

## What is CAPTA?

CAPTA refers to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (PL 108-36), which is the federal law governing Child Protective Services programs across the country. This past year, the Keeping Children Safe Act of 2003 amended CAPTA and was signed into law. This law included a big change for young children, that Protection and Safety programs (CPS) must refer children under the age of 3 for early intervention services; these new requirements involve situations where there are *substantiated cases* of child abuse or neglect. In Nebraska, early intervention services make up the Early Development Network (EDN) and are overseen by the Co-Lead team (Department of Education and Health and Human Services administrators and staff and the Family Partners.)

CAPTA presented an immediate challenge to the team. Quite a few differences exist between the two systems. For example, EDN services are voluntary, while Child Protective Services involvement in families is mandated under certain legal circumstances. In addition, the focus of EDN services involves enhancing the family's ability to meet their child's needs, while in CPS it is specifically the safety and welfare of the child. Fortunately, given the collaborative nature of the Co-lead team, the group was well-positioned to start working to meet the challenge.

The first step of the process in finding ways to implement the new requirements involved finding collaborators in both systems. Shirley Pickens-White, an administrator with state CPS, joined the effort. Along with Shirley, the Co-Lead team convened a CAPTA work group, including EDN and CPS stakeholders from across the state, which began meeting this past summer. Over several meetings, a list of questions and concerns were developed on how personnel in the two systems would work together on the new requirements. These included:

1. trying to determine how the new requirements would impact local services,
2. meshing the voluntary philosophy of the EDN with the requirements of the law,
3. create a master flow sheet documenting key points in the process,
4. determining what training and other supports would be necessary for staff in the field, and
5. identifying ways to best insure staff clearly understand their roles in this process.

The work group first found that, based on the current program counts, there are already a large number of children under CPS supervision receiving EDN services. There will still be an impact from increased referrals, and the work group is continuing to put together information regarding this; for example, a conference call is scheduled in the very-near future with Drs. Corey Robinson and Steven Rosenberg of Colorado (who recently published study results on CAPTA implementation.) Another critical point is that EDN remains a voluntary service; the referral from CPS is required, but families in these circumstances continue to have the right to choose or refuse to receive EDN services. A flow sheet has been developed at this time, and agendas for staff trainings are in the planning process. One main message in these trainings will be the need for clarity of role;

in other words, neither system's staff duties change due to the family's involvement in the other program. This will hopefully make things as clear as possible for families and workers and will insure children's safety as services are delivered.

### **What is the EDN?**

The Early Development Network provides services and supports that are designed based on the needs of children birth to age three and their families with the belief that parents know what is best for their families. These services are designed to act on what families think is important for their child and family. The Network is staffed by friendly, supportive people who listen to and respect families. The Network can also connect families with other families who have had similar experiences.

The goal of the Early Development Network is to provide coordinated services for Nebraska families as conveniently as possible. The program helps families to understand their child's disability and provides assistance in dealing with situations that interfere with the child's development. Families may choose a particular service or all services. Families may also refuse services at any time.

A child is eligible for Early Development Network Services if he or she is not developing typically, or has been diagnosed with a health condition that will affect his or her development. Identifying such delays usually involves both the family and a team of professionals. After first receiving the family's permission, a referral may be made by anyone concerned about the child's development (e.g. a family member, child care provider, or physician). The call will go to a Services Coordinator, who will contact the family within seven days to determine if they are interested in EDN services.

With the family's permission, the Services Coordinator will arrange for an assessment with the local school district to determine the unique needs of the child and his or her eligibility. While the process is confidential, the Services Coordinator can also link the family with community resources before the assessment if needed. If the child qualifies, the Services Coordinator will identify others who can participate on a team to help the family develop an Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP), which sets goals for the child and family and identifies activities and services needed to achieve those goals.

The EDN provides family-centered services, based on the special needs of each child and family. Services that may be provided include, but are not limited to:

- Services coordination
- Special instruction
- Speech/language therapy
- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Psychological services
- Assistive technology devices and services
- Transportation

Audiology  
Vision services

Other services may be provided based on the needs and eligibility of the child and family.

\* Adapted from (2000), Babies Can't Wait. Nebraska's system of services for and toddlers with disabilities and their families.