GUIDE TO SUCCESS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY NETWORK LEAD AGENCIES

DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

Louisiana Believes

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Louisiana is currently engaged in a multi-year effort to unify its early childhood system and improve kindergarten readiness. To address a fragmented system that prepares too few children for kindergarten, Louisiana's legislature passed the Early Childhood Care and Education Act of 2012. This legislation seeks to have every child in publicly-funded birth to age five programs on track for success in school. The state's Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) is charged to unify publicly funded preschool, Head Start and child care programs into a statewide early childhood network and to empower families by ensuring easy access to high-quality early learning options for their children.

To implement this law, the Louisiana Department of Education, under the leadership of BESE, established a plan to create local early childhood networks of child care, Head Start, publicly funded private preschools, and public school pre-kindergarten that is unified by early learning and development standards, expectations for adult/child interactions, and enrollment that is easily accessible for families. These local networks are expected to serve all publicly funded at-risk children from birth to age five, implement innovative approaches to increasing the quality of programs, and improve access for families. There are currently 65 early childhood care and education community networks in Louisiana and each functions as a consortium of early learning providers. The state coordinates these community networks by designating a Lead Agency for each community to coordinate essential activities, specifically observations and enrollment. The Lead Agency also serves as fiscal agent. **Lead Agencies must:**

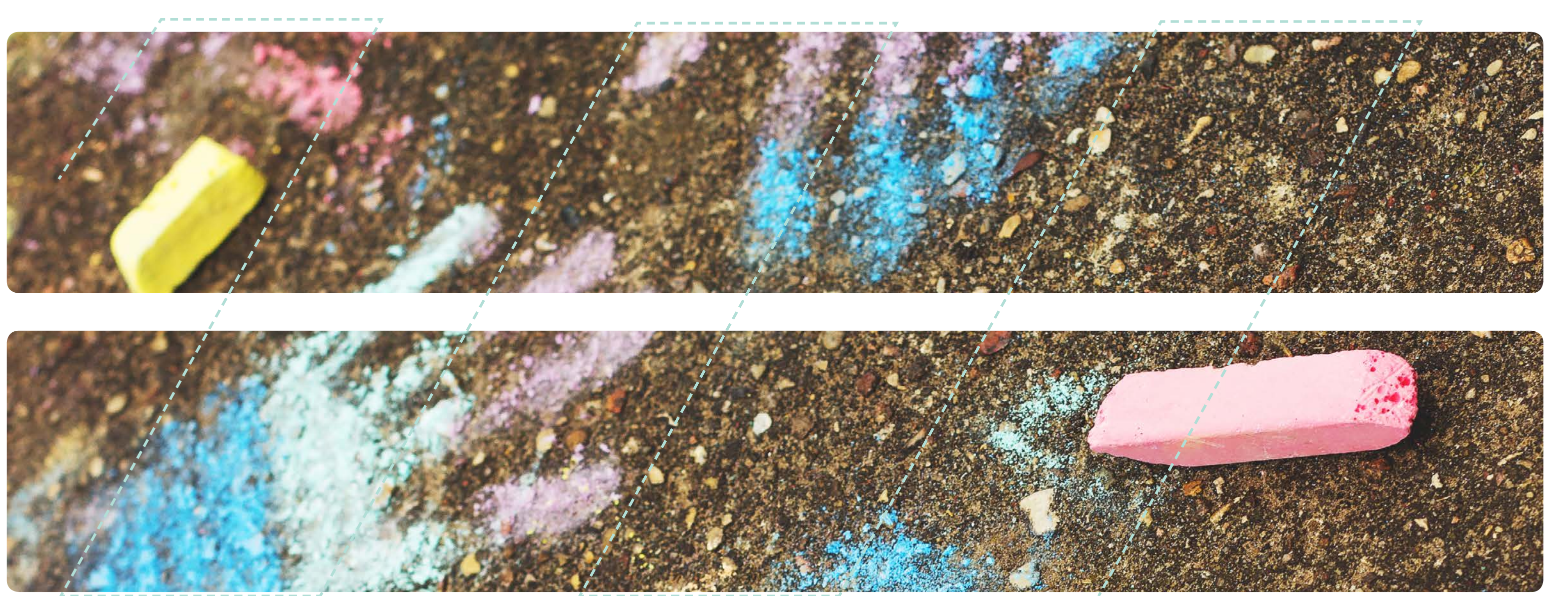
1. **conduct administrative functions for the community network;**
2. **coordinate *CLASS™* observations assuring that accurate observations are conducted for all Toddler and PreK classrooms and that feedback is provided to all programs; and**
3. **coordinate the birth-to-age-five enrollment and the state funding application for the community network.**

PURPOSE OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD GUIDEBOOK

The Lead Agency Assurances outline detailed expectations for each of the three Lead Agency requirements specified above. This guidebook serves as a how-to guide for Lead Agencies by providing advice for successfully implementing each of the Lead Agency Assurances and a suggested timeline for doing so.

The following icons represent the suggested season in which each assurance should be implemented:

SUMMER **FALL** **WINTER** **SPRING**



REQUIREMENT 1: CONDUCT ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY NETWORK

Lead Agencies are the key to success for Louisiana's Early Childhood Care and Education Network. They are the state's agent for providing families with information, choice, and access to programs; for collecting accountability system data; and for identifying funding needs for programs in their community network. They also are the state's primary communication link with publicly funded programs. Using the Lead Agency Assurances as the model, this section of the guidebook explains how to accomplish Lead Agency administrative responsibilities. **The requirement to conduct administrative functions for the community network has three parts:**

1. **Central Office Operations**
2. **Administrative Activities for the Accountability System**
3. **Partner Engagement**

RESOURCES:

- Bulletin 140 – Louisiana Care and Education Network
- Lead Agency Milestones and Expectations
- GOLD™ by Teaching Strategies Guide for Principals and Directors
- Setting Up Programs/Sites, Teacher Accounts, and Classrooms in GOLD©
- Performance Profile Site Key
- Performance Profile Network Key
- Performance Profile Plain Language Guide for Community Networks
- Performance Profile Plain Language Guide for Sites

CONDUCT ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS: CENTRAL OFFICE OPERATIONS					
ASSURANCE	STEPS FOR SUCCESS	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER	SPRING
Designate an individual to serve as the primary point of contact between the community network and the State.	The primary point of contact should be appointed by July 1 and must have the authority to serve as liaison between the Lead Agency and the Department and to make decisions and to speak on behalf of the Lead Agency.	✓			
Send a representative to all state-sponsored meetings for Lead Agencies.	Each Lead Agency should be represented at all meetings and events for community networks that are sponsored by the Department.	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Build capacity among program partners by offering the opportunity to attend events with the Lead Agency representative.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Serve as fiscal agent for the community network.	By July 1, identify the person in your organization's business department who will be the primary contact for the Lead Agency business process, schedule regular check-ins, and collaborate to determine exactly how the process will work.	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Submit reimbursement claims at least once a month.	✓			
Maintain records and documentation for the community network and make such available to representatives of the state when requested.	Keep agendas from community network meetings and records of partner attendance.	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Keep records of correspondence with partners and community network Newsletters.	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Maintain organized records of all Lead Agency expenditures made with funds allocated by state.	✓	✓	✓	✓

CONDUCT ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS: ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR THE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM					
ASSURANCE	**STEPS TO SUCCESS**	**SUMMER**	**FALL**	**WINTER**	**SPRING**
Ensure that all sites in this community network have a site code assigned by the state.	Maintain a roster or spreadsheet of all program sites in the community network and the corresponding site code. *NOTE: Site codes are assigned through the Department and are used to link site data with Performance Profiles. When there is a new site in a community network, the Department will provide Lead Agencies with the site code.*	⚓	🍁	🌿	💧
Facilitate and reconcile on an ongoing basis an accurate accounting in the *GOLD™* online system of all classrooms at publicly funded sites in the community network that contain children from age birth to age five.	Program partners are responsible for maintaining accurate classroom information in the GOLD™ online system even if they are not using the assessment. Establish a procedure to assist them with assuring the accuracy of this information. *NOTE: Without exception, every classroom from every partner must be in the GOLD™ online system by October 1. The classroom names used in the GOLD™ System should be consistent with what is used in the Department's CLASS™ System.*		🍁	🌿	💧
Verify through the Department's verification process community network-level data that has been collected and reported to the Department for the community network Performance Profile.	Assist with data verification by distributing data summaries from the Department to all program partners. Collect program partner data certification change requests and submit to the Department.	⚓			

CONDUCT ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS: PARTNER ENGAGEMENT					
ASSURANCE	**STEPS FOR SUCCESS**	**SUMMER**	**FALL**	**WINTER**	**SPRING**
Ensure that all required program partners are engaged including: • One or more school districts; all early childhood programs within the district(s) will be included, and in communities where more than 10% of schools are governed by the Recovery School District (RSD), the RSD must be a partner and include all early childhood classrooms; and • Programs that feed into the identified school district's PreK and Kindergarten programs (e.g., Head Start and Early Head Start, all school-based early childhood programs including charter schools, Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development (NSECD) Program sites, EarlySteps, and Type III child care providers. *Note: All licensed Type III early learning centers are required to participate in the state's accountability system and the local coordinated enrollment system.*	Maintain current contact information for each program partner including the primary contact person's name, email address, telephone number and mailing address.	⚓	🍁	🌿	💧
	Provide all program partners with timely notice for all community network meetings and events.	⚓	🍁	🌿	💧
	Since program partners may not always be available to attend meetings, send out a recap of meetings and/or send out a regular newsletter highlighting pending milestones.	⚓	🍁	🌿	💧
Engage Community Partners who want to support early care and education in the community.	Seek out appropriate contacts at universities and technical colleges and identify charitable foundations and not-for-profit agencies in your community. Make them aware of how your program partners are working to support teachers and improve education opportunities for children improve access for families. Tell them what is needed and ask for their support.	⚓			
Conduct meetings for all community network program partners a minimum of once each quarter. *Note: Best practice is to meet with program partners once each month.*	Before school starts each year, set a schedule for program partner meetings to address milestones and any other business that is important to partners. Use these meetings to clearly communicate what partners need to know and what they need to do. Ask partners to assist with setting the agenda, determining the meeting location and conducting the meeting.	⚓	🍁	🌿	💧
Disseminate communication from the Louisiana Department of Education Early Childhood Office to all community network program partners when requested.	The Department will frequently request Lead Agencies to communicate specific information to all or some of their program partners. Be prepared to assist with these requests.	⚓	🍁	🌿	💧

REQUIREMENT 2: COORDINATE *CLASS™* OBSERVATIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY NETWORK

To help improve learning opportunity for all publicly-funded children within the community network, Lead Agencies will be responsible for coordinating classroom observations to ensure:

- each publicly funded classroom receives two *CLASS™* observations during the school year;
- observations are conducted by a *CLASS™*-reliable observer and results are accurate and reliable;
- results are reported to the Department through the *CLASS™ System*; and
- results are reported to Program Partners so feedback can be shared with teachers.

Using the Lead Agency Assurances as the model, this section of the guidebook explains how Lead Agencies should coordinate CLASS™ observations for their community network. **The requirement to coordinate *CLASS™* observations for the community network has two parts:**

1. **Central Office Operations**
2. **Partner Engagement**

RESOURCES:

- Bulletin 140 – Louisiana Care and Education Network
- Lead Agency Milestones and Expectations
- *CLASS™* Observation System User Guide
- Important Notes on Using the CLASS™ System
- *CLASS™* System Webinar Recording for Observers
- Guide for Shadow Scoring CLASS™ Observations
- *CLASS™* Debriefing Form

COORDINATE *CLASS™* OBSERVATIONS: CENTRAL OFFICE OPERATIONS

ASSURANCE	STEPS FOR SUCCESS	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER	SPRING
Maintain an adequate number of local reliable observers.	Determine the number of observers needed to complete local observations. Supervisors, directors, principals, coaches, teachers and support staff are all good candidates for *CLASS™* observer training. Train as many individuals as are interested. Prioritize those who have the most time to commit to local observations.	⚓	🍁	🌱	💧
	Every community network should build capacity to train their own observers. Determine if there are potential trainers in your community and ask them to become certified.	⚓			
Identify all sites and all classrooms to be observed with the *CLASS™* Toddler and *CLASS™* PreK tools.	Before the fall observation period begins, work with program partners to compile each site's name, physical address, mailing address, telephone number, and the name and contact information for the person in charge.	⚓	🍁		💧
Develop a written process to verify that all of the community network's sites and all toddler and preK classrooms at each site are correctly recorded in the *CLASS™* System.	Also compile information that identifies the classrooms at each site including the teacher's name, the number and age range of the children as of September 30, and whether the classroom will be observed with the *CLASS™* Toddler or PreK tool.		🍁		
	At the beginning of each observation period, compare the information for each site to the information in the *CLASS™* System. Work with program partners to resolve any discrepancies.		🍁		💧
Develop a written plan and schedule to ensure that all toddler and preK classrooms in publicly funded programs and child care centers with a Type III license in the community network are accurately observed twice each year by *CLASS™*- reliable observers.	Before the beginning of each observation period, verify the reliability status of all observers in your community network. Obtain the availability schedule for each observer as well as the holiday and event schedule for each site. Use this information to create the local *CLASS™* observation schedule.	⚓		🌱	
	Maintain a roster or spreadsheet of all community network observers that includes their contact information, type of reliability (Toddler or PreK), and reliability expiration date.	⚓	🍁	🌱	💧
	Have a process in place for observers and sites to notify you when scheduled observations cannot or did not occur.		🍁	🌱	💧
Shadow score a minimum of 10% of the local Fall observations and 10% of the local Spring observations.	Shadow score as many local observations as possible. If observer schedules permit, consider partnering with another community network for some of your shadow scoring. New observers should be assigned to shadow score an experienced observer at least twice before scoring on their own. In turn, experienced observers should be assigned to shadow new observers as they begin to score on their own.		🍁	🌱	💧
Ensure that every local observer is shadow scored at least once.					
Ensure that all local observations entered into the *CLASS™* System are conducted according to the publisher's standardized procedures.	After observers check their scoring data entries in the *CLASS™* System, conduct a quality check of observation scoresheets before the scoresheets are filed.		🍁	🌱	💧
	Keep a record of the quality check results for each observer and provide them with feedback for improvement.		🍁	🌱	💧

COORDINATE *CLASS™* OBSERVATIONS: CENTRAL OFFICE OPERATIONS					
ASSURANCE	**STEPS FOR SUCCESS**	**SUMMER**	**FALL**	**WINTER**	**SPRING**
Ensure that observation information and results are entered into the *CLASS™* System accurately and in accordance with established timelines.	Require all observers to verify the accuracy of their CLASS™ System data entry before scoresheets are filed. Have observers sign the bottom of the score sheet to indicate that the accuracy check occurred.				
	Conduct additional local quality control checks before filing scoresheets. *NOTE: Use only computers to enter observation scores into the CLASS™ System. Do not use iPads, tablets or smart phones. These devices cause data to be entered incorrectly.*				
Request corrections for the observation data in the *CLASS™* System in accordance with the procedures and timelines established by the State.	Establish a process to flag needed local corrections and immediately submit correction requests to the state.				
Collect and maintain records of all observations in an accountability reporting period for a period of three years. The three-year retention period begins on June 30th of the accountability reporting period during which the observations were conducted. If programs conduct their own observations, assure that copies of the original score sheets are obtained and maintained in Lead Agency files.	Set up a system and timeline for collecting scoresheets from observers. Organize the filing system so that scoresheets can be retrieved easily. *NOTE: Contracted observers should not be paid for an observation until their score sheets have been received and quality checked by the Lead Agency.*				
Develop and implement a written process to monitor and compare the results of all local observers for the purpose of ensuring accurate observations.	Use these data sources to analyze the performance of local observers: 1. The results from shadow scoring 2. The results from the score sheet quality control process 3. Local observer scoring trend comparisons using *CLASS™* System reports 4. Local observer/third party scoring trend comparison using *CLASS™* System reports *Note: Local observers with Fall observation results that differ from third party results by more than one point across the majority of domains will be notified about potential requirements in order to be allowed to observe in the Spring for the accountability system. Lead Agencies should monitor observer accuracy to maintain adequate observer capacity. The CLASS portal includes reports that support Lead Agencies.*				

COORDINATE *CLASS™* OBSERVATIONS: CENTRAL OFFICE OPERATIONS					
ASSURANCE	**STEPS FOR SUCCESS**	**SUMMER**	**FALL**	**WINTER**	**SPRING**
Conduct a minimum of one observation calibration activity each semester and ensure that all observers participate in at least one observation calibration activity each semester.	Use calibration activities to detect scoring errors due to misunderstanding or "drift". One option is to use video vignettes from the *CLASS™* library or other online resource. Have observers score the vignettes independently then discuss in groups to come to consensus. Or, you may choose to video a classroom from your network, watch the video, and discuss the coding for the video. The end result should be that as a group, your observers calibrate on scoring in a way that results in your confidence that your local observers are reliably using the *CLASS™* tool. This helps to avoid drift over time, inappropriate use of the tool, and can help new observers practice coding. Another option is to purchase the *CLASS™* calibration tool from Teachstone. If your community network is small, consider partnering with another community network for calibration activities.				

COORDINATE CLASS™ OBSERVATIONS: PARTNER ENGAGEMENT					
ASSURANCE	**STEPS FOR SUCCESS**	**SUMMER**	**FALL**	**WINTER**	**SPRING**
Collaborate with all program partners to establish and implement written procedures that minimize potential conflict of interest between local observers and the personnel in the classrooms they are assigned to observe.	BESE Bulletin 140 provides a definition of conflict of interest that Lead Agencies must be address. However, program partner concerns are equally as important. Find out what program partners perceive to be conflict of interest and solicit suggestions on how those concerns might be addressed. For small to medium community networks, set aside time at a regular meeting to discuss conflict of interest. For large networks, this may be delegated to a committee or special workgroup. Use this information to develop a procedure that meets the needs of your community network.				

REQUIREMENT 3: COORDINATE BIRTH TO FIVE ENROLLMENT AND THE STATE FUNDING APPLICATION

Coordinated enrollment is key to building a unified system of early childhood education and is the best way for the community network to support families. Since no single early childhood provider (schools, Head Start, or child care) has enough seats to prepare all children in the community network for kindergarten, families should be able to rank their preferences and apply to each through shared processes in their community. Coordinated enrollment results in the greatest number of children in each community being served when:

- families know of all available seats;
- families have an easy way to know what they are eligible for and apply; and
- families do not occupy more than one seat, for maximum use of available seats.

Offer the opportunity for all partners to participate in the ongoing development and execution of the different stages of the process. If your network is small, involve all partners that are available to participate in coordinated enrollment work. If you have a mid-sized or large network, use committees or workgroups to tackle the work. Keep all partners informed as decisions are made and plans take shape. Lead Agencies must be coordinating local enrollment by June 2017 or the state may appoint third-party coordinators.

Using the Lead Agency Assurances, this section of the guidebook outlines the steps to successfully coordinate birth-to five-enrollment and the state funding application. **This requirement has two parts:**

1. **Central Office Operations**
2. **Partner Engagement**

RESOURCES:

- Bulletin 140 – Louisiana Care and Education Network
- Lead Agency Milestones and Expectations
- Coordinated Enrollment Success – The Full Model
- Eligibility Determination Webinar
- 2016-2017 Family Eligibility Worksheet

COORDINATE BIRTH TO FIVE ENROLLMENT AND THE STATE FUNDING APPLICATION: CENTRAL OFFICE OPERATIONS

ASSURANCE	STEPS FOR SUCCESS	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER	SPRING
Manage the Tracking of Time Services (TOTS) system as part of coordinating enrollment eligibility for child care and ensure that: • Families can scan their finger image during business hours **five days a week** unless explicit written permission is obtained from the state to do otherwise. • Trained staff is available to enroll families in TOTS. • Staff keeps all information related to client records and case files for child care assistance cases confidential as required by La. R.S. 46:56. • Lead Agencies report any TOTS machine malfunctions to the state immediately.	Establish location(s) in your community network where families can easily access TOTS finger imaging machines and identify staff to assist with the process.	⚓			
	Provide staff with access to information and training posted at the Department's website,	⚓	🍁	🌿	💧
	Notify the Department of any changes in locations, staff, and schedule.	⚓	🍁	🌿	💧

COORDINATE BIRTH TO FIVE ENROLLMENT AND THE STATE FUNDING APPLICATION: PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

ASSURANCE	STEPS FOR SUCCESS	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER	SPRING
Count all publicly funded birth-to-age-five children currently being served in the community network as of October 1 and February 1 of each school year and report to the state as required.	Use meeting time with program partners to discuss the October 1 and February 1 child count process for your community network. Talk about what has worked well in the past and what problems need to be solved. Make certain that new partners are clear on expectations.		🍁	🌿	
	Work with partners to collect and report data using the instructions and template provided by the state.		🍁	🌿	
Coordinate and submit a community wide application to the state for early childhood public funding and: • Provide an opportunity for each program partner in the community network and for the general public to comment on the proposed funding request prior to submission to the state. • Document the public hearing process and include the documentation in the funding request.	Begin discussion with partners about the coordinated funding request as they are working on the October 1 Child Count. This is the perfect time for them to think about their enrollment capacity and the potential to serve more children		🍁		
	Map out a series of meetings devoted to the coordinated funding request well in advance of the public comment period so that all partners have information and opportunity to participate in the funding request process.		🍁		
	Begin by reviewing the request from the previous year. Next, identify partners with the capacity to serve more children and the ages that can be served. Compare current and proposed capacity to any waiting lists and the funding options offered by the state.		🍁		
	If requested, help partners decide the funding streams that they should apply for.		🍁		
Collaborate with the regional Resource and Referral Agency (R&R) to develop a Memorandum of Understanding that delineates the relationship between the R&R's referral system and the community network's coordinated enrollment system.	Bring together the licensed childcare centers in your community network (including Head Start) to identify possible ways that the R&R can assist families with your community network's coordinated enrollment process.		🍁		
	Next, meet with the R&R for your community to determine how they can support your coordinated enrollment system.		🍁		

COORDINATE BIRTH TO FIVE ENROLLMENT AND THE STATE FUNDING APPLICATION: PARTNER ENGAGEMENT					
ASSURANCE	**STEPS FOR SUCCESS**	**SUMMER**	**FALL**	**WINTER**	**SPRING**
Engage all program partners to submit a coordinated enrollment plan to the state that is signed by all program partners.	Offer the opportunity for all partners to participate in the ongoing development and execution of the different stages of the process. Keep all partners informed as decisions are made and plans take shape.				
	If your network is small, involve all partners that are available to participate in coordinated enrollment work. If you have a mid-sized or large network, use committees or workgroups to tackle the work.				
Provide all program partners the opportunity to participate in designing an enrollment information campaign that identifies the community network and/or all program partners.	Create the opportunity for all program partners to plan and participate in the information campaign. The information campaign should be multi-faceted with more than one event and more than one means of communicating information to families.				
Provide all program partners in the community network the opportunity to plan and participate in enrollment events that are conducted for all program partners.	Create the opportunity for all program partners to plan and participate in recruiting events that provide families with the opportunity to learn about the publicly funded programs that they may be eligible for. Plan to hold more than one event. Structure and schedule these events so that they are accessible for families and providers.				
Inform all program partners of all program eligibility requirements so that appropriate referrals can be made.	Compile eligibility information for all programs into one source document for all providers. It will be helpful for providers to have a point of contact for their questions.				
Collaborate with all program partners to develop and implement a single preliminary eligibility determination process that informs families of the programs they are eligible to apply for.	Work with partners to determine how this will work in your community. Remember, this is a **preliminary** process to give families an idea of what they may qualify for so that the application process is efficient and they do not apply to programs that they will not be eligible for. Each program can make the final eligibility determination.				

COORDINATE BIRTH TO FIVE ENROLLMENT AND THE STATE FUNDING APPLICATION: PARTNER ENGAGEMENT					
ASSURANCE	**STEPS FOR SUCCESS**	**SUMMER**	**FALL**	**WINTER**	**SPRING**
Collaborate with all program partners to design and use a common coordinated application form that allows families to indicate/rank their preference for programs.	Bring program partners together at the beginning of each enrollment period to review the existing network application. Use a simple format for the application. The goal is to make the application process easy for families.				
Provide all program partners with the opportunity to be represented in designing, reviewing, and revising the application on an annual basis.	The application should include information elements that are common for all programs. Information that is necessary to actually enroll in a program can be collected by that program after the match has occurred.				
Collaborate with all program partners to use the same enrollment application across all programs in the community network, year round.	Work with partners to determine the process and for applications to be received year round. The Lead Agency must be aware of all applications for publicly funded seats and track the status until placement occurs.				
Collaborate with all program partners and the regional Resource and Referral agency to ensure that access to the community network's enrollment application easy and that it is available year round for families interested in child care.	Place the application at locations throughout the community where families have easy access. If the application is online, make sure that paper copies are also accessible.				
Collaborate with all program partners to ensure that at-risk children are enrolled in programs based on family preference, as long as space is available.	Lead Agencies are responsible for making sure that families have information about all publicly funded programs and that their choice is honored.				
	Program partners must be provided with the opportunity to participate in designing the matching process for their community and should remain involved in executing the process.				
Collaborate with all program partners to develop and maintain a community-wide waitlist of unserved infant-to-age-five children so that families who want publicly-funded child care and education services are identified by maintaining a waitlist coordinated across all programs.	Create the opportunity for all program partners to plan and participate in designing a process to coordinate waitlists for the community network.				
	Waitlists must be transparent to families and program partners. If program partners choose to maintain their own waitlist, the information should also be included in the common community waitlist.				