

*Initial Application for Integrated Preschool Options
Summer 2007*

VDOE's Training and Technical Assistance Centers



Introduction

The Virginia Department of Education is pleased to invite a team from your division/program/agency to apply for an Inclusive Preschool Options Long-Term Technical Assistance (LTTA) partnership. This application includes an introduction and four parts: (1) a required first year application process, (2) an application form, (3) directions for submitting an application, and (4) a description of our selection process.

Before your team completes the application parts, we would like to share some introductory information about LTTA. LTTA is a systems change process designed to help you develop and implement a research-based initiative within your division/program/agency to address the development or expansion of inclusive preschool options within the placement continuum. This process requires:

- forming of a planning team,
- holding monthly scheduled meetings,
- obtaining staff and administrative support and commitment,
- developing and implementing an action plan, and
- evaluating the progress of the initiative.

Applicants could receive technical assistance support from T/TAC for 1-2 years while developing and implementing this initiative.

As technical assistance providers, in **year one**, we will:

- 1) Assist your team to identify your needs, choose a research-based model that has been effective in meeting similar needs in other divisions/programs/agencies; plan for the implementation of the model; and evaluate the effectiveness of the model in your division/program/agency; and
- 2) Provide limited financial support for materials, travel to model sites, etc.

In **year two and beyond**, we will:

- 3) Use a systems change process to increase the likelihood that this initiative continues when we are no longer providing assistance to your division/program/agency; and
- 4) Assist your team in implementing and evaluating the systems change initiative.

PART 1: Required First Year Application Process

As you complete the five steps listed below, you will actually be completing the first phase of systems change: the readiness phase. **During this prerequisite phase, we ask that you do the following:**

1. Gather Momentum for the Need for Change to the Existing System.

Create an environment that will be receptive to change. Find out if there is support for the need for change related to beginning and/or expanding integrated options for preschoolers with disabilities. An excellent first question to ask is: “Do others share my concern?” Identify a small group of people in the division and community who share your concern about the need to change the way business is done.

2. Obtain Administrative Approval To Form A Team To Plan To Make A Change Related To Integrated Options For Preschoolers With Disabilities.

After identifying a small group of people who believe that there is a need for change within the division and community, you need to get approval from the division/program/agency administration to plan how to do things differently. This request for approval to form a planning team may be done by preparing and presenting a general rationale for the need for change to building level administrators, division level administrators, agency directors, superintendent, community partners, and/or the larger governing body (e.g., supervisory or school board). Make sure to review the steps in systems change (enclosed) that your team will be implementing if selected to participate in a Long-Term Technical Assistance project with the T/TAC.

3. Form a Planning Team Consisting of Key Stakeholders to Review What is Required to Make a Change to a System.

Once you have administrative approval, ask representatives from all the relevant sub-groups within your division and community to participate on a planning team. Also, ask an individual to participate as a liaison to the larger governing board and the agency director or superintendent. Representatives from the following groups are encouraged to participate: agency representatives, community partners, principals and assistant principals, the special education director, other system preschool program directors, direct service providers (e.g., Head Start, community daycare centers, community preschools), teachers and paraprofessionals, related service providers, parents, community members (e.g., Representatives of Department of Rehabilitative Services, Department of Social Services, Department of Mental Health, Community Service Board), and any other group (e.g., representatives of the transportation department) that could be affected by the change to the system. Invite these people to attend a meeting to learn about the purpose of the planning team.

4. Explain the Purpose of the Planning Team and Gain Consensus for the Need to Apply for Long-Term Technical Assistance.

Explain that a planning team will be needed if your application for LTTA is accepted. The team will learn and begin using a collaborative team meeting process with rotating roles for meeting participants. A regular monthly meeting date will be set and team meetings will be scheduled for the year. The planning team’s goal will be to select, plan for, pilot test, and evaluate the new initiative to address your agency or school need. Therefore, its role will be to gain stakeholder support for the initiative and involve stakeholders in all aspects of development of the initiative, including the development of policies and procedures to ensure the new initiative sustains. T/TAC staff roles will include guiding the team to conduct steps as outlined in the phases of systems change in this application, and participating as a team member on the planning team (consider reviewing the phases and steps in systems change to determine whether this potential team is interested in applying for LTTA). If there is consensus to apply for LTTA, then complete the next step.

5. As a Team, Complete the Application Form on page 5.

Questions and Answers about Systems Change

- Q.** What is systems change?
- A.** An orderly plan to add a new initiative or alter an existing program and set of policies within an established system.
- Q.** Who participates on a division/program or agency planning team in a systems change project?
- A.** A planning team is made up of volunteers from each of the following stakeholder groups: administrators (e.g., principal and assistant principal, the special education director, system preschool programs director, agency director), direct service providers (e.g., teachers and paraprofessionals, related service providers), community preschool/daycare representatives and any other group essential to the success of the initiative (e.g., members of the transportation department). T/TAC staff also participates as team members.
- Q.** How often does the planning team meet and what do they do?
- A.** The planning team meets monthly and follows a structured meeting process where leadership is shared and members volunteer to complete tasks prior to subsequent meetings.
- Tasks may include building consensus with others for the need for change, collecting information about the need for change, surveying parents and direct service providers regarding their perceived need for change, and visiting programs currently using research-based models. The planning team also involves the entire staff and family members in the development of sample materials, the identification of training needs, and in revising existing forms and processes used, developing policies to ensure the change sustains, etc.
- Q.** How long does it take to change a system?
- A.** Typically two to five years. The first year is devoted primarily to planning for the change to the system. In subsequent years, planning continues and implementation begins. Putting a new initiative into practice almost always involves first trying out (e.g., piloting) and evaluating a small portion of the new initiative before making a full-scale change to the system.
- Q.** What are the critical features of systems change?
- A.** There are many different models for systems change; however, these four critical phases occur in all models:
- Readiness
 - Planning
 - Implementation
 - Continuation

Within each phase of systems change, there might be several steps. Each group involved in changing a particular system will identify the specific steps and how those steps will be sequenced for their unique situation. The steps within each phase are described below.

Phases and Steps in Systems Change to begin/expand integrated options for preschoolers with disabilities

1. Readiness Phase

- Gather momentum for the need for change to the existing system.
- Obtain administrative approval to form a planning team to plan to make a needed change to the system.
- Form a planning team consisting of key stakeholders to review what is required to make a change to a system.
- Explain the purpose of the planning team and gain consensus for the need to apply for long-term technical assistance.
- As a team, complete the T/TAC LTTA application.

2. Planning Phase

- Learn a structured team meeting process.
- Gather information about the current state of affairs in the school/agency/community.
- Learn about research-based models that have successfully addressed preschool integrated options.
- Visit/communicate with sites that use these models.
- Select a model to use to address your need.
- Develop a philosophy to support the new initiative.
- Develop an action plan, including an evaluation plan and timeline.
- Develop a proposal to add the new initiative to the system.
- Gain the support of school division/agency/community program administrators for the proposed initiative.
- Develop a description/guide for the new initiative.
- Share information about the proposed initiative, elicit concerns, and gain support from stakeholders.
- Develop the initiative.
- Plan for and conduct ongoing evaluations and use results to improve the new initiative.
- Plan for and conduct a series of in-service training sessions.
- If applicable: Develop and recommend job revisions and selection criteria to use for staff selection in the new initiative.

3. Implementation Phase

- Plan for and conduct orientation activities to introduce and create awareness of the new initiative.
- Pilot the new initiative.
- Conduct regularly scheduled team meetings with participants in the new initiative.
- Continue participating in planning team meetings.
- Evaluate the pilot and determine how to continue on larger scale.

4. Continuation Phase

- Revise the written description/guide.
- Develop or revise policies to support the philosophy and goals for the new initiative.
- Make the initiative a tangible part of the school system/agency/program.

Part 2:

Initial Application for Inclusive Preschool Options

School Division, School, State Operated Program, or Agency:

Date: _____

**Proposed Planning Team Members Who Agree to
Serve on LTTA Team:**

Position:

Team Contact:

Name: _____ **Position:** _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ **Fax:** _____

E-mail Address: _____

A. Please check one from the following menu:

- New preschool options initiative
- Expansion of an existing program

B. Briefly describe why this particular initiative was selected. Be specific (for example, describe a survey/self-evaluation completed, data collected).

C. Describe the actions you have taken to address this need and the outcome of those actions.

D. Describe the anticipated impact your team hopes to achieve as a result of implementing the new initiative. List specific outcomes you want to achieve.

E. Identify at least three specific strengths of your division/program/agency that will assist in implementing your initiative.

F. Describe existing and/or potential barriers that might affect the implementation of the initiative. Consider possible circumstances that may arise associated with the initiative.

G. Identify additional resources that could be provided by your division/program/agency to support your proposal. Resources may include people, money, time, and expertise within your division/program/agency and/or community.

H. These are the required components of the LTTA agreement. Please have your team review these items and indicate any concerns you may have with them.

1. Establish a Long-Term Technical Assistance Team consisting of family members, teachers, administrators, community agency personnel, instructional assistants, and other relevant team members.
2. Participate in mandatory systems change/evaluation workshop (all team members).
3. Conduct monthly planning team meetings at a time when all team members can be present (e.g., before and after school, schedule release time, etc.).
4. Arrange and support weekly planning time for staff involved in classroom and/or school-wide initiatives.
5. Develop a long-range action plan that will be incorporated into your existing school improvement plan.
6. Schedule release time for teachers and planning team members to participate in activities associated with the new initiative.
7. Assist with ongoing data collection for evaluation of the initiative.
8. Implement the phases of systems change.
9. Determine yearly whether to reapply for continuation of LTTA.

Our team has concerns with the following key components listed above:

Suggested times between August and October 2007 that your team could meet to attend a required one-day training on systems change/teaming.

Please designate an administrator in your program who will be available to meet with the T/TAC representatives once your application has been reviewed.

Administrative Designee: _____
Position: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ Fax: _____
E-mail Address: _____

Signatures:

Date:

Superintendent

Division Program Coordinator/Agency Coordinator/Program Director

Planning Team Members

Part 3: Directions for Submitting

After completing the application form, please **mail the original and two copies (postmarked no later than June 29, 2007) to:**

Regions 1 & 8:

T/TAC at VCU
Attn: Sandy Wilberger or Sue Palko
P.O. Box 843081
Richmond, VA. 23284-3081

Regions 2 & 3:

T/TAC at ODU
Attn: Linda Ingleson
Child Study Center, Room 224
Norfolk, VA 23529-0164

Region 4:

T/TAC at GMU
Attn: Lynn Wiley or Kris Ganley
Helen A. Kellar Institute for Human disAbilities
4400 University Drive, MS 1F2
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Region 5:

T/TAC at JMU
Attn: Cheryl Henderson or Dianne K. Lowman
MSC 9002
800 South Main St.
Harrisonburg, VA 22807

Regions 6 & 7:

T/TAC at VT
Attn: Selina Flores
Office of Educational Research and Outreach
112 Lane Hall
Blacksburg, VA 24061-0254

Part 4: Selection Process

A fair and impartial review team will review applications. Point values will be assigned to each component of the application. The attached scoring rubric will be used to evaluate the applications. Those applications with the highest point values will be considered for acceptance. A maximum of eight applications (one per superintendents' region) for 2007-08 school year will be accepted. The identified contact person for each accepted site will be notified in writing by July 20, 2007.