

# **Center for Early Literacy Learning**

## **Technical Assistance for Early Literacy Learning Interventions that Work**

States and communities across the country are increasingly concerned with preparing all young children to succeed in kindergarten and the early elementary grades, including young children with disabilities and those who are developmentally delayed or at risk for poor outcomes.

Rigorous scientific research has shown that early literacy learning provides the building blocks for later literacy achievement in school. Unfortunately, early childhood educators and families often lack the time, training, and support they need to identify proven practices and then determine which practices are most appropriate for them and the young children in their care.

To help meet these challenges, the **Center for Early Literacy Learning** is assisting stakeholders across the country to learn about and use early literacy interventions that work.

### **WHAT IS CELL?**

The Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) has four major aims:

- Synthesize available research evidence on effective early literacy learning interventions,
- Identify and develop evidence-based practices from this research,
- Implement and evaluate the use of these evidence-based practices, and
- Conduct both general and specialized technical assistance promoting the adoption and sustained use of evidence-based early literacy learning practices.

CELL partners are the Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute (Asheville, NC), American Institutes for Research (Washington, DC), Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER) Center (Minneapolis, MN), and the University of Connecticut's A.J. Pappanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (Farmington, CT).

The Office of Special Education Programs has funded CELL for five years: October 2006 through September 2011 (Grant # H326B060010). The CELL website is [www.earlyliteracylearning.org](http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org).

### **WHO ARE THE TARGET AUDIENCES FOR CELL?**

CELL's target audiences include state and local educators and families associated with all early childhood intervention programs for young children with disabilities and those who are developmentally delayed or at risk for poor outcomes (birth through five years). Target programs include especially:

- IDEA-Part C programs and services,
- IDEA-Part B (619) programs and services,
- Public school district-based preschool and early intervention programs and services,
- Early Head Start agencies and programs,
- Head Start agencies and programs, and
- Child care provider programs, including *Child Care Resource & Referral Networks* and *Child Care and Development Block Grants* that serve public, private, and family home providers.

## WHAT IS CELL TA?

CELL provides Technical Assistance (TA) about early literacy interventions proven to achieve early literacy outcomes that are socially and developmentally important and valued. CELL TA services include:

- **Generalized TA**, that helps stakeholders learn about proven interventions that can support the early communication, language, and literacy development of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers birth to five years of age; and
- **Specialized TA**, that helps stakeholders to adopt policies, practices, and implementation strategies that promote the effective and sustained use of proven early literacy learning practices. *Specialized TA* includes:
  - **Information Sharing Communities**
  - **Statewide Training Assistance**

## WHAT ARE CELL GENERALIZED TA SERVICES?

CELL *Generalized TA* services support the widespread dissemination and utilization of CELL products on evidence-based early literacy instruction. CELL *Generalized TA* provides information through:

- **CELLtoolkits** that promote print-related and linguistic processing competencies for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers using formal and informal literacy learning opportunities. Within these **CELLtoolkits** include **Practice Guides** that describe interventions for: (a) literacy rich learning opportunities that are the contexts for skill acquisition, (b) instructional practices that promote early literacy learning, and (c) specialized practices for supporting the literacy learning of children with disabilities or learning difficulties that require more specialized interventions. **Practice guides** are prepared in various formats including printed material, DVD's, CD-ROMs, and PowerPoint slides.
- **The CELL website** contains information in **CELLpapers**, conceptual, evaluation and research articles; **CELLreviews**, practice-based research syntheses; and **CELLnotes**, user-friendly summaries of synthesis findings; as well as other products.

## WHAT ARE CELL SPECIALIZED TA SERVICES?

CELL provides two types of *Specialized TA Services*: *Information Sharing Communities* and *Statewide Training Assistance*.

**CELL Information Sharing Communities** provide platforms for states to share their experiences, discuss their unique needs, and explore possible solutions to their early literacy learning challenges.

A CELL TA liaison supports 5-7 interested states in forming an *Information Sharing Community*. The TA liaison helps each state identify 2-3 state or local leaders, including educators and parents, who will be active members of the community. The TA liaison also works with each community to:

- **Develop a sound rationale** for why and how educators, parents, and other end-users should use CELL products;
- Problem solve to **reduce policy or practice barriers** to effective statewide training on early literacy learning.

The *Information Sharing Community* uses advanced telecommunication media (e.g., conference calls, webinars, web-based discussions, and file-sharing) as primary communication vehicles. Face-to-face meetings can also be scheduled at naturally occurring events that members of the community are already planning to attend, such as OSEP-sponsored national early childhood meetings. The TA liaison supports the community in communicating and sharing information with its members both at a distance and face-to-face, as needed and appropriate throughout the year.

**CELL Statewide Training Assistance** helps individual states to develop their own training programs for using *CELLtoolkits* and *Practice Guides* to improve early literacy outcomes.

A CELL TA liaison supports individual states in forming a **resource team** of 15-20 state and local leaders, including educators and parents, who plan and coordinate CELL training activities statewide. The TA liaison helps the Resource Team to:

- Develop **action plans** for using CELL products, including especially *CELLtoolkits* and *Practice Guides*, to help improve early literacy outcomes in their state,
- **Identify a CELL trainer** who will conduct training workshops on CELL products;
- Schedule and **conduct CELL workshops** at selected sites throughout the state; and
- Establish **statewide systems of follow-up support** for the sustained use of CELL products.

The CELL TA liaison works with each state individually to identify members of the resource team. The TA liaison supports the resource team both face-to-face and at a distance. Face-to-face support is provided on-site within the target state. The TA liaison also routinely communicates with the resource team via conference calls and emails throughout the year.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF CELL TA?

- **Increase Knowledge and Awareness.** CELL TA can inform state and local educators and families about evidence-based practices that can support early communication, language, and literacy development.
- **Build Statewide Capacity.** CELL TA can empower state and local leaders to build their own capacity to identify their early literacy learning needs and integrate CELL products within their existing programs for young children birth through five years of age.
- **Improve Early Literacy Outcomes.** CELL TA can support states and local communities in increasing the number of young children who enter public school with the language and literacy skills they need to benefit from beginning reading instruction.

## HOW CAN STATES REQUEST CELL SPECILAIZED TA?

Individual states should submit a *Letter of Interest* to CELL. The letter should be signed by appropriate state agency personnel, submitted on official state agency letterhead and provide brief answers to the following four (4) questions:

### (a) What are your state's goals for TA on early literacy learning?

The state is expected to have specific goals for improving its programs and services for early childhood literacy. The letter of interest should include a goal statement that identifies the target age group. The

goal statement should also describe the desired outcome for improving these young children's early literacy learning. For example, a state might seek to improve the expressive vocabulary development of infants and toddlers, or the print concepts and letter knowledge abilities of preschoolers. Please briefly discuss how CELL TA can help your state accomplish its early literacy goals.

**(b) What other early literacy initiatives (e.g., SIG/SPDG, Early Reading First) and TA delivery systems already exist in your state?**

It is expected that CELL TA will be integrated with early literacy initiatives and TA delivery systems in the state. The letter of interest should identify relevant initiatives and describe how CELL TA will be coordinated with them. For example, staff from these programs may be involved in the CELL *Information Sharing Community* or be members of the resource teams working with CELL on *Statewide Training Assistance*. These programs may also provide financial support for early childhood providers and families to attend CELL-sponsored TA events. Please briefly comment on how the coordination of CELL TA with these initiatives can capitalize on the state's early childhood service delivery systems.

**(c) Who are your statewide partners in TA on early literacy learning?**

The state is also expected to form partnerships among key state agencies that are willing to collaborate in achieving the state's goals for TA on early literacy learning. For example, the Part B/ 619 Program, Head Start, Child Care Resource and Referral Program, and Child Care Development Block Grant may be appropriate partners to collaborate in providing TA to improve early literacy learning for preschool-aged children. Similarly, Part C and Early Head Start Programs might want to partner to improve early literacy outcomes for infants and toddlers.

The letter of interest should identify the lead state agency who will work with CELL to plan CELL-sponsored TA events. The letter should also provide contact information for each partner agency and organization who has agreed to collaborate on CELL-sponsored TA on early literacy learning.

**(d) What financial resources will your state partners provide to help share the cost of TA on early literacy learning?**

The state is expected to share the costs of providing TA on early literacy learning. CELL provides the following TA supports **at no cost to the state**:

- TA liaison who provides on-going advice and support, as needed and requested, for
  - CELL *Information Sharing Communities*
  - CELL *Statewide Training Assistance*.
- CELL trainers who conduct up to three (3) CELL workshops in the state.
- *CELLtoolkits*, on-line discussion forums, and other products that are available on the CELL website.

Each interested state should be prepared to pay for the following TA costs:

- Salaries of state and local personnel who help plan and participate in CELL activities.
- Expenses of hosting all CELL TA workshops within the state.
- Travel and other logistic costs for state and local personnel participating in CELL-sponsored TA events.

The letter of interest should briefly describe how the state will access available funds to pay its share of the costs of CELL-sponsored TA events. For example, funds from *SIG/SPDG*, *Early Reading First*, or other state grants could be used, as appropriate, to provide for a state's share of TA costs.

Additionally, the letter should indicate which type of CELL TA -- *Information Sharing Community* or *Statewide Training Assistance* -- the state is interested in receiving in 2008. A state may indicate that it would like to be considered for participation in a CELL *Information Sharing Community* in 2008 and then be considered for CELL *Statewide Training Assistance* in a later year (2009, 2010, or 2011).

Finally, the letter of interest should identify one contact person who is responsible for coordinating CELL-sponsored TA events and activities at the designated lead state agency: Please provide the person's name, title, address, telephone number, and email address.

### **HOW WILL STATES BE SELECTED FOR SPECIALIZED TA?**

States will be selected for *Specialized TA* based on answers to the four questions provided in the letter of interest. Information in the letter will be judged according to the appropriateness of goals, existing programs and TA delivery, and partners, as well as the adequacy of financial resources. CELL will contact states by telephone, as needed, to resolve any questions about the letter of interest. Letters of interest will be reviewed by CELL staff and OSEP officials. Additionally, input from members of the CELL advisory board will be solicited, as needed and appropriate.

CELL expects to establish one (1) *Information Sharing Community* comprised of five to seven states, and provide *Statewide Training Assistance* to two (2) states beginning in January 2008. CELL also expects to establish one new *Information Sharing Community* and provide *Statewide Training Assistance* to two new states in January 2008 and January 2010. Thus, CELL expects that a total of three *Information Sharing Communities* (15-21 states) will be operating and a total of six states will be receiving *Statewide Training Assistance* by the end of the CELL grant in 2011.

Please note that the above numbers for states receiving CELL *Specialized TA* are minimum estimates, as additional states may be invited to join a CELL *Information Sharing Community* or receive CELL *Statewide Training Assistance*, depending on the interests of individual states and available CELL and state TA resources.

Each year, the final selection of states will be members of a CELL *Information Sharing Community* or will receive CELL *Statewide Training Assistance* will be made jointly by CELL and OSEP.

### **WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR SELECTING STATES FOR CELL SPECIALIZED TA?**

August 15, 2007: CELL issues national announcement of its process for selecting states for *Specialized TA*.

October 31, 2007: Deadline for states to submit a letter of interest and be considered for CELL *Specialized TA* in 2008.

December 21, 2007: CELL will inform states that have been selected for *CELL Specialized TA* in 2008. An agenda for CELL TA activities to begin in January 2008 will be provided.

Please note that states will be invited to submit a letter of interest for *CELL Specialized TA* not only in August 2007 but also in August, 2008, August 2009, and August 2010. States not selected for *CELL Specialized TA* in one year will be automatically considered in upcoming years, unless the state indicates that it is no longer interested. Additionally, states involved in *CELL Information Sharing Communities* may submit a letter of interest and request that they be considered for *CELL Statewide Training Assistance*.

For answers to questions about *CELL Specialized TA*, please contact:

**Rebecca Holland Coviello, Ph.D.**  
American Institutes for Research  
1000 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20007  
Telephone: 202-403-5404  
Email: [cell@air.org](mailto:cell@air.org)