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## Developmental Specialist Certification & FSC Waiver's

Presented by:  
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Family Infant Toddler Program

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The Family Infant Toddler (FIT) Program of the NM Department of Health (DOH), Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) in collaboration with the Children Youth & Families Department (CYFD), Office of Child Development (OCD) created a system for certification of Developmental Specialists (DS) levels I, II and III, in December 2001, under LTSD Policy # 01-6.1.




The Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that states determine the personnel standards (§303.361) for individuals providing early intervention services.  
New Mexico FIT regulations (NMAC 7.30.8.9) require certification for individuals functioning in the position of Developmental Specialist.

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## Fast Facts DS Certification

- The Family Infant Toddler program designed the developmental specialist certification for those persons who wish to work as developmental specialists in early intervention programs in the state of New Mexico ***only***.
- The individual ***must be*** a contractor or employee of a FIT early intervention program.
- In order to Supervise staff who work as Developmental Specialists, the supervisor must be a DSII or DSIII.
- Professionals from the approved discipline, who also hold a specific license or certificate can acquire a DS certificate, but they must spend ***at least 60%*** of their time employed in the role of Developmental Specialist.
- Certification is for 3 years; unless it is an ***Exemption***, exemption is for 1 year.

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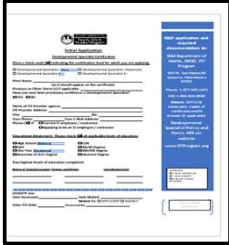
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## Application Process

### Initial Application



### Recertification Application



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### What do I need for Initial Certification?

- Within thirty (30) days of hire, program managers need to assist the Developmental Specialists to apply to the Family Infant Toddler Program for a certificate.
- Prior to submitting the required documentation, you must create a personnel profile for the new Developmental Specialist candidate in FITKIDS.
- Submit the application form and all required documentation to the Family Infant Toddler Program

 *Do not send the initial start of your IPDP with your initial application.*  
 ☞ *Unless you are requesting an Exemption.*

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## LEVELS of Certification

Developmental Specialist I Basic

Developmental Specialist I Advanced

Developmental Specialist II

Developmental Specialist III



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Comparing the Levels of Developmental Specialist Certifications

| DS I-BASIC   | DS I Advanced  | DS II  | DS III   |
|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A photocopy of your High School Diploma or GED.</li> <li>A photocopy of your certificate of completion of the 45-hour entry-level course.</li> <li>If you are a new employee, a statement of when and where you will complete the 45-hour entry level course, if not already completed</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A photocopy of your professional license, if applicable, in a related field</li> <li>Original OFFICIAL (certified or with a seal) two-year Associate-level college transcript in Early Childhood or related fields listed in Developmental Specialist Certification Policy.</li> <li>If transferring credits the official transcript from the college awarding your degree is satisfactory</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A photocopy of your professional license, if applicable, in a related field</li> <li>Original OFFICIAL (certified or with a seal) four-year Bachelor's level college transcript in Early Childhood or related fields listed in policy.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A photocopy of your professional license, if applicable, in a related field</li> <li>Original OFFICIAL (certified or with a seal) advanced degree level or above college transcript in Early Childhood or related fields listed in policy.</li> </ul> |

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## What are the Approved Disciplines?

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Audiology<br/>           Art or Music Therapy<br/>           Vision Training<br/>           Counseling and Guidance<br/>           Education of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing<br/>           Social Work<br/>           Nursing (LPN, RN, Midwife)<br/>           Occupational Therapy<br/>           Orientation/Mobility Training<br/>           Pediatric or other Medical Specialty (e.g., MD, CNP, PA)<br/>           Physical Therapy<br/>           Psychology<br/>           Special Education</p> | <p>Communication-Language Disorders<br/>           Elementary Education<br/>           Early Childhood Development and Education<br/>           Family Studies<br/>           Family Therapy and Counseling<br/>           Nutrition/Dietetics<br/>           Certified Occupational Therapy assistant (COTA)<br/>           Physical Therapy Assistant (PTA)<br/>           Speech and Language Pathology</p> |
|--|--|

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EXEMPT

## Exemption

- The following degrees will result in an exemption and will require the applicant to take **FIT Core modules**, the **45-hour Intro to Early Childhood Development** and/or Early childhood college credit classes.
  - Sociology
  - Public Health
  - Other Related Fields*, as determined by the Department of Health
- For degree's in nonrelated fields, where the applicant can demonstrate two years of experience in an early childhood setting, *a request for exemption should be done*
  - The applicant will be required to take FIT Core modules and the 45-hour Intro to Early Childhood Development
  - and/or the Infant Toddler Studies AA program through Portales EMNU, or BA program through Albuquerque CNM, or other early childhood education course work at higher institutions.

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# Requesting an Exemption

Requests for an exemption shall be made within 30 days of hire or the date that the need for exemption is identified.

The agency shall submit a written request for an exemption and should include:

- Name of the individual(s) for whom the exemption is sought.
- Details of the circumstances justifying the agency's request for the exemption.
- Level for which the candidate for exemption is being sought.
- Qualifications and experience of the individual that deems them a suitable candidate for exemption.
- An IPDP, with current and planned courses, that the individual is taking to meet the requirements of Developmental Specialist certification at the desired level and the amount and type of supervision.
- Official Transcript
- Completed Developmental Specialist application
- Resume



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# Template Letter for Exemption

Sample Letter Requesting DS Exemption

Agency Letterhead  
Exemption Request Letter

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
To: \_\_\_\_\_  
From: \_\_\_\_\_  
Subject: \_\_\_\_\_



Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

This IPDP Requester is requesting an exemption for income of personnel to work as a Developmental Specialist at \_\_\_\_\_ level.

Our agency has been requesting for a DS for \_\_\_\_\_ for the past \_\_\_\_\_ and has been \_\_\_\_\_

INDIVIDUAL'S WORK EXPERIENCE: Please include dates, title, number of months working with your agency, number of years working with children, related to course of program, describe activities, etc.

INDIVIDUAL'S EDUCATION and TRAINING/CREDENTIALS: Please include information regarding level of education, if candidate is currently enrolled in a degree program and the area of study, courses/workshops/drafting that individual has taken that are relevant to work with special, infants and toddlers.

INDIVIDUAL'S EDUCATIONAL PLANS: Please include information regarding: education, education, Bachelor's / Master's in education / major, and degree of education to pursue.

INDIVIDUAL'S SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: Please include information regarding: (e.g., health) barriers, whether they live in community and for how many years, knowledge of the community, if a parent of child with a disability or has lived with an individual with a disability, etc.

SUPERVISION: Explain how the individual will be supervised by a DS II or DS III, at least monthly and will shadow the current DS. Include details, and be consistent in conducting evaluations, writing IPDP strategies and outcomes, etc.

Created June 8, 2019



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## Exemption Time Period



- Exemption requests shall be granted for a maximum of one (1) year.
  - 25 hours documented on IPDP at time of re-certification.
- Agencies can re-apply for an exemption for a maximum of 3-years for one individual.
- When granting the renewal of an exemption the FIT Program will determine if the individual has successfully completed the required courses.
- Upon successful completion of the required courses / classes, the individual will be granted full certification.
- If the individual takes a position with another agency, the exemption does not transfer with the employee.
- Extension of the exemption beyond three (3) years will only be made in exceptional circumstances decided upon by the FIT Review team.



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# Re-Certification

- Re-Certification Application
- IPDP for the last 3 years is needed; OR 1-year if you received your Initial certification on exempt status. Copies of certificates.
- Re-Certification is DUE 30 days before expiration.
- Re-Certification can be mailed, faxed, or emailed.
- If you are Re-certifying for a higher level of certification and have acquired your degree; an OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT is needed.



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An IPDP is required for every Developmental Specialist

Each Developmental Specialist completes the Self-Assessment Tool, prior to creating the IPDP with the supervisor. The Self-Assessment tool addresses early intervention competencies and assists the Developmental Specialist and supervisor in identifying the goals and knowledge/skills to be addressed on the IPDP.

| Developmental Specialist Self-Assessment Tool   |  | SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL |  |      |      |
|---|--|----------------------|--|------|------|
| Name of Developmental Specialist  |  | Competency Area      |  | None | Some |
| 1. Functions of Early Intervention<br><small>(Describe your current position in terms of the functions you perform in your current position.)</small>                     |  |                      |  |      |      |
| 2. Early and professional goals & objectives<br><small>(List your professional goals and objectives for the next 6 months and how you plan to achieve them.)</small>      |  |                      |  |      |      |
| 3. Knowledge, skills, and abilities<br><small>(List your knowledge, skills, and abilities that you plan to use in your current position.)</small>                         |  |                      |  |      |      |
| 4. Professional development<br><small>(List your professional development activities and how you plan to achieve them.)</small>   |  |                      |  |      |      |
| 5. Training, education, and continuing education<br><small>(List your training, education, and continuing education activities and how you plan to achieve them.)</small> |  |                      |  |      |      |
| 6. Self-reflection<br><small>(Reflect on your own strengths and areas for improvement.)</small>   |  |                      |  |      |      |
| 7. Communication skills<br><small>(Reflect on your communication skills and how you plan to improve them.)</small>  |  |                      |  |      |      |
| 8. Cultural awareness<br><small>(Reflect on your cultural awareness and how you plan to improve it.)</small>  |  |                      |  |      |      |
| 9. Professional ethics<br><small>(Reflect on your professional ethics and how you plan to improve them.)</small>  |  |                      |  |      |      |
| 10. Professional conduct<br><small>(Reflect on your professional conduct and how you plan to improve it.)</small>   |  |                      |  |      |      |
| 11. Professional image<br><small>(Reflect on your professional image and how you plan to improve it.)</small>   |  |                      |  |      |      |
| 12. Professionalism<br><small>(Reflect on your professionalism and how you plan to improve it.)</small>   |  |                      |  |      |      |

The IPDP will list the professional development goals and strategies to obtain knowledge/skills and the timelines to be completed by the Developmental Specialist in order to re-certify at the desired level in each 3-year re-certification period.

At a minimum, the Developmental Specialist and his or her supervisor will review the IPDP every 6 months.

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Developmental Specialist **RE-CERTIFICATION TRACKING**  
 Developmental Specialist Level \_\_\_\_\_ Initial Certification Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Professional Development Goal (one goal per page): \_\_\_\_\_

**Log Hours**  
 At least 75 contact hours must be documented within the 3-year re-certification period. Approximately twenty-five (25) contact hours should be documented each year.  
 There are no maximum number of contact hours for participating in in-service training, academic coursework, or mentoring. A maximum number of five (5) contact hours per year for participation in formal reflective supervision. A maximum number of ten (10) contact hours per year for participation in self-study.

| Activity completed (i.e., workshops, self-study, etc.) | Competency Indicator(s) | Date Completed | Contact Hours | Supervisor |
|--|-------------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|
|  |                         |                |               |            |
|  |                         |                |               |            |
|  |                         |                |               |            |
|  |                         |                |               |            |
|  |                         |                |               |            |
|  |                         |                |               |            |
|  |                         |                |               |            |
| Total Hours _____                                      |                         |                |               |            |

Contact hours stated above are a true reflection of the professional development activities. I have completed this IPDP.

Developmental Specialist Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
 Infant Toddler Program Page \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_ IPD

Attach copies of certificates

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## Mentorship

Developmental Specialist \_\_\_\_\_

MENTORSHIP PLAN

IPDP Outcome:

The Mentorship Plan (Describe what will be done during and in between mentoring sessions to help reach the outcome)

Schedule of mentorship session (How often and for how long will the mentorship session occur)

Signature of Person RECEIVING Mentorship \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Person PROVIDING Mentorship \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Mentorship in the Re-certification of the Developmental Specialist must relate to the Developmental Specialist competencies listed in the Self-Assessment tool and the goals agreed upon in the Developmental Specialist's Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP).





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## Guidance on Mentorship


An essential foundation for a *good mentoring* relationship is developing a clear agreement between the Developmental Specialist and Mentor regarding the goals of the Developmental Specialist.

The Developmental Specialist, supervisor and mentor all need to agree on the mentorship plan, timelines and frequency of mentoring sessions.


The Mentorship Plan form should be used to document this agreement.

Supervisors are an integral part of a successful mentoring experience.

Supervisors need to meet regularly with the Developmental Specialist to find out how the mentorship is progressing and how the Developmental Specialist will incorporate their new learning into practice.



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**A Brief Look at:**  
**Developmental Specialist Competency Areas**

The following descriptions give an overview of the competencies as detailed in the:


*"Common Core Content and Areas of Specialization for Personnel Preparation in Early Care, Education and Family Support in New Mexico"*  
(revised Jan. 2005)

prepared by

Higher Education Early Childhood Task Force for  
the New Mexico Child Development Board



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**DS Competency Areas** 

- **Child Growth and Development, and Learning**
  - Foundations for all learning are established during early childhood. Biological-physical, social, cultural, emotional, cognitive, and language domains are inherently intertwined in growth and development. Early childhood professionals must understand this process of development and the adult's role in supporting each child's growth, development, and learning.
- **Health, Safety and Nutrition**
  - Early childhood professionals promote physical and mental health and appropriate nutrition and provide an emotionally and physically safe environment for young children *in partnership with their families*. Sound health, safety, and nutritional practices provide the foundation for development and learning. Good nutrition is appropriate and important to the total development of young children and their families. Meals and snacks encourage good nutrition and eating habits. A safe environment prevents and reduces injuries for young children who are only beginning to recognize dangerous situations.
- **Family and Community Collaboration**
  - Early childhood professionals are committed to *family-centered practices*. They maintain an open, friendly, and collaborative relationship with each child's family, encouraging family involvement, and supporting the child's relationship with his or her family. The diverse cultures and languages representative of families in New Mexico's communities are honored.

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**DS Competency Areas** 

- **Curriculum Development and Implementation**
  - **Developmentally Appropriate Content**  
 Early Childhood professionals *demonstrate knowledge of child development and learning, as well as content knowledge, both in terms of academic disciplines and interdisciplinary integration. Their approach to curriculum content emerges from multiple sources*, such as play and exploration, and is appropriate for the ages and developmental levels of the children with whom they work. Content includes, but is not limited to, the arts, literacy, mathematics, physical education, health, social studies, science, and technology. Children's initial experiences with these content areas form the foundation for later understanding and success.
  - **Learning Environment and Curriculum Implementation**  
 Teaching and learning with young children is a *complex process embedded in relationships*. These teaching and learning relationships provide the scaffold for jointly constructing meanings about self, others, and the world. Early childhood professionals use their child development knowledge, their knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices, and their content knowledge to design, implement, and evaluate experiences that promote optimal development and learning for all children from birth through age eight. In addition, their use of observations is grounded in a thorough understanding of children's families, cultures, and communities. Early childhood professionals encourage young children's problem solving, critical thinking, and academic and social competence within a supportive and challenging learning environment. These challenging teaching and learning experiences build children's confidence in themselves as competent learners.

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**DS Competency Areas continued** 

- **Assessment of Children and Evaluation of Programs**
  - Early childhood professionals must develop knowledge of diverse assessment approaches, including observational skills. They use appropriate on-going documentation and report information to families and professionals. Appropriate early childhood assessment is responsive to cultural and linguistic differences. It includes information from multiple sources, e.g., observations, checklists, interviews, and both formal and informal standardized measures in diverse settings for making educational decisions about children. The assessment data gathered from multiple sources that has a major impact on children should be made by a team of family members, teachers, and other professionals. In addition, early childhood professionals engage in systematic, on-going evaluation of their programs
- **Professionalism**
  - Professionalism is built upon individual integrity, responsibility, and ethical practices that demonstrate a profound respect for all children and their families. Early childhood professionals embrace a multicultural perspective that is responsive to individuals in culturally diverse communities in New Mexico. Professionals make decisions based upon knowledge of early childhood theory and practices that recognize diversity of ability, developmental level, and family characteristics. Early childhood professionals advocate for excellence in early childhood programs and participate in on-going professional development to enhance their knowledge and skill.

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## Future for Professional Development 🧐

- We know that our current IPDP self-assessment tool is not up to date with early intervention practices of today.
- We know that the self-assessment tool does not truly cover everything a DS is required to know and learn.
- We know the current IPDP self-assessment tool is cumbersome.
- We know that the current competencies are not applicable to all disciplines. Including FSC's.

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## Things that don't happen "Automatically" 😊

- If an individual takes a position with another agency, the **exemption does not transfer** with the employee.
  - Call FIT office for guidance.
- If an individual takes a position with another agency, **the certification in FIT Kids does not transfer** with the employee.
  - Notify FIT office.
- If an individual works for two agencies, their **certification does not automatically show up in FIT Kids for both agencies.**
  - Notify FIT office & document it on your application.

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## Accurate Data



Insert highest level of education. Use the exact name on degree or from Transcript

Is the current DS data correct??

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## Where is my Certificate?

- Has your program entered your information into the FIT Database?
  - **No:** an *initial* certificate will not be mailed or issued until this is done.
  - **Yes:** You can call the FIT Office; you can ask your program manager to check the FIT Database
- The FIT program has *30 days* to get your certificate to you.
- Certificates will be mailed to your program manager. **IF** requested by your program your certificate will be mailed to your program human resources department.
  - A copy of the certificate should be kept in your personnel file.
  - The developmental specialist should also have a copy or the original.

*A DS can bill as long as they have been updated in the FIT Database, you do not need your certificate in hand.*



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## Name Changes

Let's face it! Big events happen. What to do for name changes?

- Contact FIT office
- FIT office will provide sample letter for requesting a name change to you.
- Complete letter requesting name change and provide copy of marriage certificate, divorce decree and/or name change decree.
  - Return documentation to FIT office.
  - Make sure information is updated in FIT Database



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## Required to become an FSC

- Family Service Coordinators must possess a bachelor's degree in one of the following:
  - Social work
  - Counseling
  - Psychology
  - Nursing
  - Special education
  - Early childhood education or closely related field.



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**What if?**

- Individuals with a bachelor's degree in another field can substitute two (2) years of direct experience in serving individuals with disabilities and/or families.
- If there are no suitable candidates with the previously described qualifications, individuals with an Associates degree or a registered nurse (who does not have a baccalaureate degree in nursing) and who have a minimum of three (3) years of experience in community health or social service settings can be employed as a service coordinator.

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**The Waiver**

- A *waiver* to the requirements can be approved by the FIT Program in order to hire service coordinators who meet the cultural or linguistic needs of the population served **or** if the applicant is a parent of a child with special needs (NOTE a parent cannot be paid to provide Family Service Coordination to their own family).
- How to get a waiver?
  - The agency submits a letter of request to the FIT Program.

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**FSC's and FSC Waiver's**

- Fast Facts
  - FSC Waiver does not need to be renewed.
  - FSC Waiver does not expire, *unless*:
    - You leave one agency and move to another; the new agency will need to request a waiver on your behalf.
  - The FSC and agency are responsible for maintaining documentation of your professional development.
- FSC designation in FIT Kids does not automatically transfer. If you move from one agency to another, the new agency must activate you by entering you into the FIT database. The agency you left should deactivate you. If you are working for two agencies, they both need to enter you into FIT Kids.

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## All FSC's

- Family Service coordinators must attend the required Family Service Coordination trainings within 6 months of hire.
  - Both online and In-person training
- Family Service Coordinators must take the non-credit on-line Family Service Coordination training Part I and Part II
  - A refresher is needed every 3 years to update on revised requirements.
- Provider will ensure that the Family Service Coordinators receive in-house training and mentoring, including observation of intake, IFSP, transition meetings, etc.) before working independently with families.*
- Family Service Coordinators are required to receive reflective supervision at least once every month.




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## Accurate Data

**Manage Personnel**  
 ( \* indicates required fields)

First Name: [Redacted] Middle Name: [Redacted]  
 Last Name: [Redacted] SSN: [Redacted]  
 DOB: [Redacted] Gender: [Redacted]  
 Employment Start Date: 01/04/2007 Employment End Date: [Redacted]  
 Address Line 1: [Redacted] Address Line 2: [Redacted]  
 City: Santa Fe Other City: [Redacted]  
 State: NM Zip: [Redacted]  
 Phone: [Redacted] Fax: [Redacted]  
 Employment Type: Staff Personnel Race / Ethnicity: Select  
 Specialty / Major: Sociology/Anthropology License/Certification: DS II  
 Educational Degree: BA/BS Full Time Equivalent (FTE %): 1  
 Developmental Specialist: Yes Service Coordinator: Yes  
 Profession/Discipline: Service Coordinator Additional Profession: Select  
 Service Provider: [Redacted] Status: Inactive

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## Comparison

### Exemption

**Is for:** Developmental Specialists  
 Requires recertification  
 Is for one year  
 Does not transfer  
 IPDP Required  
 Reflective Supervision is Required (at least once a month)



### Waiver

**Is for:** Family Service Coordinators  
 No renewal required  
 No expiration unless you permanently leave the agency  
 Does not transfer  
 IPDP not required (but agency may have professional development plan for all staff)  
 Reflective Supervision is Required (at least once a month)

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## Important Definitions



- **Academic Coursework:** Means experienced practitioners may take college or university coursework to obtain a degree or an advanced degree, or to increase their knowledge and skills. Such coursework may be in Early Childhood, Special Education or other topics related to working with infants, toddlers and their families.
- **Contact Hours:** Means an equivalent of hour for hour of classroom time, conference or workshop in-service attendance, one-on-one mentoring, formal reflective supervision or self-study. One (1) hour of academic credit is equivalent to fifteen (15) contact hours.
- **Developmental Specialist:** Means an early intervention practitioner who provides special instruction or family training, counseling and home visits for eligible children and their families under the FIT Program. *Developmental Specialists address the development of children in the context of their families within everyday routines, activities and places.*
- **Developmental Specialist Certificate:** Means an official credential awarded to an individual who meets the qualifications required to serve eligible infants, toddlers and their families in the FIT Program in accordance with defined levels of practice.
- **Exemption:** Means the process an agency can utilize under certain circumstances to request certification of an individual as a Developmental Specialist who does not meet the required qualifications.
- **In-Service Training:** Means professional development activities attended to assist the experienced practitioner in expanding and growing within their practice.



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## Definitions Continued

- **Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP):** Means an on-going plan that identifies the knowledge and skills the individual needs to achieve each year so that he or she can be re-certified at the desired level in the 3-year recertification period. The plan is reviewed every 6 months with the supervisor and a new IPDP is developed annually. The plan includes the Developmental Specialist's goals, strategies to obtain knowledge/skills, and timelines for each year.
- **Mentoring:** Means a professional development strategy to gain competence and address a specific professional development goal. The Developmental Specialist enlists the support of a skilled and knowledgeable individual and establishes a professional relationship with this person. A plan is developed with the mentor to support the Developmental Specialist's growth and learning related to one or more of the goals on his/her Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP).
- **Reflective Supervision:** Means a process of staff support that helps to promote quality practice. Formal reflective supervision, according to best practice, is one-on-one supervision that is provided regularly (every 2-4 weeks). Supervision can occur within or outside the agency. All staff, regardless of educational background and years of experience, need and deserve supportive supervision that provides them with opportunities to reflect on their job performance in ways that support their continuous professional growth. Supervision that is provided in a collaborative, inquisitive and supportive manner, rather than in a didactic and evaluative manner, results in practitioners who are able to offer this type of support to team members and to families with whom they work.
- **Self-Study:** Means a professional development strategy to gain competence and address a specific professional development goal. Self-study involves conducting a carefully planned review of materials, including journals/articles, videos, books, websites, and/or others, resulting in a prepared presentation to the supervisor and/or fellow staff members about what has been learned and how it applies to the work of the Developmental Specialist.
- **Self-Assessment Tool:** Means a tool to be completed by each Developmental Specialist in collaboration with his/her supervisor. The Developmental Specialist rates his/her level of competence on a number of competency indicators that are essential to providing early intervention services in New Mexico.



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## Q & A



### Resources:

- NM FIT Standards & Definitions 2020
- NM FIT Developmental Specialist Certification Manual July 2013

Thank you



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