

Natural Environments
Correlations with Federal Regulations, Policies and Procedures and OSEP Policy Letters

General Comment(s)	Federal Citations Related to Natural Environments Requirements	Location in Virginia Policies and Procedures where citation(s) is (are) found	Policy Letters and Statement from Office of Special Education Program (OSEP) Related to Natural Environments Requirements
Natural Environments			
General	<p>34 CFR 303.167(c)(1): <i>To the maximum extent appropriate, early intervention services are provided in natural environments.</i></p> <p>34 CFR 303.167(c)(2): <i>The provision of early intervention services for any infant or toddler occurs in a setting other than a natural environment only if early intervention cannot be achieved satisfactorily for the infant or toddler in a natural environment.</i></p>	Component XVII A. 1-3	<p><u>Letter to Honorable Richard Shelby, August 6, 2001</u></p> <p>Digest of Letter: "You requested that the U.S. Department of Education reconsider the Part C regulations that require "early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities to be provided in a child's home or a day care center where there are other children without disabilities." You also expressed concern that "parents should have the freedom to have early intervention services at home or at centers specifically designed to meet the needs of disabled children" and that the Part C regulations place a heavy burden on rural early intervention providers that must travel long distances to serve children and families."</p> <p>Selected text from the response: The requirement to provide early intervention services in natural environments is not a new requirement. In the 1991 Amendments to IDEA, Congress added the requirement of "natural environments" as part of the definition of early intervention services, as well as making it a required part of an individualized family service plan (IFSP). The statute governing the Early Intervention Program (Part C) requires each State to have policies and procedures to ensure that: (1) to the maximum extent appropriate, early intervention services are provided in natural environments including the home, and community settings in which children without disabilities participate; and (2) the provision of early intervention services for an infant or toddler occurs in a setting other than a natural environment only if early intervention cannot be achieved satisfactorily for the infant or toddler in a natural environment. (IDEA sections 632(4)(G) and 635(a)(16)). In addition, an IFSP must contain a justification of the extent, if any, to which the services will not be provided in a natural</p>

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			<p>environment. (IDEA section 636(d)(5)). The regulations implementing these statutory requirements are found at 34 CFR §§303.12(b), 303.18, 303.167(c) and 303.344(d)(1)(ii). “Natural environments” means settings that are natural or normal for the child’s age peers who have no disabilities. (34 CFR §303.18).</p> <p>Early intervention services provided to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families are designed to meet the unique needs of the child, taking into consideration the strengths and challenges of the child and the child’s family. After careful evaluation of the child and significant input from the family as to its typical routines and dreams for the future of the child, a team that includes qualified professionals and the parents, meets to determine the types of early intervention services needed, how often the services will be provided, by whom, where services are to be provided, and who will pay for these services. The discussion of, and decision about, the location of any service takes place in the context of an IFSP meeting. In all instances, supports and services are to be determined based on the individual needs of the child. Nothing in Part C of IDEA or its implementing regulations at 34 CFR Part 303 requires that early intervention services always be provided in a child’s home or in a day care center where there are other children without disabilities. In general, providing services in a setting limited exclusively to infants and toddlers with disabilities would not constitute a natural environment. However, if a determination is made by the IFSP team that, based on a review of all relevant information regarding the unique needs of the child, the child cannot satisfactorily achieve the identified early intervention outcomes in natural environments, then services could be provided in another environment. In such cases, a justification must be included on the child’s IFSP.</p> <p>Many center-based programs that formerly served only children with disabilities have now integrated children without disabilities, creating a childcare or preschool program constituting a natural</p>

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			<p>environment. If services were provided to an eligible child in such an integrated environment, the child's IFSP would not require a justification for services in that integrated setting.</p> <p><u>Letter to Honorable Ike Skelton, June 14, 2001</u></p> <p>Digest of the Letter: X expressed concerns about the provision of early intervention services in natural environments under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. X's letter stated that the "natural environment is not always the best for the child and parent."</p> <p>Selected text from the response: Early intervention services provided to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families are designed to meet the unique needs of the child, taking into consideration the strengths and challenges of the child and the child's family. After careful evaluation of the child and significant input from the family as to their typical routines and dreams for the future of their child, a team that includes qualified professionals and the parents, meets to determine the types of early intervention services needed, how often the services will be provided, by whom, where services are to be provided, and who will pay for these services. The discussion of, and decision about, the location of any service takes place in the context of an IFSP meeting. In all instances, supports and services are to be determined based on the individual needs of the child.</p> <p><u>Letter to Individual, Missouri, November 1, 2000</u></p> <p>Digest of the Letter: In your letter, you stated that you have a concern about the requirements in Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Part C) for providing early intervention services in natural environments. You stated that you feel that the problem is created by a narrow "natural environments" definition in Missouri.</p>

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			<p>Selected text from the response: While some confusion may exist in the field about the requirements to provide early intervention services in natural environments, this is not a new requirement. The Department's 1989 regulations initially implementing the 1986 Part H law required that, to the extent appropriate, early intervention services take place in settings in which children without disabilities participate. In the 1991 Amendments to the Part H, Congress added the requirement of "natural environments" as part of the definition of early intervention services as well as making it a required element of the individualized family service plan (IFSP).</p> <p>Part C now requires that, to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the child, early intervention services are provided in natural environments, including the home and community settings in which children without disabilities participate. <u>See</u> 34 CFR §303.12(b).</p> <p>By definition, natural environments are natural or normal for the child's age peers who have no disabilities. <u>See</u> 34 CFR §303.18.</p> <p>The 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act further strengthened the requirements related to provision of services in natural environments by requiring States to: (1) develop and articulate specific policy and procedures for the provisions of early intervention services in natural environments (<u>See</u> 34 CFR §303.167 (c)); and (2) include on the IFSP a justification of the extent if any, to which the services will not be provided in a natural environment (<u>See</u> 34 CFR §303.344(d)(1)(ii)). <u>Therefore, the provision of services in natural environments is not just a guiding principle or tenet, but also a requirement of the law.</u></p>

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			<p><u>Statement Provided by OSEP Staff at the 1998 DEC Conference.</u></p> <p>“Services in natural environments support the natural flow of a family’s activities; are delivered where the child lives, learns and plays; decreases family’s marginalization; uses natural supports; and builds on existing capacity of the community.”</p>
Definition	<p>34 CFR 303.12(b): <i>To the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the child, early intervention services must be provided in natural environments, including the home and community settings in which children without disabilities participate.</i></p> <p>34 CFR 303.18: <i>Natural environments(s): Settings that are natural or normal for the child’s age peers who have no disabilities.</i></p>	<p>General Application Requirements A. Definitions #42</p> <p>Component VII G.1.a. (3)</p> <p>Component XVII A Note</p>	<p><u>Letter to Honorable Ike Skelton, June 14, 2001</u></p> <p>Digest of the Letter: X stated, “center-based programs provide a more concentrated emphasis on the appropriate therapies needed and where the developmental delays are addressed.”</p> <p>Selected text from the response: We would be concerned if early intervention services were provided to any young child in a setting that did not support the child’s needs. It is critical that appropriate services and supports, designed to maximize the child’s potential development, be provided regardless of the setting in which the child receives early intervention services.</p> <p>In general, providing services in a setting limited exclusively to infants and toddlers with disabilities would not constitute a natural environment.</p> <p><u>Letter to Individual, Missouri, November 1, 2000</u></p> <p>Digest of the Letter: In your letter you state that, in Missouri, "agencies are narrowly defining the "natural environment" requirement... as essentially requiring the child's home as the sole therapy location."</p> <p>Selected text from the response: Such an interpretation would conflict with both the Part C statute and regulations, which specify that natural environments include "community settings in which</p>

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			<p>children without disabilities participate." Because Part C services must be tailored to the unique needs of the individual child, see 34 CFR §303.344(d), no one setting is appropriate for all services for all infants and toddlers.</p> <p>Digest of the Letter: You also state that Missouri's "narrow interpretation virtually precludes therapeutic centers from being a primary therapy placement location."</p> <p>Selected text from the response: Many center-based programs that formerly served only children with disabilities have now integrated children without disabilities, creating a daycare or preschool program constituting a natural environment. IFSPs are not required to include a justification for services in such a setting; a justification is needed, however, for services in settings that are not natural environments.</p> <p>In general, providing services in a group setting limited exclusively to infants and toddlers with disabilities would not constitute a natural environment. However, if a determination is made by the IFSP team that, based on a review of all relevant information regarding the unique needs of the child, the child cannot satisfactorily achieve the identified early intervention outcomes in natural environments, then services could be provided in another environment. In such cases, a justification must be included on the IFSP</p> <p><u>Letter to the Honorable Lynn Woodsy, California, March 21, 2000:</u></p> <p>Digest of the Letter: In response to concerns raised by constituents, the Honorable Lynn Woolsey requested clarification from the U.S. Department of Education on the interpretation of the definition of natural environments. Specifically, does natural environments "mean only settings where children without</p>

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			<p>disabilities are present and participate” and can programs such as those conducted by a hospital be excluded as a provider of early intervention services because it did not meet the definition of natural environments?</p> <p>Selected text from the response: “. . .In general, providing services in a setting limited exclusively to infants and toddlers with disabilities would not constitute a natural environment. However, if a determination is made by the IFSP team that, based on all relevant information regarding the unique needs of the child, the child cannot satisfactorily achieve the identified early intervention outcomes in natural environments, then services could be provided in another environment. In such cases, a justification must be included on the IFSP.”</p> <p>“ . . . It is not the Department’s practice to dictate which providers meet the requirements of qualified personnel, consistent with Part C, in order to provide early intervention services. California must continue to ensure that early intervention services are provided consistent with all the requirements of Part C, regardless of who is providing the early intervention services. However, it is not true that Part C makes “ineligible” or “illegal” a centered-based program serving only children with disabilities. . . . [I]f justification is made on the IFSP based on the needs of the individual child for a particular service, a service may be provided in such a setting.”</p>
Justification	34 CFR 303.344 Note 1: <i>With respect to the requirements in Sec. 303.344 (d), the appropriate location of services for some infants and toddlers might be a hospital setting – during the period in which they require extensive medical intervention. However, for these and other eligible children, early intervention services must be provided in natural</i>	Component VII E.1.a. (5) Component XVII A. 1-3	<p><u>Letter to Honorable Richard Shelby, August 6, 2001</u></p> <p>Digest of Letter: " You also expressed concern that “parents should have the freedom to have early intervention services at home or at centers specifically designed to meet the needs of disabled children” and that the Part C regulations place a heavy burden on rural early intervention providers that must travel long distances to serve children and families."</p>

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	<p><i>environments (e.g., the home, child care centers, or other community settings) to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the child.</i></p>		<p>Selected text from the Response: Early intervention services provided to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families are designed to meet the unique needs of the child, taking into consideration the strengths and challenges of the child and the child’s family. After careful evaluation of the child and significant input from the family as to its typical routines and dreams for the future of the child, a team that includes qualified professionals and the parents, meets to determine the types of early intervention services needed, how often the services will be provided, by whom, where services are to be provided, and who will pay for these services. The discussion of, and decision about, the location of any service takes place in the context of an IFSP meeting. In all instances, supports and services are to be determined based on the individual needs of the child. Nothing in Part C of IDEA or its implementing regulations at 34 CFR Part 303 requires that early intervention services always be provided in a child’s home or in a day care center where there are other children without disabilities. In general, providing services in a setting limited exclusively to infants and toddlers with disabilities would not constitute a natural environment. However, if a determination is made by the IFSP team that, based on a review of all relevant information regarding the unique needs of the child, the child cannot satisfactorily achieve the identified early intervention outcomes in natural environments, then services could be provided in another environment. In such cases, a justification must be included on the child’s IFSP.</p> <p>Many center-based programs that formerly served only children with disabilities have now integrated children without disabilities, creating a childcare or preschool program constituting a natural environment. If services were provided to an eligible child in such an integrated environment, the child’s IFSP would not require a justification for services in that integrated setting.</p>

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			<p><u>Letter to Honorable Ike Skelton, June 14, 2001</u></p> <p>Digest of the Letter: X expressed concerns about the provision of early intervention services in natural environments under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.</p> <p>Selected text from the response: In general, providing services in a setting limited exclusively to infants and toddlers with disabilities would not constitute a natural environment. However, if a determination is made by the IFSP team that, based on a review of all relevant information regarding the unique needs of the child, the child cannot satisfactorily achieve the identified early intervention outcomes in natural environments, then services could be provided in another environment. In such cases, a justification must be included on the child's IFSP.</p> <p>Many center-based programs that formerly served only children with disabilities have now integrated children without disabilities, creating a childcare or preschool program constituting a natural environment. If services were provided to an eligible child in such an integrated environment, the child's IFSP would not require a justification for services in that integrated setting.</p> <p><u>Letter to Individual, Missouri, November 1, 2000</u></p> <p>Digest of Letter: In your letter, you stated that you have a concern about the requirements in Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Part C) for providing early intervention services in natural environments. You stated that you feel that the problem is created by a narrow "natural environments" definition in Missouri. You also state that Missouri's "narrow interpretation virtually precludes therapeutic centers from being a primary therapy placement location."</p>

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			<p>Selected text from the response: Many center-based programs that formerly served only children with disabilities have now integrated children without disabilities, creating a daycare or preschool program constituting a natural environment. IFSPs are not required to include a justification for services in such a setting; a justification is needed, however, for services in settings that are not natural environments.</p> <p>In general, providing services in a group setting limited exclusively to infants and toddlers with disabilities would not constitute a natural environment. However, if a determination is made by the IFSP team that, based on a review of all relevant information regarding the unique needs of the child, the child cannot satisfactorily achieve the identified early intervention outcomes in natural environments, then services could be provided in another environment. In such cases, a justification must be included on the IFSP</p> <p><u>Letter to the Honorable Dianne Feinstein, California, March 21, 2000:</u></p> <p>Digest of the letter: In response to a letter from constituents, the Honorable Dianne Feinstein requested clarification from the U.S. Department of Education on regulations related to natural environments.</p> <p>Selected text from the Response: . . .”We share . . .concerns for the networking and training needs of parents. These are particularly important family needs and should be addressed by the IFSP team as part of the development of the child’s IFSP. The identification of parent support, training or counseling, as a needed early intervention service, can be provided either through Part C, or by referral to an organization that offers these services (e.g., a Parent-to-Parent Training and Information Center, a Parent-to-Parent program, or other family support or advocacy</p>

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			<p>organizations.) Where these meetings or training will take place should be part of the overall discussion in the development of the IFSP. A variety of locations for training activities could be considered, such as a public library, another family's home, etc. Services for parents alone, such as parent support, are not required to take place in 'natural environments'."</p> <p><u>Letter to Heskett, Missouri, May 26, 1999</u></p> <p>Digest of question: Can the IFSP team decide to provide early intervention in a program, which provides services only for infants and toddlers with disabilities without a determination that the environment is necessary to satisfactorily achieve appropriate outcomes for the child?</p> <p>Selected text from the response: ...“For the provision of services in a setting outside of a natural environment to occur, the Part C regulations require a determination by the IFSP team that an infant or toddler cannot achieve identified early intervention outcomes satisfactorily if services are provided in a natural environment, and a justification for such an exception in the child's IFSP.”</p> <p><u>Letter to Yarnell, Pennsylvania, October 19, 1999</u></p> <p>Digest of question: Can the fact that receiving some services at a center with other families and their special needs child provides opportunities for parents to meet while participating in therapy be considered an appropriate justification for providing some service in a setting other than a natural environment?</p> <p>Selected text from the response: “We share your concerns for the isolation and for the networking and training needs of parents. These are particularly important family needs and should be addressed by the IFSP team as a part of the development of the child’s IFSP. ... any justification for the child’s services to take</p>

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			<p>place in a setting other than a natural environment must relate to the child's individual needs. Nothing in the law precludes such services from being provided in settings that include other children with disabilities as well as non-disabled children, as long as the requirements of part C are met, so that many opportunities may exist for parents of children with disabilities to interact. Because a parent's need for time with other parents of children with disabilities can be successfully accommodated in the natural environments where the child receives services, or in separate meetings, this parent need can not be used as a justification to deny the child the appropriate services in natural environments."</p> <p>Digest of question: When the focus is on parent training, is this considered an appropriate justification for providing service in a setting other than a natural environment?</p> <p>Selected text from the response: "... for services directed solely at the parent such as parent support, those services are not required to take place in a natural environment. No justification, therefore, is needed on the IFSP. Such services solely for the parent, however, cannot be used as a justification for providing services to the child in other than natural environments."</p>
IFSP Documentation	34 CFR 303.344 (d) (1) (ii): <i>The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) includes a statement of the natural environments, as described in 303.12 (b) and 303.18 in which early intervention services will be provided, and a justification of the extent, if any, to which the services will not be provided in a natural environment.</i>	Component VII E.1.a. (5) Component XVII A 3	<p><u>Letter to Individual, Missouri, November 1, 2000</u></p> <p>Digest of the Letter: In your letter, you stated that you have a concern about the requirements in Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Part C) for providing early intervention services in natural environments.</p> <p>Selected text from the response: The Department's 1989 regulations initially implementing the 1986 Part H law required that, to the extent appropriate, early intervention services take place in settings in which children without disabilities participate. In the 1991 Amendments to the Part H, Congress added the requirement</p>

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			of "natural environments" as part of the definition of early intervention services as well as making it a required element of the individualized family service plan (IFSP).
Intervention in the Context of Learning Opportunities/ Daily routines and Activities			<p><u>Letter to Honorable Richard Shelby, August 6, 2001</u></p> <p>Digest of Letter: "You requested that the U.S. Department of Education reconsider the Part C regulations that require "early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities to be provided in a child's home or a day care center where there are other children without disabilities." You also expressed concern that "parents should have the freedom to have early intervention services at home or at centers specifically designed to meet the needs of disabled children" and that the Part C regulations place a heavy burden on rural early intervention providers that must travel long distances to serve children and families."</p> <p>Selected text from the response: Early intervention services provided to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families are designed to meet the unique needs of the child, taking into consideration the strengths and challenges of the child and the child's family. After careful evaluation of the child and significant input from the family as to its typical routines and dreams for the future of the child, a team that includes qualified professionals and the parents, meets to determine the types of early intervention services needed, how often the services will be provided, by whom, where services are to be provided, and who will pay for these services. The discussion of, and decision about, the location of any service takes place in the context of an IFSP meeting.</p> <p><u>Direction Provided by OSEP Staff at the 1998 DEC Conference.</u></p> <p>"Services in natural environments support the natural flow of a family's activities; are delivered where the child lives, learns and</p>

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			plays; decreases family’s marginalization; uses natural supports; and builds on existing capacity of the community.”
Family Choice	<p><i>34 CFR 303.344 Note 2: Throughout the process of developing and implementing IFSPs for an eligible child and the child's family, it is important for agencies to recognize the variety of roles that family members play in enhancing the child's development. It also is important that the degree to which the needs of the family are addressed in the IFSP process is determined in a collaborative manner with the full agreement and participation of the parents of the child. Parents retain the ultimate decision in determining whether they, their child, or other family members will accept or decline services under this part.</i></p>	Component XVII A 2	<p><u>Letter to Elder, Texas, July 17, 1998</u></p> <p>Digest of question: If the IFSP team determines services can be satisfactorily achieved in the natural environment, does it violate Part C to provide services in a setting selected by the parent, which does not meet the definition of a natural environment even if the parents are incurring the cost of the setting?</p> <p>Selected text from the response: “... if the parents do not consent to a particular location for a service specified in the IFSP, the State may not use Part C funds to provide that service in a location different from that identified on the IFSP. The parents are free to reject any service(s) on the IFSP by not providing written consent for that service(s) or by withdrawing consent after first providing it. If the parents do not provide consent for a particular early intervention service, which also includes the location, that service may not be provided. ...”</p> <p><u>Letter to Heskett, Missouri, May 26, 1999</u></p> <p>Digest of question: May a family choose to receive early intervention services in a center-based program which provides services only for infants and toddlers with disabilities, if that family determines the center-based program is best for their child and family?</p> <p>Selected text from the response: “...Although Part C recognizes the importance of, and requires, parent involvement throughout the IFSP process, Part C does not relieve the State lead agency of its responsibility to ensure that other regulatory and statutory requirements, including the natural environments provisions, are met. While the family provides significant input regarding the provision of appropriate early intervention services, ultimate</p>

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			responsibility for determining what services are appropriate for a particular infant or toddler, including the location of such services, rests with the IFSP team as a whole. Therefore, it would be inconsistent with Part C for decisions of the IFSP team to be made unilaterally based solely on preference of the family. The State bears no responsibility under Part C for services that are selected exclusively by the parent; however the State must still provide all other services on the IFSP for which the parents did consent.”
Use of Funds	<p>34 CFR 303.3: Funds under this part may be used for the following activities:</p> <p><i>(a) To maintain and implement a statewide system of early intervention services for children eligible under this part and their families.</i></p> <p><i>(b) For direct services for eligible children and their families that are not otherwise provided from other public or private sources.</i></p> <p><i>(c) To expand and improve on services for eligible children and their families that are otherwise available, consistent with 303.527.</i></p> <p><i>(d) To provide a free appropriate public education, in accordance with Part B of the Act, to children with disabilities from their third birthday to the beginning of the following school year.</i></p> <p><i>(e) To strengthen the statewide system by initiating, expanding, or improving collaborative efforts related to at-risk infants and toddlers, including establishing linkages with appropriate public or private</i></p>		<p><u>Letter to Elder, Texas, July 17, 1998</u></p> <p>Digest of question: Can the state use state funds to provide services in settings other than those determined to be appropriate in the IFSP?</p> <p>Selected text from the response: “.... All funds used to implement the early intervention system under Part C must be used consistent with Part C. Thus, the State <u>cannot</u> circumvent the requirement to provide early intervention services in natural environments by using State funds that are budgeted for early intervention services under Part C and used to satisfy the nonsupplanting requirement. State and local funds used in a way inconsistent with the requirements of Part C may not be considered in determining whether a State has met the standard regarding supplanting in 34 CFR 303.124(b).”</p>

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	<p><i>community-based organizations, services, and personnel for the purpose of -</i></p> <p><i>(1) Identifying and evaluating at-risk infants and toddlers;</i></p> <p><i>(2) Making referrals of the infants and toddlers identified and evaluated under paragraph (e)(1) of this section; and</i></p> <p><i>(3) Conducting periodic follow-up on each referral under paragraph (e)(2) of this section to determine if the status of the infant or toddler involved has changed with respect to the eligibility of the infant or toddler for services under this part.</i></p> <p>34 CFR 303.124 (b): <i>To meet the requirement in paragraph (a) of this section, the total amount of State and local funds budgeted for expenditures in the current fiscal year for early intervention services for children eligible under this part and their families must be at least equal to the total amount of State and local funds actually expended for early intervention services for these children and their families in the most recent preceding fiscal year for which the information is available.</i></p>		
Parent Support	34 CFR 303.344 Note 2: <i>Throughout the process of developing and implementing IFSPs for an eligible child and the child's family, it is</i>		<p><u>Letter to Honorable Ike Skelton, June 14, 2001</u></p> <p>Digest of the Letter: X stated that “center-based programs also provide parental support and encourage parental involvement.”</p>

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	<p><i>important for agencies to recognize the variety of roles that family members play in enhancing the child's development. It also is important that the degree to which the needs of the family are addressed in the IFSP process is determined in a collaborative manner with the full agreement and participation of the parents of the child. Parents retain the ultimate decision in determining whether they, their child, or other family members will accept or decline services under this part.</i></p>		<p>Selected text from the response: We agree that networking and training needs of parents are important and should be addressed by the IFSP team as a part of the development of the child's IFSP. Parent support, training or counseling identified by the IFSP team as a needed early intervention service can be provided either through the First Steps Early Intervention Program, by referral to an organization that offers these services (e.g., a Parent Training and Information Center, a Parent-to-Parent program, or other family support or advocacy organizations), or through some other appropriate arrangement.</p> <p>Because a parent's need for time with other parents of young children with disabilities can be successfully accommodated in natural environments where the child receives services, or in separate meetings, this parent need can not be used as a justification to deny the child the appropriate services in natural environments. The location of these meetings or trainings should be part of the overall discussion in the development of the IFSP. A variety of locations for parent support activities should be considered, such as a public library, another family's home, etc.</p>
Limited Personnel			<p><u>Letter to Honorable Richard Shelby, August 6, 2001</u></p> <p>Digest of Letter: " You also expressed concern that "parents should have the freedom to have early intervention services at home or at centers specifically designed to meet the needs of disabled children" and that the Part C regulations place a heavy burden on rural early intervention providers that must travel long distances to serve children and families."</p> <p>Selected text from the Response: We share your concern that providing services in rural communities can be particularly challenging. Many states with significant rural areas have developed strategies to address the needs of children and families residing in rural communities, including the use of</p>

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			<p>teleconferencing, videotaping, and other methods. This Department supports many early childhood research and demonstration projects to assist States in the implementation of Part C. One such project is charged with providing technical assistance to State and local agencies. Information about promising practices from rural communities is available through the technical assistance project.</p>