

# Chapter 12

## An Interdisciplinary Case– Based Approach to Preservice Interprofessional Training

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter focuses on an innovative interdisciplinary training to support preservice professionals in provision of early intervention services to young children with high-intensity needs and their families. A brief review of the literature on interprofessional education in early intervention/early childhood special education practice fields, adult learning, and case-based methods of instruction is presented. Building on that foundation, a two-year, interdisciplinary personnel preparation program is described, with specific emphasis on a two-day interprofessional training event. During the training interdisciplinary faculty and families delivered content on early intervention and used a progressing case study to allow students to apply newly learned content in interdisciplinary teams. Lessons learned and implications for future training to support interdisciplinary collaboration among professionals and families are discussed.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Interdisciplinary teaming and collaboration are established and recommended practices within the field of Early Intervention (EI) for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities (Council

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for Exceptional Children-Division for Early Childhood [DEC], 2014; 2020). Effective collaborative practices between professionals and families are necessary to meet the often complex developmental and health needs of young children served through Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004). Professional organizations guiding the practices of early interventionists, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists emphasize interprofessional practice and collaboration with families in professional standards and recommended practices (DEC, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association [ASHA], American Physical Therapy Association [APTA], American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA]). However, many preservice preparation programs continue to train future providers within disciplinary “silos” (King et al., 2016), with limited opportunities for cross-disciplinary electives or additional practicum placements due to tightly scheduled programs of study. Unfortunately, a lack of interprofessional opportunities at the preservice level may limit the preparedness of newly trained EI providers to effectively collaborate across disciplines and with families to support infants and toddlers with high-intensity needs. In response, it is incumbent upon those engaged in training early intervention and related services providers to develop feasible and effective interprofessional training opportunities that could be implemented across a variety of preservice training programs and models.

Development and implementation of interdisciplinary personnel preparation programs has been supported through US Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) grant awards. However, funding for such programs is limited by the amount of federal dollars available (only a small percentage of programs are funded each year) and is not typically used to sustain a program once it has been established. Therefore, it is important to find ways to extend the reach of such grants by developing innovative practices and strategies for interdisciplinary training that can be implemented outside the parameters of the original funded personnel preparation program. This chapter describes one example of an interprofessional training event developed for preservice EI providers as part of a larger OSEP-funded interdisciplinary preparation program for early intervention/early childhood special education (EI/ECSE) and speech-language pathology (SLP) graduate students. The full program model took two years to complete, and provided students with joint coursework and applied experiences integrated into their disciplinary programs of study. As part of the grant-funded program, a brief weekend-long interdisciplinary training event was developed and implemented during the second summer of the two-year program. The training event included additional students in the fields of physical and occupational therapy and used a case-based application to support practice of teaming and collaboration skills. The interdisciplinary training incorporated principles of adult learning by connecting content to real-life applications using problem-based case studies. This is deemed a critical strategy for adult learners (Bryan et al, 2009; Daley, 2001; Steinberg & Vinjamuri, 2014) and gives relevance to the content. Steinberg and Vinjamuri (2014) highlight the concepts of scaffolding “opportunities to critique applicability of multiple perspectives” and hands-on learning “opportunities to immediately apply evidence-based practice examples” as key adult learning principles (p. 372); these key principles were intentionally woven into the training. This chapter highlights this innovative interdisciplinary training (hereafter referred to as the Interprofessional Practice Summer Institute) as a way to extend the reach of grant-funded programs so greater numbers of practitioners are ready to provide EI services to young children with high-intensity needs using an interdisciplinary framework. The following section provides a brief review of interprofessional education in EI/ECSE fields of practice, with focus on interdisciplinary training and practice standards of professional organizations such as DEC, ASHA, APTA, and AOTA.

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