

*Welcome to the first State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Newsletter! This newsletter will keep you informed about how the work is progressing. A new issue will be released every four to six weeks. Please contact us if you have any questions.*

**What is the SSIP?**

Vermont's Part C Early Intervention services are known as Children's Integrated Services-Early Intervention (CIS-EI) services. Vermont CIS-EI supports families with young children who have developmental delays, or who are at risk of having developmental delays due to a medical condition, by providing services in accordance with Part C of the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA). CIS-EI does this in collaboration with a variety of partners. Knowing parents are their children's first and most important teachers, CIS-EI partners with families in their homes and community settings to provide services to support children's development.

To enhance Vermont CIS-EI's work, the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is requiring every state's Early Intervention program to develop a five-year plan. The state plan, known as the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), identifies a State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR) that will improve outcomes and the quality of life for infants and toddlers receiving CIS-EI services. Vermont CIS-EI, in collaboration with families and other partners, seeks to do this by supporting families to help their children develop and improve their social and emotional skills.

Supporting social and emotional development fosters positive relationships for children within their families, school and broader community. Doing this will help children now and in the future. Through the SSIP, CIS-EI will implement strategies that directly and positively impact families' ability to support their children's healthy social and emotional development. CIS-EI's goal is to increase infant and toddler's social and/or emotional functional skills.

**Four Main Interconnected Strategies:**

**Targeted Supports**—CIS invited the Bennington, Brattleboro and Hartford regional teams to receive targeted supports aimed at improving Child and Family Outcomes. The aim of these supports are to identify, implement, and evaluate strategies that will improve children's social and emotional functioning. The three targeted regions performed a deep root cause analysis this summer. The targeted regions, with the State, will meet in September to discuss their findings and begin the process of identifying strategies they may pursue to improve children's social and or emotional development.

**Comprehensive System of Professional Development (CSPD)**— CIS will develop and promulgate a comprehensive system of personnel development (CSPD) with the help of intensive technical assistance from the Early Childhood Personnel Center (ECPC). Using the framework developed by the ECPC, we will have a strategically designed and documented CSPD which can be used at the State and regional level to identify, promote and implement best and consistent practice among CIS-EI practitioners. A leadership team is being identified who will be responsible for the development of this CSPD. Furthermore, regions will note that additional questions are included in the annual staff Host Agency inventory to support the CSPD work.

**Infrastructure Alignment**— CIS is seeking opportunities to align with other state initiatives and programs that seek to impact children's social and emotional development. Currently, some of the connections being forged are with the BBF Regional Councils; Projects 8, 15, 16 and 17 of the RTT-ELC grant that work with AOE and Higher Education to support the CSPD work; Project 24 of the RTT-ELC grant around Promise Communities to support family engagement opportunities; and DMH regarding screening and assessment related to children's social emotional development.

**Family Connections**— Stakeholders shared the importance of identifying and promoting community activities to families receiving CIS-EI services. Community activities such as play groups, dabble-days at the local parent child center, or music in the park provide adults and children alike the opportunity to make positive social connections with peers. Social connections support children's healthy development, reduce family isolation, and increase natural supports for families. CIS created a Family Engagement Coordinator position to support this need. Unfortunately the individual hired has left this position. The CIS team is currently seeking to re-fill this position.

For questions related to the SSIP Phase Two project, please contact Danielle Howes, Part C Coordinator at [Danielle.Howes@vermont.gov](mailto:Danielle.Howes@vermont.gov)

**Estimated State Systemic Improvement Plan Schedule of Projects**

