AUTHENTICATED,
OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
COMMISSION
DOCUMENT #536945

Ohio Administrative Code

Rule 5180:8-1-05 Early intervention - developmental specialist certification.

Effective: October 15, 2026

(A) Who must hold valid certification under this rule?

All persons working in the early intervention program as developmental specialists must hold valid certification in accordance with this rule.

(B) What definitions apply to developmental specialist certification?

For the purpose of this rule, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Accredited college or university" means a college or university accredited by a national or regional association recognized by the secretary of the United States department of education or a foreign college or university of comparable standing.

(2) "College course" means department-approved instruction of at least two semester hours or three quarter hours of credit provided by an accredited college or university. Department approval of college courses will be based on documentation (including a transcript and/or syllabus with identified objectives and method of evaluation).

(3) "Department" means the Ohio department of children and youth.

(4) "Developmental specialist" means a professional trained to provide special instruction to infants and toddlers from birth through age two as part of an individualized family service plan team.

(a) A developmental specialist is an early intervention service provider who provides expertise in all the following:

(i) Infant and toddler development.

(ii) Promotion of an infant's or toddler's acquisition of functional skills across developmental areas, including cognitive processes and social interaction through adaptation of the child's learning environment and activities.

(iii) Developing individualized, evidence-based strategies which promote planned interactions and active participation of parents, other family members, caregivers, children, materials, and the specific environment that leads to achieving individualized family service plan outcomes.

AUTHENTICATED,
OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
COMMISSION
DOCUMENT #536945

(iv) Providing parents, other family members, and caregivers with information, skills, and support related to enhancing a child's development.

(b) The scope of work for a developmental specialist includes developmental screenings, developmental evaluations, functional assessments, family assessments, individualized family service plan development and implementation, teaming practices, and the delivery of special instruction in accordance with Chapters 5180-10 and 5180:8-1 of the Administrative Code.

(c) A developmental specialist follows the "Code of Ethics of the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children" (available at https://www.decdocs.org/member-code-of-ethics) to guide professional behavior.

(5) "Developmental specialist orientation modules" means department-provided web-based training that addresses topics integral to developmental specialist practice, including but not limited to:

(a) Introduction to early intervention services;

(b) Mission and key principles of early intervention;

(c) Family-centered early intervention practices;

(d) Individualized family service plan process;

(e) Mandated reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect;

(f) Parent rights and procedural safeguards in early intervention;

(g) Primary service provider approach to teaming in early intervention;

(h) Natural learning environment practices;

(i) Assessment practices; and

(j) Coaching in early intervention.

(6) "Director" means the director of the Ohio department of children and youth or that person's designee.

(7) "Early childhood" means birth through age five.

AUTHENTICATED,
OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
COMMISSION
DOCUMENT #536945

(8) "Early intervention service provider" has the same meaning as in rule 5180-10-02 of the Administrative Code.

(9) "Early intervention services" has the same meaning as in rule 5180-10-02 of the Administrative Code.

(10) "Evidence-based practice coach" means a person who:

(a) Holds valid five-year developmental specialist certification; and

(b) Has successfully completed department-provided training in evidence-based practice coaching.

(11) "Evidence-based practice coaching" means an activity that forms the formal relationship between a person holding one-year developmental specialist certification issued in accordance with paragraph (C)(1) of this rule and an evidence-based practice coach that is designed to foster growth and reflection and increase confidence and competence of the person holding one-year developmental specialist certification. The evidence-based practice coach provides ongoing support to the person holding one-year developmental specialist certification while that person completes college courses or seminars required for five-year developmental specialist certification.

(12) "Evidence-based practice coaching agreement" means a written agreement documented on form EI-19 ("Evidence-Based Practice Coaching Agreement") developed and signed by a person holding one-year developmental specialist certification and an evidence-based practice coach.

(13) "Principles of special instruction" means department-provided training specific to the role of a developmental specialist that builds on college courses or seminars required for five-year developmental specialist certification, delivering practical information necessary for providing special instruction and supports related specifically to the cognitive and social-emotional developmental domains.

(14) "Professional development" means training, courses, seminars, or evidence-based practice coaching completed subsequent to the effective date of an applicant's most recent five-year developmental specialist certification that enhance the knowledge, skills, and competencies of developmental specialists and are verified as successfully completed by the department (or, at the department's discretion, by an entity under contract with the department for the purpose of verifying completion of professional development) and may include:

AUTHENTICATED,
OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
COMMISSION
DOCUMENT #536945

(a) Training, courses, or seminars pre-approved by the department that are relevant to the role of a developmental specialist, and support and align with evidence-based early intervention practices, and are pertinent to early childhood.

(b) As many as ten documented hours of training, courses, or seminars that are not pre-approved by the department, but are submitted by an applicant with written justification explaining how completion of the training, course, or seminar enhanced the applicant's knowledge, skills, and competencies as a developmental specialist.

(c) As many as twenty hours spent by an evidence-based practice coach actively participating in evidence-based practice coaching documented on form EI-19 ("Evidence-Based Practice Coaching Agreement") and a written log that includes dates and times when evidence-based practice coaching occurred.

(15) "Seminar" means department-approved instruction of a minimum of thirty hours. Department approval of seminars will be based on documentation (including a syllabus with identified objectives and method of evaluation) to demonstrate that the instruction is:

(a) Provided by a department-approved instructor who holds a master's degree or doctoral degree in early childhood education, special education, or a closely related field and who possesses in-depth knowledge related to the content area of the seminar;

(b) Formulated on current evidence-based practices;

(c) Structured in accordance with evidence-based adult learning practices; and

(d) Based on peer-reviewed literature and research.

(C) What are the requirements for obtaining and maintaining developmental specialist certification?

There are two levels of developmental specialist certification, one-year and five-year:

(1) One-year certification is available for a person who holds a valid one-year developmental specialist certification issued prior to October 2026 or a person who receives an offer of employment or is employed in the position of developmental specialist but who does not yet meet the requirements for five-year certification set forth in paragraph (C)(2) of this rule.

AUTHENTICATED,
OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
COMMISSION
DOCUMENT #536945

(a) The department may issue developmental specialist certification for an initial period of one year to an applicant who meets all the requirements in paragraphs (C)(a)(i) to (C)(a)(iv) of this rule:

(i) Receives an offer of employment or is employed as a developmental specialist by an entity that submits a written attestation that the entity will arrange for and ensure that the applicant actively participates in evidence-based practice coaching as described in paragraph (B)(11) of this rule.

(ii) Meets one of the following:

(a) Holds a bachelor's degree or graduate-level degree in education, health, social or behavioral science, social services, human services, or other related field from an accredited college or university;

(b) Holds a bachelor's degree or graduate-level degree in any field from an accredited college or university and has at least two years of verified full-time (or equivalent part-time), supervised, paid experience working with families and children birth through age five with disabilities, developmental delays, or diagnosed physical or mental conditions that have a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay; or

(c) Holds a bachelor's degree or graduate-level degree in any field from an accredited college or university and holds a valid license in counseling; early childhood education for ages three through eight, grades kindergarten through third, or special education; hearing impairment intervention; medical; nursing; occupational therapy; physical therapy; psychology; psychiatry; social work; speech-language pathology; or visual impairment intervention.

(iii) Has successfully completed all department-provided developmental specialist orientation modules as described in paragraph (B)(5) of this rule.

(iv) Has successfully completed department-provided training in infant and toddler development.

AUTHENTICATED,
OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
COMMISSION
DOCUMENT #536945

(b) The department may renew developmental specialist certification for a period of one year provided the applicant meets all the requirements in paragraphs (C)(1)(b)(i) to (C)(1)(b)(iii) of this rule:

(i) Is employed as a developmental specialist by an entity that submits a written attestation that the entity will arrange for and ensure that the applicant actively participates in in evidence-based practice coaching as described in paragraph (B)(11) of this rule.

(ii) The applicant has successfully completed at least three of the six college courses or seminars required for five-year developmental specialist certification as specified in paragraph (C)(2)(b)(i)(a)(iii) of this rule, including:

(a) Evaluation and assessment.

(b) Infant/toddler growth and development.

(c) Individualized family service plan development, intervention planning, and service delivery.

(iii) Has submitted to the department a copy of the evidence-based practice coaching agreement from the previous year.

(c) A person who held one-year developmental specialist certification in accordance with paragraph (C)(1)(b)(i) of this rule and failed to complete requirements set forth in paragraph (C)(1)(b)(ii) of this rule is ineligible to renew their one-year developmental specialist certification and will be required to meet the requirements set forth in paragraph (C)(2)(b)(i) of this rule for five-year developmental specialist certification.

(2) Five-year certification.

(a) Five-year developmental specialist certification issued prior to October 2026 in accordance will remain in effect until assigned expiration. A person wishing to continue to hold certification without interruption shall apply to the department prior to expiration of the certification in accordance with paragraph (C)(2)(c) or (C)(2)(d) of this rule.

(b) There are two tracks for obtaining five-year developmental specialist certification.

AUTHENTICATED,
OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
COMMISSION
DOCUMENT #536945

(i) Track I - for a person with a related degree, a person with any degree and two years of related experience, or a person with any degree and a related license.

(a) The department may issue developmental specialist certification for an initial period of five years to an applicant who meets all the requirements in paragraphs (C)(2)(b)(i)(a)(i) to (C)(2)(b)(i)(a)(iii) of this rule:

(i) Meets one of the following:

(A) Holds a bachelor's degree or graduate-level degree in education, health, social or behavioral science, social services, human services, or other related field from an accredited college or university;

(B) Holds a bachelor's degree or graduate-level degree in any field from an accredited college or university and has at least two years of verified full-time (or equivalent parttime), supervised, paid experience working with families and children birth through age five with disabilities, developmental delays, or diagnosed physical or mental conditions that have a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay; or

(C) Holds a bachelor's degree or graduate-level degree in any field from an accredited college or university and holds a valid license in counseling; early childhood education for ages three through eight, grades kindergarten through third, or special education; hearing impairment intervention; medical; nursing; occupational therapy; physical therapy; psychology; psychiatry; social work; speechlanguage pathology; or visual impairment intervention.

(ii) Has successfully completed all department-provided developmental specialist orientation modules as described in paragraph (B)(5) of this rule.

(iii) Has successfully completed one college course or seminar in all the following areas:

AUTHENTICATED,
OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
COMMISSION
DOCUMENT #536945

(A) Evaluation and assessment.

(B) Infant/toddler growth and development.

(C) Individualized family service plan development, intervention planning, and service delivery.

(D) Disabilities and risk factors from birth.

(E) Family-centered services and supports.

(F) Teaming and collaboration in early intervention.

(ii) Track II - for a person who holds a credential issued by another state or territory of the United States. The department may issue developmental specialist certification for an initial period of five years to an applicant who has been determined by the department to have met all the following:

(a) Met state-approved or recognized certification, licensure, registration, or other comparable requirements to provide special instruction via an early intervention individualized family service plan in a state other than Ohio or a territory of the United States within the past six months.

(b) Successfully completed all department-provided developmental specialist orientation modules as described in paragraph (B)(5) of this rule.

(c) The department may issue developmental specialist certification to an applicant for a second period of five years provided the applicant:

(i) Has completed principles of special instruction which may be counted toward the professional development required for renewal.

(ii) Has either:

(a) Successfully completed fifty hours of professional development and been engaged for at least four thousand hours total of one or more of the following activities during the period of the preceding developmental specialist certification: conducting formal early intervention assessments for the purposes of individualized family service plan development; delivering early intervention services through individualized

AUTHENTICATED,
OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
COMMISSION
DOCUMENT #536945

family service plans to infants and toddlers birth through age two; or developing early intervention services policies or instructional materials; or

(b) Successfully completed eighty hours of professional development during the period of the preceding developmental specialist certification.

(d) The department may renew developmental specialist certification to an applicant for subsequent periods of five years provided the applicant:

(i) Has either:

(a) Successfully completed fifty hours of professional development and been engaged for at least four thousand hours total of one or more of the following activities during the period of the preceding developmental specialist certification: conducting formal early intervention assessments for the purposes of individualized family service plan development; delivering early intervention services through individualized family service plans to infants and toddlers birth through age two; or developing early intervention services policies or instructional materials; or

(b) Successfully completed eighty hours of professional development during the period of the preceding developmental specialist certification.

(e) A person who obtained five-year developmental specialist certification in accordance with paragraph (C)(2)(b)(i) or (C)(2)(b)(ii) of this rule and failed to complete requirements set forth in paragraph (C)(2)(c) or (C)(2)(d) of this rule, as applicable, to renew five-year certification is ineligible to apply for initial five-year developmental specialist certification in accordance with paragraph (C)(2)(b)(i) or (C)(2)(b)(ii) of this rule.

(f) Renewal of expired five-year developmental specialist certification issued in or after October 2026.

(i) Five-year developmental specialist certification issued in or after October 2026 which has been expired for less than one year may be renewed upon completion of renewal requirements of the expired certification.

AUTHENTICATED,
OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
COMMISSION
DOCUMENT #536945

(ii) Five-year developmental specialist certification issued in or after October 2026 which has been expired for one year or more may be renewed upon successful completion of all the following:

(a) At least one hundred hours of professional development subsequent to the effective date of the expired certification;

(b) All developmental specialist orientation modules which may be counted towards the one hundred hours of professional development; and

(c) Principles of special instruction which may be counted towards the one hundred hours of professional development.

(D) What the coaching requirements for individuals holding an initial one-year developmental specialist certification?

A person holding an initial one-year developmental specialist certification must actively participate in a minimum of nine months of evidence-based practice coaching which commences within the first three months of employment as a developmental specialist and is provided in accordance with an evidence-based practice coaching agreement.