additional Strategies**

### **Subcontract with Other WA ESIT Provider Agencies**

The following ESIT PAs in WA have stated they may have capacity to subcontract with other ESIT PAs to provide IFSP services in this challenging circumstance. The specific terms and details of any subcontract will be agreed upon by the contractor and subcontractor. All subcontracts must be

submitted to [esit.reports@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:esit.reports@dcyf.wa.gov), with the regional Quality Improvement Specialist cc'd on the email.

<p><b>Birth to Three Development Center</b>            35535 Sixth Place SW, Federal Way, WA 98023            Maryanne Barnes, Executive Director  <a href="mailto:mbarnes@birthtothree.org">mbarnes@birthtothree.org</a>            (253) 874-5445</p>	<p><b>Kindering</b>            16120 NE Eighth Street, Bellevue, WA 98008            Kim Gerdes, Director of Early Support and KidsClinic programs  <a href="mailto:kim.gerdes@kindering.org">kim.gerdes@kindering.org</a>            (425) 984-2602</p>
<p><b>Boyer Children's Clinic</b>            1850 Boyer Avenue E., Seattle, WA 98112            Michael Stewart, Executive Director  <a href="mailto:mike.stewart@boyercc.org">mike.stewart@boyercc.org</a>            Gay Burton, Chief Program Officer  <a href="mailto:gay.burton@boyercc.org">gay.burton@boyercc.org</a>            (206) 325-8477</p>	<p><b>Summit Center for Child Development</b>            462 S. Market Blvd., Chehalis, WA 98532            Megan Bunker, Executive Director  <a href="mailto:megan@sccdkids.org">megan@sccdkids.org</a>            (360) 736-0086 ext. 3</p>
<p><b>ESD 112</b>            2500 N.E. 65th Ave., Vancouver, WA 98661            Carol Hall, Director Early Intervention  <a href="mailto:carol.hall@esd112.org">carol.hall@esd112.org</a>            (360) 750-7500</p>	<p><b>Wonderland Child and Family Services</b>            2402 NW 195th Place, Shoreline, WA 98177            Michelle Stiller Bradley, Chief Program Officer &amp; Infant Family Specialist  <a href="mailto:info@wonderlandkids.org">info@wonderlandkids.org</a>            (206) 364-3777</p>
<p><b>Joya Child &amp; Family Development</b>            2118 West Garland, Spokane, WA 99205            Colleen Fuchs, Executive Director  <a href="mailto:colleen.fuchs@joya.org">colleen.fuchs@joya.org</a>            (509) 326-1651</p>	

## Subcontract with Out-of-State Telepractice Providers

The ESIT state office has gathered a short list of out-of-state telepractice organizations that offer Speech Language Pathology and/or Occupational Therapy services. Each of these providers has stated that they are interested in subcontracting to provide distance services to Part C enrolled families in WA. This list is not exhaustive and ESIT PAs are encouraged to do their own research. Subcontracted professionals must have the capacity to bill WA private insurance or Medicaid in order for the ESIT PA to meet payor of last resort requirements. ESIT PAs must independently verify the WA State licensure, vaccination status, credentials, ability to bill, and goodness-of-fit of any subcontracted professionals.

<p><b>Expressable</b>            Spencer Magloff, Chief Marketing Officer  <a href="mailto:spencer@expressable.io">spencer@expressable.io</a>            (561) 462-3746</p>	<p><b>The Hello Clinic</b>            Jenny Peddicord, Clinic Director  <a href="mailto:clinic@thehellofoundation.com">clinic@thehellofoundation.com</a>            (503) 517-8555            (855) 875-0707</p>
<p><b>Lighthouse Therapy</b>            Janet Courtney, Founder/CEO  <a href="mailto:contact@lighthouse-therapy.com">contact@lighthouse-therapy.com</a>            (517) 234-0227 ext. 210            (888) 642-0994 ext. 210</p>	<p><b>Glow Bright Therapy</b>            Glory Lichon, Owner  <a href="mailto:glory@glowbrighttherapy.com">glory@glowbrighttherapy.com</a>            (937) 230-6300</p>

## Connect with State Therapist Associations

Professional organizations are a great way to connect with professionals who may be interested in a job in early intervention. Most professional associations have a way of getting job information out to their members. Here are the contacts for three therapy associations in WA.

### American Physical Therapy Association, Washington (APTAWA)

Jackie Barry, Certified Association Executive, Executive Director

[jackie@aptawa.org](mailto:jackie@aptawa.org)

(360) 352-7290 ext. 110

Request your job announcement be posted on the APTAWA Pediatric Special Interest Group Listserv by emailing the address above.

### **Washington Speech-Language-Hearing Association (WSLHA)**

[WSHLA Advertising page](#)

WSHLA provides fee-based advertising services such as email announcements, a job board and social media posts to help with Speech Language Pathologist and Audiologist recruiting efforts.

### **Washington Occupational Therapy Association (WOTA)**

Email contact form at <https://wota.org/about/contact/>

Reach out to WOTA to see how they might help with your recruiting efforts.

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## **Funding Sources**

State Special Education 0-3 Funding is the primary funding source used to address staffing needs. Private insurance, Medicaid, and County DDA funds must be accessed, where available, before using Part C funding due to the payor of last resort requirement. Two other potential funding sources are described below.

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### **ARPA Funds**

Washington State's Part C allocation of the [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\)](#) funds totals \$4,683,413, much of which will be distributed to providers this federal fiscal year. These funds must be obligated by the state by September 2023 and liquidated by January 2024. For more information see [Fact Sheet: Section 2014 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(July 1, 2021\)](#).

Access to ARPA funding will be supported through a Pre-Approval and Planning Request Form. ESIT PAs will be notified as soon as funding becomes available.

The Finance Committee of the ESIT State Interagency Coordinating Council reviewed results from a COVID-19 Impact Survey conducted in spring of 2021 and recommended the following uses of ARPA funds in the priority area of Workforce Development and Stabilization:

- Staff retention and bonuses, college tuition reimbursements.
  - Concrete supports to address staff needs resulting from COVID-19 impacts.
  - Recruitment of a more diverse, representative workforce to support language and culture match for families.
  - Training incentives for personnel recruited to work in rural and inner-city areas.
  - Training in culturally appropriate, evidence-based coaching practices and effective virtual home visiting.
- 

### **Multi-Year Gifts from Private Donors**

Multi-year donations may provide non-profits with a pool of unrestricted funds which can be drawn from to increase personnel capacity and sustainability. ESIT PAs that can describe the impact of their services in terms of *child and family outcomes* may be especially well-positioned to foster partnerships that support access to private funding.

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## Resources and Citations

- [Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) Part C.](#)
- [OSEP Part C Provision of Service in the COVID-19 Environment Q&A Document.](#)
- [OSERS Return to School Roadmap: Provision of Early Intervention Services.](#)
- [IDEA American Rescue Plan \(ARPA\) Funds.](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Section 2014 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(July 1, 2021\).](#)

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