



FPG Child Development Institute

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Early Intervention Training Center for Infants and Toddlers with Visual Impairments
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Early Intervention Project Focuses on Partnerships with Universities and Practitioners July 25, 2001

The Early Intervention Training Center for Infants and Toddlers with Visual Impairments was established to develop resources that build the capacity of universities to train personnel to serve infants and toddlers with visual impairments and their families. The five-year project began on January 1, 2001, and is located at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. L. Penny Rosenblum from the University of Arizona is a major collaborator on the project.

Activities during the first six months of the project were driven by a series of national meetings that provided access to faculty from personnel preparation programs in the field of visual impairments/blindness and to leading practitioners from the field of early childhood visual impairment from throughout the United States. During associated meetings, faculty members and practitioners provided guidance on both the format and content of the multimedia modules that are being developed by the project.

Our top priority has been to establish partnerships with the faculty members who will ultimately use the modules. To date, 29 faculty members from 24 universities in 19 states have agreed to serve as members of our University Advisory Board. We met with 18 of these faculty members at a half-day meeting preceding the Josephine L. Taylor Leadership Institute in Washington on March 16, 2001 and with 34 university faculty members during a three-hour session at the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville on May 21, 2001.

In addition, we conferred with leading practitioners from the field of early childhood visual impairment preceding the International Seminar on Preschool Blindness held in Seaside, Oregon on May 6, 2001. Representatives from the following agencies participated in a half-day meeting: Perkins School for the Blind and the Hilton Perkins Foundation in Boston, the Foundation for Blind Children in Phoenix, the Blind Babies Foundation in San Francisco, VIPS and the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville, Anchor Center in Denver, the Colorado Department of Education Public Instruction, the Center for Development and Learning at UNC-Chapel Hill, Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind, along with private consultant Virginia Bishop from Austin, Texas. At all of these meetings, we secured detailed feedback from participants on the content and format of our proposed modules.

To provide immediate resources that will enhance training personnel to serve infants and toddlers, a mini-grant competition has been established specifically for our University Advisory Board. Mini-grants of up to \$1,000 can be used to purchase resources related to early intervention or to provide funds for guest lecturers, field trips, etc.--any reasonable activity that promotes training personnel to serve infants and toddlers with visual impairments. Faculty from the following universities have been awarded mini-grants for 2001: the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Dominican College, Florida State University, University of Louisville, North Carolina Central University, Pennsylvania College of Optometry, and Portland State University.

Another priority of the project has been to refine the content and format for the modules that will be developed. This priority served as the focus for our meetings with faculty members and practitioners. Consequently, the proposed content of the modules has continuously evolved over the course of the past six months. A list of the proposed modules, along with a rough outline of content, can be viewed

under the Update section of our website at www.fpg.unc.edu/~edin. We welcome feedback and suggestions for the modules.

A preliminary description of the knowledge, theory, and practices that will be included in the family module can also be found in the Update section of this our website. at www.fpg.unc.edu/~edin. From September 1 through October 31, 2001 this module will be posted so that practitioners, parents, and university faculty can provide feedback and suggestions. We welcome suggestions for resources to be used with this module, as well as feedback regarding the proposed content.

Since January 1, 2001 the project has hosted an early intervention list serv that now has 133 subscribers. Subscribers have shared information about resources, and topics such as active learning, vision screening, multiple disabilities, and assessment have been discussed. We have devoted considerable time and energy to the development of the project website since March. Although it is still under construction, it is now available at www.fpg.unc.edu/~edin.

During the next few months, we look forward to refining content for the modules. We hope to field test the family module early in 2002 so that it can be disseminated during the summer of 2002. We would like to thank faculty from the following personnel preparation programs who have agreed to serve on our University Advisory Board:

University of Alabama at Birmingham, University of Arizona, California State University at Los Angeles, Dominican College, Florida State University, Hunter College of CUNY, Kutztown University, University of Louisville, Marshall University (South Charleston, WV), University of Massachusetts at Boston, North Carolina Central University, University of North Dakota, Northeastern University (Talequah, OK), University of Northern Colorado, Northern Illinois University, Pennsylvania College of Optometry, Portland State University, Teachers' College at Columbia University, Texas Tech University, San Francisco State University, Southwest Missouri State University, Steven F. Austin University, Vanderbilt University, and Western Michigan University.

For more information about the project, contact

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