

# Interprofessional Collaborative Practice in Early Intervention



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## KEYWORDS

- Interprofessional practice and education • Early intervention
- Teaming and collaboration • Family partnerships

## KEY POINTS

- Early intervention is an interdisciplinary field with a history of collaborative teamwork that contributes to and benefits from interprofessional collaborative practice.
- Although children with disabilities younger than age 3 and their families are served in multiple settings and service delivery models, interprofessional collaborative practice is the recommended approach to ensure coordination and to maximize family participation.
- The SLP in early intervention provides assessment and intervention services and informational resources supports to the child, family, and other members of the team.
- Competencies clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of the SLP in EI.
- Engaging families in the intervention process is a linchpin of early intervention that involves the SLP in coaching and consultative services.

This article provides a conceptual framework for speech-language pathologist (SLP) services in early intervention (EI) contexts, including pediatric practices or medical homes, based on the principles of interprofessional collaboration. Specifically, these are identifying key roles and responsibilities of SLPs working as members of interprofessional teams to provide family-centered, culturally responsive services that support children's development in natural contexts and the inclusion of families and other caregivers as essential members of the interprofessional team. The history of collaboration, EI, and the role of SLPs as members of the EI team are summarized. The

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competencies mandated for interprofessional education and practice are juxtaposed with the principles of highest quality EI and guidelines for SLPs.

### **INTERPROFESSIONAL COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE DEFINED**

Interprofessional collaborative practice is a concept that is currently shared among many disciplines and has grown in acceptance among professional organizations related to all aspects of health care and education (eg, <sup>1,2</sup>). It is not a singular model of services but a process that is grounded in theories and practices that are evidence-based and reflective of a philosophy that is holistic, culturally responsive, and client/family centered. As such, the definitions are aligned with the preprofessional education competencies, professional practice competencies and processes, and the processes and outcomes necessary for effective team work. The following are the operational definitions provided by the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC). <sup>3(p8)</sup>. As is evident, these are aligned with and grew out of definitions provided by the World Health Organization.<sup>4</sup> It is important to recognize that in defining the competencies for preprofessionals, the intent is to define them in a trajectory for professional practice among disciplines and across services.

### **OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS**

#### ***Interprofessional Education***

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“When students from two or more professions learn about, from and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes.”<sup>4</sup>

#### ***Interprofessional Collaborative Practice***

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“When multiple health workers from different professional backgrounds work together with patients, families, [Caregivers], and communities to deliver the highest quality of care.”<sup>4</sup>

#### ***Interprofessional Teamwork***

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The levels of cooperation, coordination, and collaboration characterizing the relationships between professions in delivering person-centered care.

#### ***Interprofessional Team-Based Care***

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Care delivered by intentionally created, usually small work groups in health care or education who are recognized by others and by themselves as having a collective identity and shared responsibility for a patient or student, or group of patients or students (eg, primary care team, student support team, and individualized family support plan team).

### **IS THIS NEW?**

The interest in collaborative practice has a long-standing history and scholarly activity that includes nearly all special service professions, as summarized by Gutkin.<sup>5</sup> The concept of collaborative service delivery derived from processes first attributed to work in the areas of community counseling,<sup>6</sup> and later applied to educational settings, evolving from the mental health literature.<sup>7,8</sup> Coufal<sup>9</sup> summarized the critical competencies essential to the collaborative planning and problem-solving model as emphasizing communication skills; mutual respect; ecological and holistic assessment and intervention; and assessment of the team’s accountability, processes, and outcomes. These characteristics are essential to interprofessional collaborative processes, regardless of the persons being served or the professional disciplines represented

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