Fidelity Assessment:
Frequently Asked Questions

<u>Fidelity Checklist</u>:

1. Am I correct that the "Fidelity Tool" we would be using is the Coaching in Action Checklist? This Coaching in Action Checklist would be used both for the self-assessment and for the observation?

   Answer: That is correct.

<u>Observation</u>:

2. Regarding Master Coaches as qualified observers, if you attended the master coach training with Dathan Rush and M'Lisa Shelden but didn't go through the master coach cohort after the training, are you qualified to observe? Could you provide a detailed definition of 'Master Coach'?

   Answer: For the purpose of being a qualified fidelity observer, "Master Coach" means an individual who has completed the 3-day face-to-face Master Coach training by Dathan Rush and M'Lisa Shelden and the 6-month community of practice following that training (completing coaching logs and participating in the monthly technical assistance call in at least 4 of the 6 months). This training may have occurred in Virginia or elsewhere. Documentation of completion may include a certificate of participation, a letter of commendation from Catherine Hancock, or other records maintained in the individual's personnel file documenting completion of these requirements at the time they were completed.

3. We no longer have a Master Coach in our community. Will Master Coach training ever happen again?

   Answer: At this time, we have no plans to offer additional Master Coach training. We do have a number of other resources in place to help you train your staff in coaching and to help staff meet the professional development requirements associated with becoming qualified observers (see response to next question).

4. Can you give us some options of professional development that would count toward the 4 or 8 hours of professional development needed for some of the qualifications to be an observer?

   Answer: Professional development may include but is not limited to: Rush and Shelden regional training, book study of Early Childhood Coaching Handbook, Coaching Implementation Project participation, local or regional coaching training, participation in coaching community of practice, book study, classes, webinars, supervision of and feedback on your own coaching practices, observation/work with mentor, Texas Coaching Module (http://www.veipd.org/main/)

5. Will prior professional development in coaching count in meeting the hours required? How recent must the professional development be?

   Answer: Yes, prior professional development counts. There is no requirement about how recently the professional development was completed.

6. Who makes the final determination if someone meets the requirements to be a Qualified Observer and will there be documentation provided that indicates the individual is "certified" Qualified Observer?

   Answer: The local system manager must ensure observers meet the required qualifications, by directly reviewing those qualifications and/or through oversight of contracts with local providers. Local system managers are expected to provide, if requested, documentation that they have reviewed the qualifications of those conducting fidelity observations.

7. Will the State check to see if those that we have determined as qualified, they also feel are qualified?

Answer: The State has established the criteria that an individual must meet in order to be a qualified observer. The determination that an individual meets these criteria will be made at the local level, not the state level.

8. About how much time is involved in an observation?

   Answer: If observation is done in person, then the time involved will include travel to the visit, the length of the visit, travel after the visit and time to reflect and discuss with the practitioner following the observation. During the May 31, 2017 webinar, Kim Griffith from the Infant & Toddler Connection of Fairfax-Falls Church indicated that this was usually at least 1-1/2 to 2 hours total. Conducting observation using videotaping would certainly shorten this time.

9. Can the observation be separated from the follow-up decisions regarding other professional development needed?

   Answer: There is no requirement that the follow-up discussion occur immediately after the observation. It is also possible to separate the responsibilities for observation and for decisions about professional development needed. For instance, a qualified peer may conduct observation, share their findings with the practitioner and supervisor, and the supervisor then works with the practitioner to develop a plan for any needed professional development or support.

10. Can we use Part C funds to pay the Master Coach/Qualified Observer for their time?

    Answer: Although there are not additional state or federal Part C funds being allocated to local systems to compensate qualified observers for their time, a local lead agency may choose to do so if they have sufficient Part C funds within their original annual allocation. In other words, if the local lead agency has enough revenue and Part C funds (without requesting any additional Part C funds) to serve all eligible children <u>and</u> provide some compensation for observers' time, then they are permitted to do so. While the State in unable to provide additional funds for this purpose, observers may count up to 15 hours of their time spent conducting fidelity observations toward the 30 hours required for EI recertification. This reduces the time these practitioners must take away from service delivery in order to meet professional development requierments.

11. If the Agency Director/Supervisor is the person who does the observation, who does the observation for that person? What about practitioners who are a one practitioner agency?

    Answer: If the agency director or supervisor is also a practitioner who must meet the fidelity assessment requirements, then consider whether there is another qualified observer in the program who can conduct the observation (e.g., a peer or the local system manager). You also could consider whether there's a director/supervisor in another provider agency or nearby local system who could conduct the observation (and perhaps you could return the favor for them).

12. Must a peer observer also be an EI Professional? Could the peer observer be a service coordinator?

    Answer: As long as he or she meets one of the three categories of observer qualifications, a service coordinator may be a qualified observer.

<u>Tracking and Reporting</u>:

13. Our community is very transient. Tracking is going to be difficult. What are the consequences if we have a provider or two slip through the cracks?

    Answer: We appreciate that you want to ensure all practitioners meet fidelity assessment requirements, and this is not designed to be a "gotcha" process from the state level. Eventually, practitioners will record their completion of fidelity assessment requirements directly in the new statewide data system. In the meantime, we are working to develop a mechanism to assist local systems with tracking.

Other:

14. How do you see this assessment in Day care environments?

    Answer: Fidelity self-assessment or observation could occur during an intervention visit at a day care setting. Since that environment presents some unique challenges with coaching, one might expect generally lower fidelity to coaching practices in that setting as a practitioner is first learning to use coaching. For that reason, it may make sense to initially conduct fidelity assessment during home visits and then consider fidelity in a child care environment as the practitioner's coaching skills become stronger.

15. Is this going to be monitored through the Annual Performance Report?

    Answer: Virginia's implementation of fidelity assessment will fall under the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), which is one of the indicators that comprise the Annual Performance Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). One of the criteria OSEP uses to evaluate each state's annual progress on their SSIP is whether evidence-based practices are being implemented with fidelity.

16. What other infant /toddler programs in the nation have used this approach successfully?

    Answer: Like Virginia, most states are in the process of developing and beginning to implement fidelity assessment processes for their early intervention programs as part of their SSIP work. We reviewed fidelity tools and processes from Arizona, Texas and Connecticut as we worked to develop fidelity assessment in Virginia.