

Project EI-NEST-DL: **Early Intervention in Natural Environments Specialization Training Through Distance Learning**
Development of a Statewide Preservice Early Intervention Specialist Certification Program
Absolute Priority 2: Personnel Preparation in Special Education, Early Intervention, and Related Services (Focus Area A)
CFDA number 84.325K

Abstract

The purpose of the proposed project is to develop, implement, and evaluate a high-quality, evidence-based preservice personnel preparation program through distance learning for future early intervention (EI) professionals. Project EI-NEST-DL (hereafter referred to as Project NEST) will be designed to meet the certification requirements of the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and aligned with current research, the best practices in EI, and professional standards (i.e., Division for Early Childhood's Recommended Practices). Project NEST will be conducted in collaboration with various county EI programs in Ohio providing home-based and community-based services for families of infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities. The personnel preparation program will include a series of coursework in a web-based format, concurrent with innovative practicum experiences in home and community settings, supported by ongoing mentoring through technology applications. Upon completion of the program, students will be eligible for the EI certification from the state of Ohio, the credential required to serve young children (birth to three years) and their families under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Funding is requested to support 25 students' full-time tuition, stipends, and technology devices for participation in coursework, practica, and cyber-mentoring. Sixty-five percent of total annual funding is designated for student support. The project will also be supported by an Advisory Board, composed of family members whose children have received/are receiving EI services, state EI administrators, EI professionals, and technology support personnel.