

# Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) Program Implementation

## Readiness and Reflection Questions



The Road Map to DECA Implementation

The Devereux Center for Resilient Children (DCRC) is committed to supporting programs successfully implement resilience resources that promote the healthy social and emotional development of children. The following tool is specifically designed to help program leaders reflect on important questions that should be thought about and discussed to ensure successful implementation. The tool has two parts, including:

- A. Implementation **Readiness** Questions – designed for leaders to reflect on in advance of initial implementation; and
- B. Implementation **Reflection** Questions – questions for leaders and staff to discuss as early as possible into the implementation process.

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## A. Implementation Readiness Questions: Getting Started

Undertaking the successful implementation of any new resource requires planning and discussion, ensuring that team members understand roles, responsibilities, budget implications, time commitments, etc. The following questions should be reviewed prior to making the commitment to implement the DECA Program. The DECA Program Implementation Guide can be made available upon request to assist you in answering the following questions.

1. Has a leader (or leadership team) been identified to oversee DECA Program implementation and are roles and responsibilities related to the project clearly articulated? (Roles and responsibilities may vary. A better understanding of the roles and responsibilities required will be more evident as leaders review the Implementation Reflection Questions.)
2. Has the leadership team discussed and determined whether the DECA Program will be implemented universally (with all children) and in its comprehensive five-step approach, or as a targeted intervention with select children and only using specific resources? (For more information to help answer this question, please review the DECA Program Implementation Guide and the Implementation Reflection Questions that clearly outline the DECA Program five-step process and associated resources.)
3. Has the leadership team decided on a professional development plan for effective DECA Program implementation? (Basic training, Local Program Mentor training, ongoing training and technical assistance.)
4. Does the leadership team understand what DECA Program resources are needed for implementation and the costs associated? Has a decision about e-DECA (web-based assessment) vs. paper been made?
5. How will staff have access to all of the DECA Program resources necessary? (Including assessment forms, Strategies Guides, computer access for e-DECA users, etc.) If staff are sharing resources, are they clear on how to access resources when needed?
6. Does staff know about the program's decision to implement the DECA Program and do they understand the goals and objectives for choosing the DECA Program? (For assistance in helping educate staff about the DECA Program and to inspire a commitment to resilience, consider sharing videos and resources from the Devereux Center for Resilient Children website [www.centerforresilientchildren.org](http://www.centerforresilientchildren.org).)
7. Have decisions been made about how parents will be involved? (Programs should consider whether parents will be asked to provide ratings of their child.) How will parents receive information about the DECA Program? (Letters, posters, bulletin boards, parent night.)
8. Has the leadership team considered how to measure DECA Program implementation success? (Pre/post DECA ratings, staff development around social and emotional teaching, improved family partnership, reduction in behavior incidents, etc.)
9. Do you plan to use the *Building Your Bounce* / adult resilience resources to support and promote staff resilience throughout the entire DECA Program implementation process?

## B. Implementation Reflection Questions

The following questions are important to reflect upon as early as possible in the implementation process. Some programs may want to review these questions at the same time as the readiness questions, while others may need to attend the DECA Program training before making some of these decisions. The questions are VERY detailed. This was done intentionally to help programs think about all aspects of the DECA Program.

*\*It is important to remember that the DECA Program was designed to fit within already existing systems. Some programs may decide to implement all of the DECA Program while others will only select certain elements to enhance practices that are already in place.*

### Step 1 – Collect Information

During Step 1, you will collect important information about individual children and current teaching/caregiving practices. You will use this information to complete the DECA and identify opportunities to improve teaching practices. In this step, you will get to know each child and family, conduct observations and complete the Reflective Checklist(s).

#### Observing Children

1. How does your program collect information on individual children and families? Do you wish to adopt additional tools to support your program efforts of getting to know children and families, or do you feel that your current practices are sound? (The DECA Program offers resources to support this step, but the resources may not be necessary if they duplicate what is already in place. It is critical that staff not be overburdened with additional forms but also that staff have collected sufficient information to inform Step 2 – Completing the DECA.)
  - a. Does your program currently do regular observations of children? Do you plan to continue with existing methods of observation or do you wish to adopt the DECA observation tool and/or method of running record observation?
  - b. How long do you plan to hold the initial observation phase? (A minimum of 4 weeks is required prior to completing an assessment.)
  - c. How many observations per child would you recommend for your teachers to complete prior to completing a DECA?
  - d. How will teachers be supported in completing the initial observation phase? (Time management ideas, staffing support, organizational systems and resources to assist with observation, etc.)
  - e. How can the practice of observation be supported throughout the year?

#### Observing the Environment

2. Does your program have a tool already in place that you use to collect information about the social and emotional quality of the early childhood setting? (The DECA Program Reflective Checklist can be used for this purpose. If programs already have a tool in place, it is important to determine whether the DECA Program Reflective Checklist will also be completed.) If programs do decide to use the DECA Reflective Checklist, the following questions should be considered:

- a. Will the Reflective Checklist be used for independent teacher use, joint use by teachers and supervisors, one at a time or all at once?
- b. When do you plan to have the Reflective Checklist completed? (What is the timeframe, e.g., one Reflective Checklist per week/month, etc...)
- c. How will teachers be supported in completing the Reflective Checklist? (Provide time for reflection, establish clear timelines, etc...)
- d. How can the practice of using the Reflective Checklist be supported throughout the year? (Reviewed in staff/team meetings and/or supervision.)

### **Step 2 – Assess Each Child**

During this step, staff will complete the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA). The DECA is also scored during this step.

1. Have you decided to assess every child or only select children?
2. Have you decided if teachers AND parents are both completing DECAs?
3. Have you decided if you will use paper DECA record forms or the online, web-based e-DECA system? If teachers are using e-DECA, have you determined how teachers will learn to access e-DECA with their unique ID and password?
4. What is your timeline for DECA completion by teachers (and parents)?
5. How and when will you inform teachers (and parents) of timelines and deadlines?
6. Who will be responsible for the parent/guardian education/information efforts? (Regarding the DECA Program in general as well as the assessment process and timeline.)
7. Do you need parent/guardian consent for teacher's to complete the DECA on children? If yes, how do you plan to attain it? (See sample consent forms provided by the DECA Program.)
8. If parents/guardians are completing the DECA assessment on their children, how do you plan to get assessments completed and returned in a timely fashion? (On home visits or during pick-up and drop-off, a parent night, etc...)

### **Step 3 – Summarize Results**

During this step, you score the DECAs or review e-DECA reports, review or complete the Classroom/Group profile, prepare for group planning and prepare for individual child planning.

#### **Questions for web-based e-DECA users:**

1. Will staff be required to have paper print outs of e-DECA reports in each child's file or will they be stored electronically?
2. Has a system been put into place that will help ensure that DECA results are reviewed and reflected on vs. simply scored and filed?

3. How will staff be asked to review DECA results? (Will meetings be held to reflect on results and/or will staff need to review results independently?)
4. How will staff be asked to review the Classroom/Group profiles? (Will meetings be held to reflect on results and/or will staff need to review results independently?)
5. How do you plan to share DECA results with parents/guardians (letter, meeting, home visits) and who needs to be in attendance if a meeting is scheduled?

**Questions for paper DECA users:**

6. Who is responsible for scoring the DECA assessments?
7. How do you plan to support the scoring of DECA assessments?
8. What is the timeline for DECA assessment scoring?
9. Has a system been put into place that will help ensure that DECA results are reviewed and reflected on vs. simply scored and filed?
10. How will staff be asked to review DECA results? (Will meetings be held to reflect on results and/or will staff need to review results independently?)
11. How will staff be asked to review the Classroom/Group profiles? (Will meetings be held to reflect on results and/or will staff need to review results independently?)
12. How do you plan to share DECA results with parents/guardians (letter, meeting, home visits) and who needs to be in attendance if a meeting is scheduled?

**Step 4 – Plan and Implement Strategies**

During this step you will use the information you have collected along with your DECA results to create plans for the group and the individual child.

**Group/Universal Planning**

In the DECA Program universal planning involves making social and emotional quality enhancements that benefit ALL children. This is done by using the DECA Reflective Checklist, the Classroom/Group Profile, the Group Action Planning form and the DECA Strategies Guide. Programs that have other quality improvement measures in place may choose NOT to use the DECA Program's approach to Group/Universal Planning, while others may use portions of it. Answer the questions below if your program intends to use the DECA Reflective Checklist and Group/Universal Strategies.

1. Will the Reflective Checklist be used for independent teacher use, joint use by teachers and supervisors, one at a time or all at once?
2. When do you plan to have the Reflective Checklist completed? (What is the timeframe, e.g., one Reflective Checklist per week/month, etc...)
3. How will teachers be supported in completing the Reflective Checklist? (Provide time for reflection, establish clear timelines, etc...)

4. How can the practice of using the Reflective Checklist be supported throughout the year? (Reviewed in staff/team meetings and/or supervision.)
5. Will staff be asked to develop Group Action Plans for quality improvement based on their completed Reflective Checklist and Classroom/Group profile information?
6. What is the timeline for Group Action Plan completion?
7. Who and how will Group Action Plans be reviewed?
8. How will staff be supported in making ongoing quality improvements? (Completing the Reflective Checklists throughout the year, Group Action Planning throughout the year, reflective support throughout the year, etc...)

**Group/Universal Planning** (that does not require specific use of the DECA planning resources)

1. Does your plan intend to enhance or modify lesson plans to include more of a focus on quality enhancements and protective factor building?
2. If your program plans to enhance or modify the lesson planning process, who will do it, when will it be done, how will it be trained, how will it be supported?
3. Will someone be responsible for supporting teachers in enhancing their planning for better social emotional quality?
4. Will someone regularly review lesson plans (verbally or written) on their lesson planning efforts?
5. How will you support staff in merging other best practice and curriculum tools with their DECA efforts?
6. What group planning resources do you plan to make available for staff (Promoting Resilience in Preschoolers book, revised lesson plans, etc..)?

**Individual and Targeted Planning**

In the DECA Program individual and targeted planning both use a similar “Strengths, Goals, Strategies” approach. Individual planning refers to the process of developing individualized plans to strengthen protective factors in ALL children (even if the child’s DECA does not indicate an area of need).

Individualizing to promote social and emotional growth is ideal and beneficial for all children, but not always realistic given time and resource limitations. Targeted planning refers to the process of developing targeted plans to strengthen protective factors and reduce behavior concerns for children with identified needs or concerns. A Strengths, Goals, Strategies planning approach can be used for both individual and targeted plans with an increase in the frequency, intensity and duration of the strategy/intervention used for targeted plans.

### Individualized Planning

1. Do you plan to develop individual plans to promote social and emotional development for ALL children using:
  - a. e-DECA strategies and printable plans
  - b. The DECA Strength, Goals, Strategies paper planning process
  - c. Your program's existing individualization protocol
2. If you plan to develop individual plans to promote social emotional development for ALL children, when will they be done? Who will be responsible for completing them? Where will the plans "live"? Who will review them?
3. What resources do you plan to use in order to access strategies? (eDECA strategies, Promoting Resilience in Preschoolers book, Infant and Toddler Strategies Guides book, For Now and Forever parent resources, FLIP IT book, Socially Strong, Emotionally Secure book, other social emotional resources, etc...)
4. How will teachers be supported in implementing strategies?
5. Will individual plans be shared with parents/guardians? How will they be shared?
6. When will individual plans be re-evaluated and enhanced throughout the year? How will you know if the individualization planning process is working?

### Targeted Planning

7. Do you plan to develop targeted plans for children with identified needs or concerns using:
  - a. e-DECA strategies and printable plans
  - b. The DECA Strength, Goals, Strategies paper planning process
8. If you plan to develop targeted plans, how and who will identify children that may require more targeted level support? (Children with 1 or more protective factors scoring in the Area of Need range on the DECA, children who teacher's have concerns about behavior, etc...)
9. Will a collaborative meeting be held in order to develop the targeted plan (including parents/guardians and other professionals as needed)? Who will lead the meetings? Will you use the DECA Strengths, Goals, Strategies planning tool to help guide the meeting?
10. What resources do you plan to use in order to access strategies? (e-DECA strategies, Promoting Resilience in Preschoolers book, Infant and Toddler Strategies Guides book, For Now and Forever parent resources, FLIP IT book, Socially Strong, Emotionally Secure book, other social emotional resources, etc...)
11. How will teachers be supported in implementing strategies at a high frequency, intensity and duration?

12. Will targeted plans be shared with parents/guardians? Will home based goals and strategies be included in a collaborative planning process?
13. Will someone be responsible for supporting parents in home based strategies efforts?
14. When will targeted plans be re-evaluated and changed as needed? How will you know if the targeted plan is working or if you need an increased level of support?
15. What resources will you have available to offer children who need an increased level of support? (DECA Positive Guidance Planning resources and forms, mental health services, etc.

### **Step 5 – Review Progress and Adjust**

During this step, you will monitor the effectiveness of group and individual child plans and adjust plans as needed.

1. What methods of evaluation do you plan to use (pre-post assessments, the Reflective Checklist, plans, staff and family feedback, etc...)?
2. Who will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the various methods of evaluation?
3. Are processes in place that will ensure outcome data is shared with the appropriate individuals (staff, families, funders)?
4. Are there processes in place that will ensure continuous quality improvements are made based on outcome data results?
5. How and who will monitor the progress of individual plans or targeted plans?