

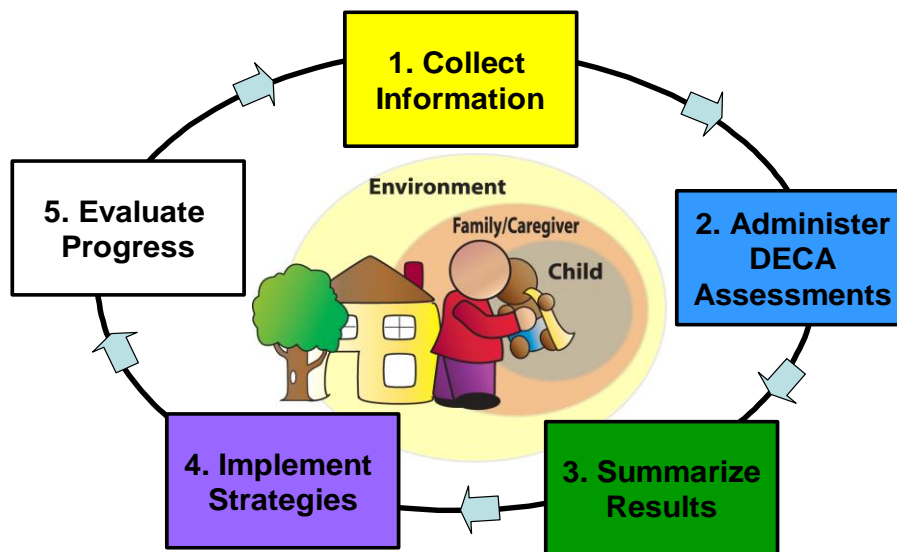
## Early Head Start and the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Infants and Toddlers (DECA-I/T) Program – Executive Summary

*The DECA-I/T Program is a well-fitted match for Early Head Start Programs looking for a social emotional assessment that is:*

- high quality, strength-based, and child-centered
- standardized, reliable, and valid
- inclusive of data from both the home and group care environments
- supportive of partnerships between families and all caring adults in a child's life
- linked to research-based strategies to promote resilience and mental wellness

The DECA-I/T Program is an integrated, comprehensive five-step system to promote healthy social and emotional growth in infants and toddlers through strengthening their protective factors. Central to the DECA-I/T Program are two assessment instruments, the DECA for Infants (DECA-I) spanning the age range of 4 weeks up to 18 months, and the DECA for Toddlers (DECA-T) spanning the age range of 18 months up to 36 months. Both the DECA-I and DECA-T measure the protective factors Attachment and Initiative. The DECA-T also measures the protective factor scale Self-Regulation. Assessment results are linked to a planning framework and research-based strategies for both the group and home environments.

### DECA- I/T Program Comprehensive System



Through the five steps, at both the individual child and group levels, social and emotional development is reflected upon and observed, assessed, planned for, and evaluated for growth and further needs. Important to the DECA-I/T Program are the key components that influence resilience: the Environment, the Caregivers, and the Child (*Ecological Model*, Bronfenbrenner, 1998). The following DECA-I/T Program resources offer support at all three levels:

- DECA-I and DECA-T (the assessment forms for infants and for toddlers)
- *Infant Toddler Strategies Guide* (research-based strategies for home and group settings)
- *For Now and Forever* (family guide for building resilience)
- *Building Your Bounce* (adult resilience journal for staff members or family)
- *The DECA-I/T User's Guide and Technical Manual* (data on development of the assessment instruments, instructions on scoring and interpretation of the assessment, as well as validity and reliability studies)

<b>Early Head Start Guiding Principle</b>	<b>How this Principle is supported and enhanced through use of the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Infants/Toddlers (DECA-I/T) Program</b>
#1: <i>High Quality Programs</i>	The DECA-I/T is a reliable, valid instrument for measuring infant and toddler protective factors that was developed using rigorous guidelines for high quality assessment and planning programs. All assessment items and accompanying strategies are supported by well-respected research in the areas of resilience, as well as infant and toddler mental health.
#2: <i>Prevention and Promotion</i>	The DECA-I/T Program supports prevention through tools designed for all children and caregivers including those of strength-based assessment through the DECA-I and DECA-T, Classroom Profiles, Adult Resiliency Checklists, and Quality CARE Checklists for Connecting with Families (C), Activities/Routines (A), Responsive Caregiving (R), Environment (E).
#3: Positive Relationships and Continuity	Resilient adults allow for more continuity of caring involvement and relationship-building for each child with whom they interact. <i>Building Your Bounce</i> is an adult resiliency resource in the DECA-I/T Program that was created specifically to help assure that the relationships surrounding the child are healthy and nurturing, and provide consistency in the child's life.
#4: Parent Involvement	With a strong focus on parent education, at-home strategies, and parent goals for each child, the family is involved from observation and assessment, through planning, all the way to evaluating success and outcomes. <i>For Now and Forever</i> is a key resource in the DECA-I/T Program, helping families understand and support their child's resilience in the home setting.
#5: <i>Inclusion</i>	The DECA-I/T Program offers strategies that can be implemented with ALL children, regardless of ability or special needs, as well as

	useful adaptations when necessary. When early care and education providers and parents feel they can support every child in their care, they are more empowered in their own resilience and mental wellness.
#6: <i>Culture</i>	To respect each child’s culture and family background and values, the DECA-I/T was carefully designed to assure that the readability and content apply to the large majority of children and families from varying backgrounds. References to particular cultural preferences, backgrounds, and family preferences are included throughout the <i>Infant Toddler Strategies Guide</i> .
#7: <i>Comprehensiveness, Flexibility, Responsiveness, and Intensity</i>	The DECA-I/T Program is a five step comprehensive system to assist in observing and getting to know each child, through planning and measuring outcomes at the individual and group levels. The DECA-I/T Program can be easily adapted to meet each program’s individual needs, while maintaining the integrity of the resilience-building program itself.
#8: <i>Transitions</i>	Importantly, the DECA-I/T Program is web-based and designed for children as young as 4 weeks of age, continuing through the 36 <sup>th</sup> month. Ongoing monitoring and outcome measurement are available through the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) Program for preschoolers (ages 3-5), and the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) for children in grades K-8.
#9: <i>Collaboration</i>	With core concepts built around protective factors, a simple language regarding early care and education as well as mental health terms, and strategies that can be implemented in both the home and group care settings, the DECA-I/T Program helps all adults in a child’s life come together to build an ongoing partnership focused on helping each child find happiness and success.
<b>Selected Early Head Start Performance Standard met through use of the Devereux Early Childhood Infant/Toddler (DECA-I/T) Program</b>	
<b>Early Childhood Development and Health 1304.20: (a) Determining Child Health Status, (b) Developmental Screenings, (c) Extended Follow-Up And Treatment, (d) Ongoing Care, (e) Involving Parents, and (f) Individualization</b>	
<p><b>(a)</b> Parents and educators each complete the strength-based DECA-I/T after an adequate observation period, but still well within the 45 day deadline for determining child health status.</p> <p><b>(b)</b> The DECA-I/T is appropriate for use as a screening instrument for behavioral and social/emotional development, and has readability and relevance for families of children from a variety of races, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds.</p>	

**(c)** A comprehensive planning framework and research-based strategies surrounds the DECA-I/T. A dual approach to planning includes both group and at-home planning ideas, and children with special needs are included as well.

**(d)** The DECA-I/ can be administered as often as necessary as the rater is completing the assessment based on the 4 weeks prior to each rating. Thus, if there are sudden changes in a child's behavior, the DECA-I/T can help determine next steps.

**(e)** Parents are involved in every step of the DECA-I/T assessment and planning process. *For Now and Forever: A Family Guide for Promoting the Social and Emotional Development of Infants and Toddlers* offers many strategies for use at home.

**(f)** Assessment information from the DECA-I/T can be transferred easily from the instrument itself into a plan to individualize for **any** child, with or without areas of need. The teacher might choose a few strategies from the *Infant and Toddler Strategies Guide* to help each individual child meet his or her highest potential.