

## SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS...

Parent Liaisons are often the one provider that families can identify with when entering, transitioning from, and during their time in early intervention. No matter what specific need the CFC or Lead Agency requires of its Parent Liaison(s), the common ground that all Parent Liaisons walk on is that they are all recognized as parents of a child with special needs. Not only do they talk the talk, they have and continue to walk the walk—a powerful connection between strangers.

Compared to the other disciplines that serve Illinois Early Intervention, Parent Liaisons are few in number, yet unlike the other disciplines, their work often includes the entire caseload of the CFC/Agency. Because the life experiences of the parent liaison often create the skills required to serve as a parent liaison, 'on-the-job' is often 'round the clock.' Truly, unsung heroes among us are Parent Liaisons. One in particular has touched the lives of many families in Illinois and continues to work from her heart to reach the hearts of others...Meet Gwen Wurst, a wife, a mom, a friend to many and Parent Liaison of CFC #23.

Gwen's introduction to early intervention came nearly 14 years ago with the birth of her middle son, Brandon, the survivor of triplets born at 25 weeks. Living in Hawaii at the time and preparing to move to Illinois, the NICU staff in Hawaii directed Gwen and her family to Illinois Early Intervention. Through trial and error, being actively involved in Brandon's extended care and remaining connected to the providers working with Brandon and her family, Gwen evolved in to her own advocate for child and family services. It was through her volunteer hours with Brandon and his early childhood school program that Gwen was approached by Child & Family Connections with the position of Parent Liaison.

In addition to helping families through the Intake processes of early intervention and the coordination of services, Gwen takes a major role in the Transition processes as well. Coordinating and Facilitating Parent Support Groups also take priority with Gwen.

In addition to her work with the CFC and her commitment to her husband and family of four, Allen - 15, Brandon - 14, Nathan - 12, and Jenn'ny - 7, Gwen makes the time to serve as a Wish Grantor for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. With the coordination of bedroom make-overs, shopping sprees, costume parties and helping families connect with Mickey Mouse, Gwen spreads smiles beyond imagination. Its those smiles that keep Gwen going. Gwen is also very thankful for her CFC colleagues. The support she receives from everyone at the CFC is reaffirmation that the work that she does, does indeed make a difference. Thank You, Gwen!

## RECIPES FOR SUCCESS...

Those attending EI Training Program Conferences have been asked to share some of their favorite strategies, anecdotes, pieces of advice, etc., found to be helpful in their roles as early interventionists. Here is a small sampling of the many rich and insightful responses we have received to date. Look for more in future editions of the EI Training News, at EI Training workshops and on our website, [www.illinoiseittraining.org](http://www.illinoiseittraining.org).

*"Always ask the family about their goals/desires...Supporting the child is supporting the family ..."* *" Build a good rapport with families...Parents will be more receptive to negative observations if they trust the professional."* *"...look for parent strengths."* *"Keep lines of communication open. Provide a small notebook for parents to write down questions/concerns they have through the week..."* *"One of the greatest things I have learned from my families is to really listen without prejudice and to recognize my bias and to respect their cultures."* *"I use a small plastic 'breakfast table' as a therapy table. It helps children with boundaries during structured play. I also place toys in Ziploc bags with the plastic zippers—it helps give a definite beginning and end to activities..."* *"If there are siblings in the home, I try to include them in one activity..."* *"...taking pictures during sessions and making a Therapy Photo Album. This helps extended family and day care staff see more and feel a part of the program."* *"I always ask what the child has done new this week. It helps the parent-child-parent celebrate the little steps and realize that progress doesn't come all at once, but in little steps."* *"Keep an open mind, because you will be ready to learn from anyone at anytime."*

## The Illinois EI Training Program

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8:00 am - 4:30 pm  
Monday - Friday

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gave participants the opportunity to examine the process of gathering family information, identify family priorities and develop strategies that support outcomes throughout the context of the child's daily life.

In addition to the Annual DEC conference, the EI Training Program was present at the 10th Illinois Statewide Collaborative Early Childhood Conference. Also held in October, this Bi-Annual, three-day event took place in Springfield with a record number of registrants and first-time attendees. Also known as 'Sharing A Vision', the purpose this conference is to promote building partnerships, implementing recommended practices and collaborating in systems change among educators, support staff, local interagency council members, administrators and family members in the fields of early childhood through networking, learning, sharing and just having fun.

In addition to serving on the conference planning committee, the Training Program presented five different pre-conference sessions, facilitated two 'Hot Topic' discussions, and presented a two-hour conference session. Pre-conference sessions included topics in cultural diversity, a parent focused panel discussion on transitioning from early intervention to early childhood programs, personal and professional boundaries, sibling perspectives, and the development of Individualized Family Service Plans. Hot Topic discussions on preparing professional portfolios and current issues

in Illinois Early Intervention. The conference session presented by the Training Program focused on IDEA 2004 and updates to Part C.

One of the featured highlights of the Sharing A Vision Conference is the presentation of the Jeanette A. McCollum Award. A leader in research and personnel preparation in the field of early intervention/early childhood special education, professor emeritus at the U of I and has contributed significantly within Illinois and to the International Division for Early Childhood, the Jeanette McCollum Award is given to an individual who meets the high standards of professional practice set by her and has made recognizable contributions on the state, regional or local level which have improved or will improve the lives of young children with special needs, their families, or those who work on their behalf. Ted Burke, Program Director of the Illinois Early Intervention Training Program was this year's recipient of the Jeanette A. McCollum Award.

The Illinois Early Intervention Training Program's Team of trainers and support staff is committed to making a difference in the lives of children and families in Illinois Early Intervention. And as it continues to strive for excellence, the work that it does in curriculum development, training support and in professional growth and development is getting attention.

Illinois is closer to the forefront of early intervention than ever before and with the help of the Illinois EI Training Program may one day soon be leading the way.

**The Illinois EI Training Program**  
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# EI Training News



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## International Venue Welcomes Illinois EI Training Program

For the second consecutive year, the EI Training Program was invited to present at the Annual International Conference on Young Children with Special Needs and Their Families. In addition to a poster session and a round table discussion during the regular conference format, the Training Program presented a three-hour post conference session. All were well received with positive feedback given by those attending.

Sponsored, by the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) and Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the conference planning committee accepts proposals for conference presentations at the beginning of the calendar year for a limited window of time. Presentation proposals must include specific information regarding the objectives and purpose of the presentation, as well as the level of instruction and target audience. The 2007 Conference, *Crossing New Borders*, focused on a global perspective of early intervention and early childhood special education addressing areas of administration/policy, assessment, families, international issues/idea exchanges, intervention, leadership/professionalism, personnel preparation, service coordination, cultural diversity and research/program evaluation. Proposals submitted for the

2007 conference were at a record high ensuring a high level of quality content offered.

Of the five presentation proposals submitted by The Training Program, three were accepted in a blind review process and invited for presentation at the October conference. The poster presentation, *'Online Personnel Preparation for Early Intervention Providers and Service Coordinators'*, generated a high level of interest across many states. The Training Program's online training courses are proving to be a cost effective medium for delivering quality information and instruction. *'He's OUR Brother: Perspectives From a Couple of Sibs'* an open discussion, honest and from the heart, reached out to families of children with special needs with practical strategies for enhancing the family dynamic and above all, a sense of hope. Hope that any family unit can address and overcome adversities. The three-hour post conference session, *'Developing Meaningful Intervention Plans for Families and Providers'*,

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## Additional Online Training Opportunities Now Available

Online learning is not for everyone, but for many, online training and coursework gives the student/learner more flexibility and control over their time. Because time is such a valuable commodity to many in Illinois early intervention, the Training Program is now offering additional online training opportunities that can be credited towards your Early Intervention Credential. Providers interested in an Illinois Early Intervention credential now have the option of completing the required Systems Training in a three-day, 18 hour face-to-face training session **OR** in an online training course followed by a one-day, six hour Follow Up session. The Training Program has also added to its training menu five additional online trainings approved for EI credit among the four core content areas.

An alternative to the three day, 18 hour Systems Overview Training, required for all providers seeking an EI credential is the Online Systems Overview followed by a one day, face-to-face, follow up session. The Online Systems Overview consists of a short instructional module, 22 learning modules, each ranging 15 - 30 minutes in length and three test modules. Once registered and accepted into the online training, users may access as often and whenever desired. There is no end date for the completion of this training, allowing students to work at their own pace and according to their own schedules. However, to meet the Systems Training requirement for credentialing, providers choosing this training option must complete a one day, face-to-face follow up training session in addition to the

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**TO REACH**

**DHS  
Bureau of EI  
217.782.1981**

**Provider  
Connections  
800.701.0995**

**Central  
Billing Office  
(CBO)  
800.634.8540**

**Early  
Intervention  
Monitoring  
800.507.5057  
217.726.2263**

**IL Early  
Childhood  
Intervention  
Clearinghouse  
800.852.4302**

**Hearing  
and Vision  
Connections  
(HVC)  
217.479.4318**

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completion of the online training. The one day follow up session is scheduled at various dates and sites around the state as needed and uses lecture, interactive group activities and discussion, and Power Point presentation to review information introduced in the online training and to present the latest information relative to current policies, procedures and best practices in Illinois early intervention. Registration for the Online Systems Overview is only available online by logging on to the EI Training Program's website, [www.illinoiseittraining.org](http://www.illinoiseittraining.org), selecting the 'Upcoming EI Training' menu option and searching by category 'Online Systems Overview'. Follow the registration prompts. Once registration is completed an immediate e-mailed confirmation including the direct link to the training modules will be sent. Open the link and begin your online training. The 'Online Systems Overview' search category also includes the current schedule of Follow Up Sessions. Online registration is available for these trainings as well, but be advised that proof of completion of the Online Systems Overview Training is required for admittance to the Follow-Up Session.

The first of five online trainings added to the Training Program's online menu provides 54 EI credit hours and is also available through the Training Program's website. 'Autism Spectrum Disorders', developed by the Illinois Autism/PDD Training and Technical Assistance Project and Illinois State University as ISU coursework, has been tailored by the Illinois EI Training Program to meet the needs of Illinois Early Intervention Professionals. This course includes information on the history of ASD, how we identify, the current prevalence of ASD and an overview of educational strategies based on areas of concern. Between each learning module is a gateway 'reality check' (quiz) that serves as an entry point into the next module. Users will be allowed two attempts to complete each quiz with a score of 80% or better to move on to the next module. Learning assignments are attached to some of the reality checks and must be completed and submitted to the Illinois EI Training Program before EI credit will be awarded. There is no end date currently associated with this online course and once registered, users may access as often as needed. To register, search the Training Program website's 'Upcoming EI Training' menu for Online Trainings. Scroll down to the posted course and follow the instructions for registration.

The Illinois Association of Family Physicians has opened its online training to early intervention professionals and three of its learning modules have been approved for EI credit. '*Social and Emotional Development: Screening Strategies for Primary Care Providers*' provides an overview of important tasks in the Social and Emotional Development of children ages birth - three. '*Identifying Autism Spectrum Disorders: Guidelines for Screening, Treatment & Referral*' provides an overview of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), including autistic disorder and its milder variants including Asperger Syndrome and Pervasive Development Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS). And, '*Maternal Depression and Child Development: Strategies for Primary Care Physicians*' provides an overview of Maternal Depression and its impact on child development. Each module offers two hours of EI credit. To register for these courses, search the EI Training Program's website calendar of events, as in the other online offerings, open the link to the registration form and follow the instructions for accessing the learning modules and obtaining EI credit.

The latest online training module added to the Training Program's menu is a link to the Illinois Department of Human Services, '*Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse: Training for Mandated Reporters*'. You may access directly through the DCFS website at <https://www.dcfstraining.org/manrep/index.jsp> or through [www.illinoiseittraining.org](http://www.illinoiseittraining.org)'s online listings. A certificate of completion is offered at the end of this end of this learning module. Print a copy for your records and to claim two hours of EI credentialing credit.

**Early Intervention...**

The Director of the Division of Community Health & Prevention announced that a 3% cost of doing business adjustment for Early Intervention therapies and service coordination services is effective for dates of service beginning on or after October 1, 2007. Services receiving this increase are: audiology and aural rehab; developmental therapy; occupational therapy; physical therapy; psychological and other counseling; speech therapy; social work and other counseling; vision services and service coordination.

The Training Program hosted a webinar on Tuesday, January 8, 2008, providing current information on the role of CFCs as All Kids Agents and updates on changes with All Kids expansion. This webinar format is a new venture for the Training Program with the goal to get information out to all CFC staff in a consistent manner. The ability to connect to each other live, via the web, can potentially eliminate the need to drive to mandatory meetings, allowing for more efficient use of everyone's time. Because live webinars can be recorded and archived, the same information can be available to others at different times eliminating the issues of information becoming diluted or forgotten in the translation.

A federally funded grant in personnel preparation, offers a training opportunity entitled "Preparing Relationship-based Early Intervention Personnel" (PREP). Available through the Dept. of Special Education at the University of Urbana-Champaign, this project provides funding for interested individuals to complete a two-year master's degree (Ed.M.) program that will prepare them to work with children, ages birth to three with disabilities, and their families. Students will take specialized courses in early intervention and early childhood special education as well as general special education courses and courses in educational psychology and educational policy to complete this master's program. Grant funding for each student accepted includes a tuition waiver, waiver of some fees, and a paid traineeship (10 hours per week/approximately \$666 per month). Deadline for admission application is April 1, 2008. Information about the application and the admissions process is available at: <http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/sped/admissions.html>. You may also e-mail SungYoon Lee, Ph.D., PREP Project Co-Coordinator at [s-lee25@uiuc.edu](mailto:s-lee25@uiuc.edu) for further information.

Credentialed providers are now able to print their EI Credential directly from the Provider Connections website under the "Credential Search" function. This process involves looking up their name and clicking the box on the left labeled "Details". At the bottom of the page there is a link to "Print Certificate". Clicking this link opens a pdf. file of the credential ready to print. Provider Connections will continue to send EI certificates, portfolio checklists and cover letters when new credentials are issued and renewing credentials are completed. However, if a provider misplaces or loses his/her credential, a copy can be printed by following the steps mentioned above. Provider Connections website is: [www.wiu.edu/providerconnections](http://www.wiu.edu/providerconnections).

In addition to the two spring conferences the EI Training Program is hosting (*see page 4*), the Training Program is also collaborating with Easter Seals of Chicago and Prairie State College to present a day-long event featuring a keynote presentation by Victor Bernstein, research associate and associate professor in the Department of Child Psychiatry at UIC, and three afternoon breakout options, one of which is a family panel discussion facilitated by Victor Bernstein. Watch for an e-blast from the Training Program with further details.

The EI Training Program is also pleased to announce that it has added to its menu of online training opportunities. Systems Overview Online Training plus a one-day, face-to-face Follow-up Session is now available as an alternative to the required 18-hour, three day Systems Overview Training. Reformatted and modified to meet the educational criteria of the Illinois Early Intervention System, the Training Program is now facilitating online coursework originally developed by the Illinois Autism PDD Technical Assistance Training Program and Illinois State University. Autism Spectrum Disorders Online Training provides 54 hours of EI credit. The Training Program has also collaborated with the Illinois Association of Family Physicians to offer three of its online professional development learning modules for Early Intervention Credit. In addition, online training developed by the Illinois Department of Human Services on mandated reporting and available through the DCFS website has been reviewed and approved for EI Credit. (*See article on the front page for more information*).

**...At A Glance****EI Conferences Coming in Spring of '08**

The Early Intervention Training Program offers two conferences in the Spring of 2008. The first, '*Creating Caring Connections in Early Intervention*', keynotes Dr. Ken Moses, and will be held on Friday, March 14th at the Holiday Inn City Centre in Peoria. The second, '*Insights Into Effective Early Intervention*', scheduled for May 6th, at the Keller Convention Center in Effingham, features a plenary session presented by Dr. Juliann Woods. Each conference includes a variety of afternoon breakout options, an EXPO showcasing products and services relative to early intervention professionals and families, up to six EI hours of credentialing credit, continuing education credit towards the IL State licensures of OT, PT, SLP, Social Work, and CPDUs towards IL State teacher certification. Also included with the \$50 registration fee is a continental breakfast and buffet lunch, parking, a disk of conference resources and the opportunity to network with other professionals in and connected to Illinois Early Intervention.

To register for one or both of these exceptional conference opportunities, you may complete the information below, as directed, and send this form with payment to the Illinois EI Training Program Office, **OR** you may register and pay by phone with a major credit card, by calling the EI Training Program at 866/509-3867, ext 250 **OR** you may register and pay online with a major credit card by logging on to the EI Training Program's website, [www.illinoiseittraining.org](http://www.illinoiseittraining.org). and select 'Upcoming Training Events' menu option and searching by category, Regional Conferences.

However you choose to register, DO IT SOON. Spaces are limited and filling fast.

**Online Registration Available at [www.illinoiseittraining.org](http://www.illinoiseittraining.org)...****OR**

Indicate the conference(s) you are planning to attend. Complete the information below and send this form along with payment, payable to UCP of Chicago to:

The Illinois EI Training Program  
7550 W 183rd Street  
Tinley Park, IL 60477

- '**Creating Caring Connections in Early Intervention**'  
Friday, March 14, 2008 in Peoria, IL
- '**Insights Into Effective Early Intervention**'  
Tuesday, May 6, 2008 in Effingham, IL

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Prof Discipline: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

For More Information Please Call: 866/509-3867, ext. 250