



# Comprehensive and Sustainable Early Intervention

## Paraprofessional Training: Successes and Challenges



- *Ritu Chopra, University of Colorado Denver*
- *Geri DiPalma, University of Colorado Denver*

# Briefly share:

---

In your state, what system currently exists for preparing or training paraprofessionals who work in early intervention services?





# Early Intervention Colorado: State of the State

---

- ❑ Colorado Department of Human Services, Division for Developmental Disabilities (DDD) is the lead agency for Part C in Colorado - the program is referred to as Early Intervention Colorado
- ❑ DDD contracts with 20 Community Centered Boards (CCBs) as the single entry point into the long-term service and support system for persons with developmental disabilities.

# Early Intervention Colorado State of the State

## Community Centered Boards (CCBs) are:

- Non profit organizations
- The designated service coordination system
- Diverse:
  - Active counts range from 20 - 1,700 children
  - Rural plains, mountain communities, and cities along urban corridor
  - EI staff, contract providers, or combination



# State of the State

---

- **Colorado assures:**

“The State has a comprehensive system of personnel development, including the training of paraprofessionals and the training of primary referral sources with respect to the basic components of early intervention services...” (20 U.S.C. 1435(a)(8)(A) and (B))

# State of the State:

## Paraprofessional Training system

---

Contract initiated by Early Intervention Colorado (Colorado Department of Human Services) with the Paraprofessional Resource & Research (PAR<sup>2</sup>A) Center in the School of Education and Human Development at University of Colorado Denver in Fall of 2007

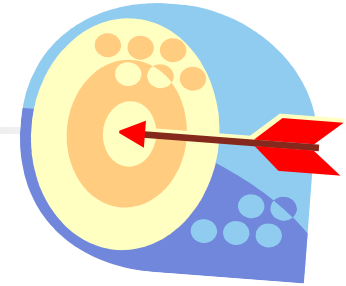


# Project CO-TOP\*EIS:

---

## Comprehensive Training Opportunities for Paraprofessionals in Early Intervention Services

# Project CO-TOP\*EIS:



## Overall Goal:

To develop and implement a state-wide system of training for paraprofessionals who work with families that have infants or toddlers (birth through two years) with developmental delays or disabilities





# Conceptual Framework of CO-TOP\*EIS

---

- Draws upon the existing CO-TOP Model (K-12) developed over a period of 14 years through five projects supported by the Federal and State funds
- CO-TOP, a Training of Trainers (TOT) model that prepares school professionals to:
  - supervise and effectively utilize paraprofessionals
  - use research based training materials and provide district-based training to paraprofessionals who serve students with diverse needs (disabilities, English language acquisition & literacy needs)

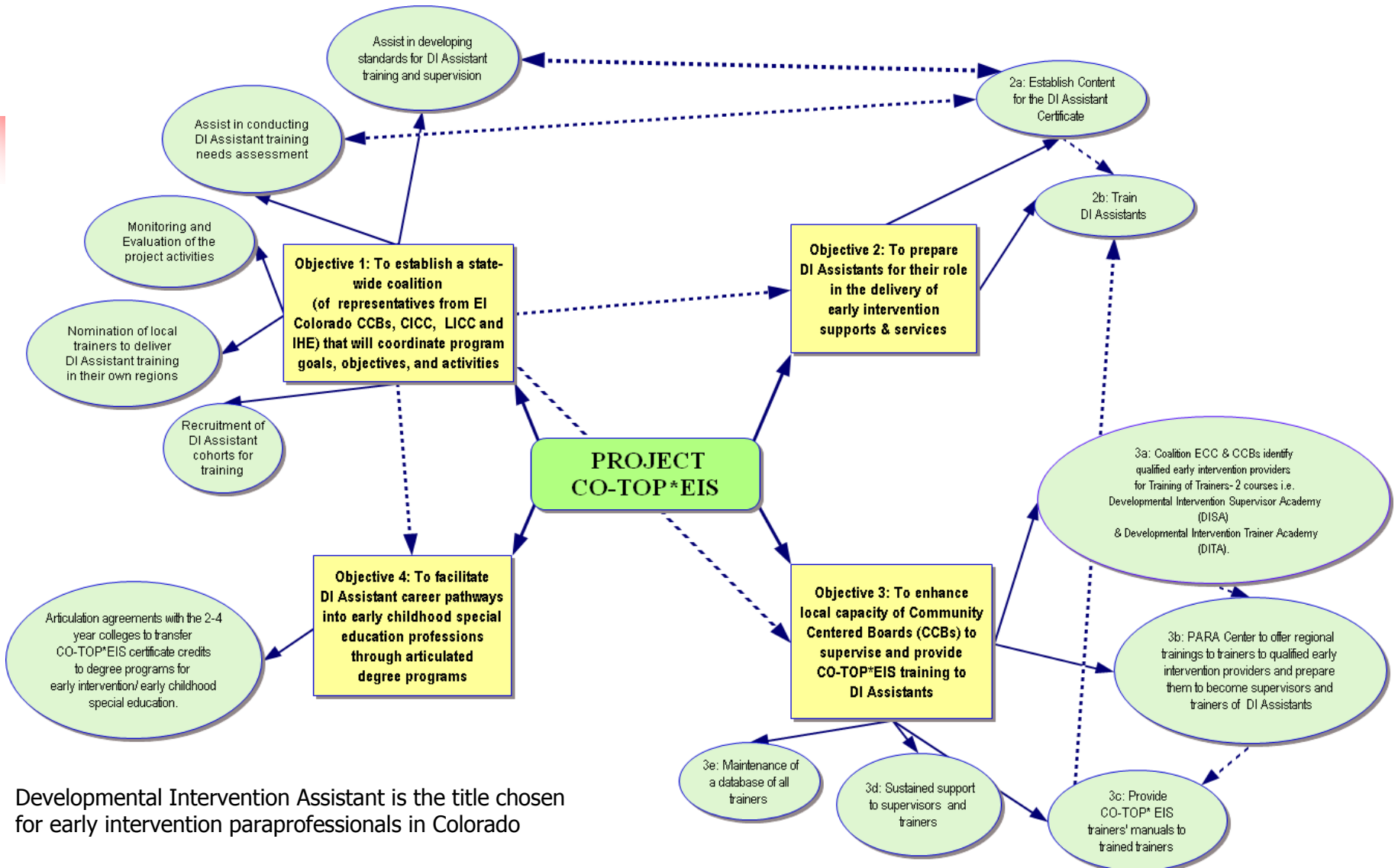


# CO-TOP\*EIS Objectives

---

- To establish a state-wide coalition of local, rural and urban agencies that will coordinate program goals, objectives, and activities
- To prepare paraprofessionals for the roles they assume in the delivery of early intervention supports and services
- To enhance local capacity of Community Centered Boards (CCBs) to supervise and train paraprofessionals
- To facilitate paraprofessional career pathways into early childhood special education professions through articulated degree programs

# CO-TOP\*EIS at a glance



Developmental Intervention Assistant is the title chosen for early intervention paraprofessionals in Colorado

Objective #1: continued...

# *Definition of DI Assistant*

*Established by the coalition*

- **A Developmental Intervention Assistant (DI Assistant)** provides developmental intervention services to families, infants and toddlers under the supervision of a qualified early intervention provider who has completed **\*Developmental Intervention Supervisor Academy (DISA)**.
- *\*DISA is a two-day training that enables the CCB nominated early intervention providers to expand their communication, collaboration, problem solving, and supervisory skills needed to work with DI Assistants*

# Objective #1: Project Coalition

- Coalition consists of 23 members, from various fields, communities, and positions
- Meets regularly and oversees all aspects of the project and acts as an advisory body to the project



# Objective #2: Prepare/Train DI Assistants

## Established Curriculum Review Panel (CRP)

**Barbara Smith, Ph.D.**, UC Denver. Past President of Division of Early Childhood (DEC). Expertise - Center for Evidence Based Practices in Early Learning, CSEFEL Center for Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning

**Susan Sandall, Ph.D.**, University of Washington. author DEC Recommended Practices in EI/ECSE special Education,

**Peggy Hayden, M.A.** Consultant to state and local education and human service agencies - extensive background in Prek-12 paraprofessional training and supervision

**Susan Moore, JD, MA-SLP**, CU-Boulder. Expertise - Speech Language and Hearing, culturally competent, family centered supports and services.

**Donna Wittmer, Ph.D.**, Expertise - Infant and Toddler Development and Responsive Program Planning, Relationship-Based Approach

**CRP's Task was to establish the content for the DI Assistant Certificate of the CO-TOP \*EIS**

# DI Assistant Training Content

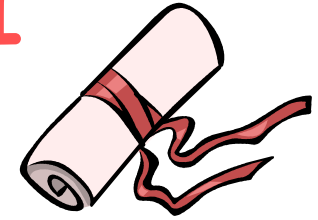
---

CRP recommendations - the curriculum must consider:

- Clarification of paraprofessional roles vs. professional (supervisor) roles
- Evidence based best practices and nationally recommended standards from NAEYC & DEC - (e.g. culturally appropriate, family centered trans disciplinary, routine based interventions, communication skills, self esteem, creativity, self reliance through play and other age -appropriate activities)

CRP established coursework for the DI Assistant

# Proposed Coursework for the DI Assistant Certificate



- I. Orientation to Early Intervention
- II. Fundamentals of the IFSP Process
- III. Early Intervention Teamwork
- IV. Working with Families
- V. Promoting Social Emotional Development
- VI. Instructional Strategies for Early Intervention
- VII. Health Support Needs in Early Intervention
- VIII. Language and Literacy for Early Intervention
- IX. Communication Support Needs in Early Intervention
- X. Individualized Intervention with Infants and Toddlers
- XI. Autism Spectrum Disorders in Early Intervention
- XII. Personal Growth and Development for DI Assistants
- XIII. Interpersonal Skills for DI Assistants
- XIV. Instructional and Assistive Technology in Early Intervention
- XV. Transition at Age 3
- XVI. Practicum in Early Intervention

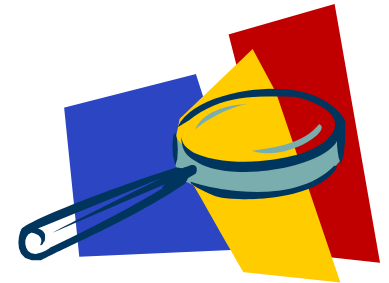
Each course involves 15 contact hours , carries one undergraduate credit & the practicum carries two undergraduate credits



# Crosswalk: Curriculum and DEC Recommended Practices

After Coalition revision and prior to finalizing:

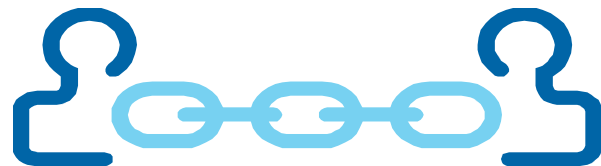
- Reviewed each course content with overall DEC Recommended Practices to ensure no conflicts
- Where appropriate, reviewed specific to a DEC RP Strand



## Objective # 3:

# Enhance local capacity of the CCBs to supervise and train DI Assistants

Provide training to CCB nominated "local" certified and licensed early interventionists to become more effective supervisors and or trainers of DI Assistants (Train the Trainers)



# Train The Trainer Model



- Involves two trainings:
  - Developmental Intervention Supervisor Academy (DISA)
  - Developmental Intervention Trainer Academy (DITA)

Each carries a graduate credit



# Developmental Intervention Supervisor Academy (DISA)

---

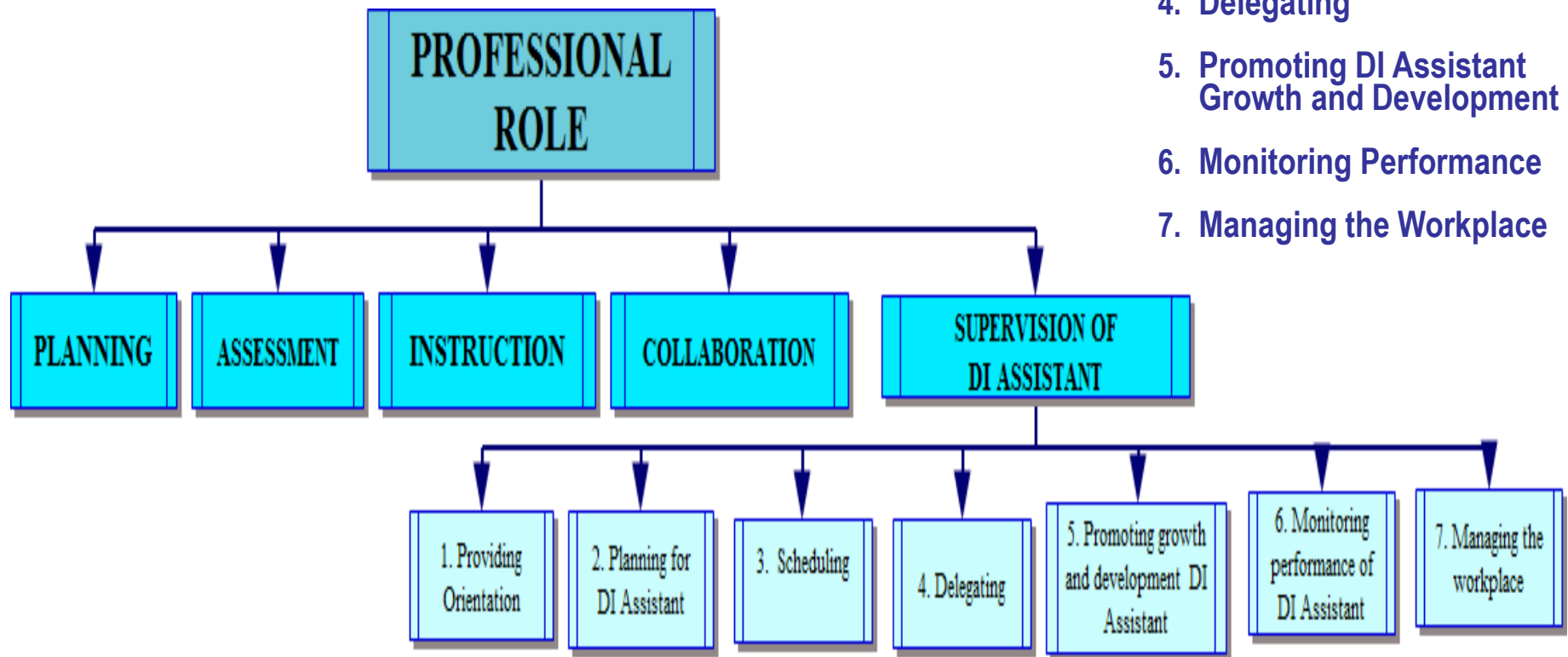
Two day training that provides core knowledge and skills to professionals in:

- Role Clarification - Supervisor **vs.** DI Assistant
- Collaboration and working relationships
- Assessing personal supervisory skills
- Developing understanding of the seven functions as supervisors of DI Assistants

(shown on the next slide)

# Seven Functions of DI Assistant Supervision

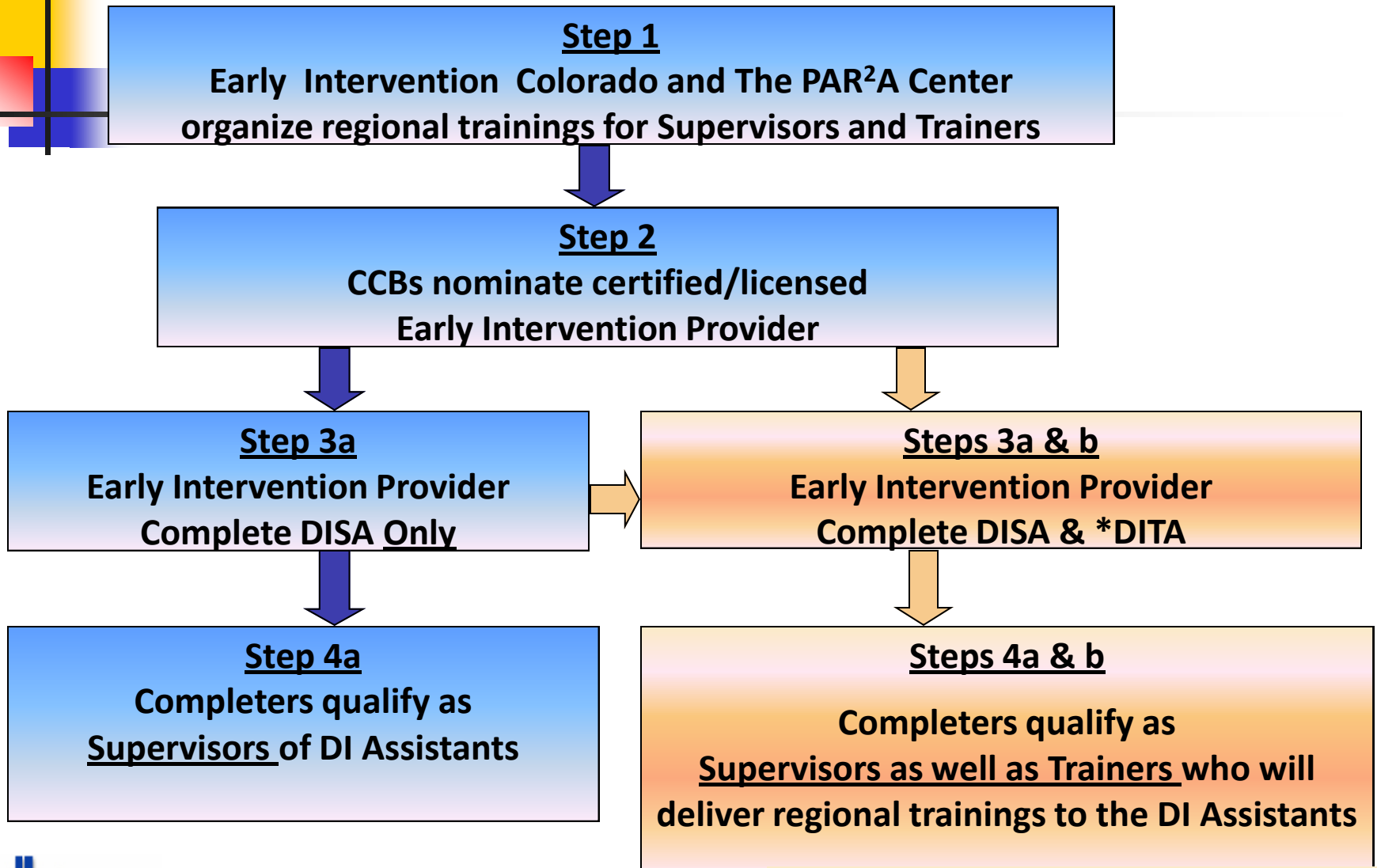
1. Providing Orientation
2. Planning for DI Assistant
3. Scheduling
4. Delegating
5. Promoting DI Assistant Growth and Development
6. Monitoring Performance
7. Managing the Workplace



# Developmental Intervention Trainer Academy (DITA)

- Additional two day training for those who have attended the Developmental Intervention Supervisor Academy (DISA)
- The training provides :
  - knowledge about how to train adult learners
  - knowledge and resources for planning and developing effective presentations
  - time and support to examine, prepare, and adapt the CO-TOP Curriculum Materials to be delivered to the DI Assistants

# Steps Involved in Delivery of Training to Supervisors and Trainers



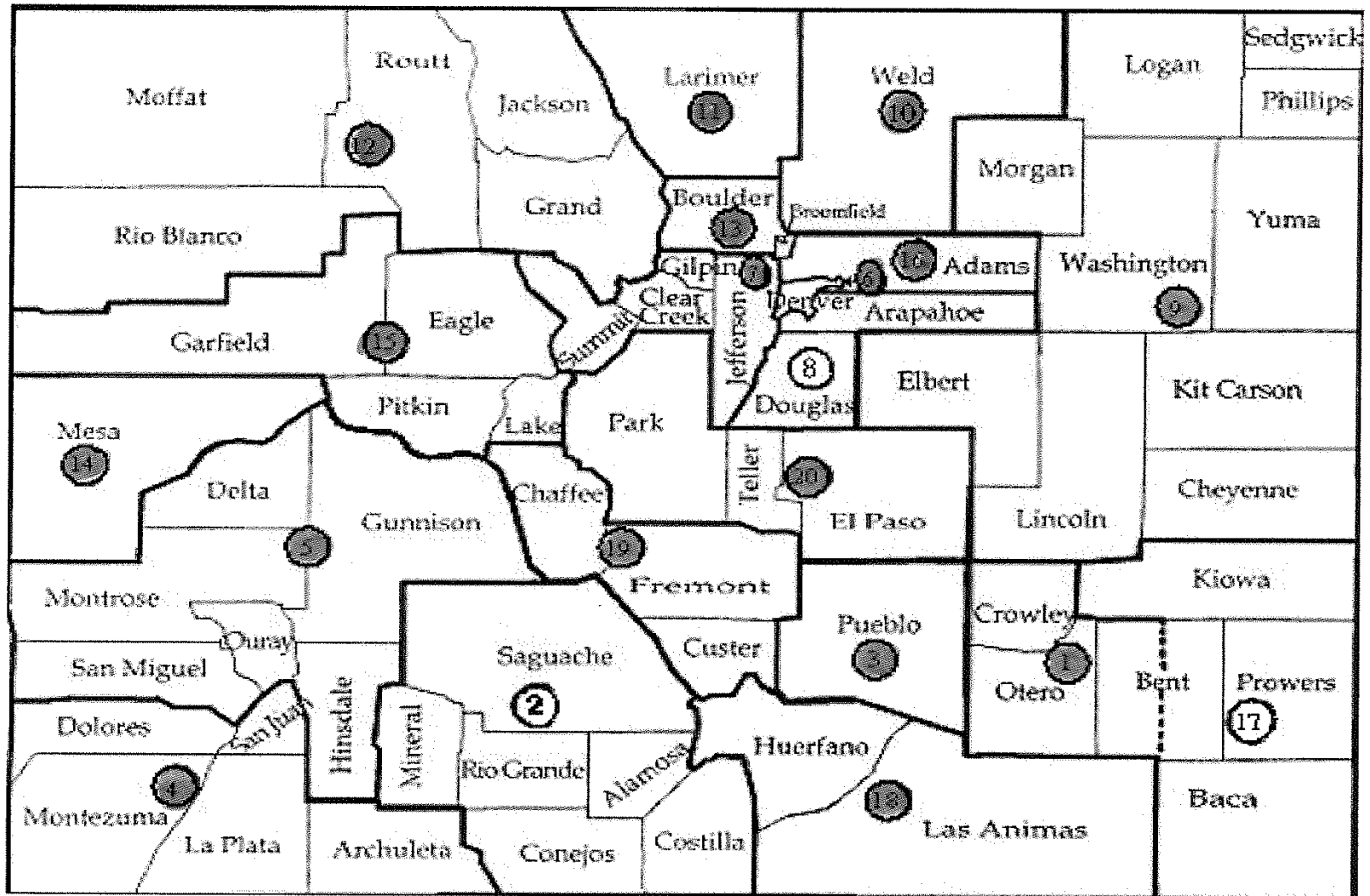
# Accomplishments : Objective #3

To enhance local capacity of the CCBs to supervise and train DI Assistants

- ❑ 5 DISA and 5 DITA trainings offered
- ❑ A total of 17 CCBs participated as well as one inclusive preschool ( with an infant/toddler program)
- ❑ 61 Developmental Intervention Supervisors Trained
- ❑ 46 Developmental Intervention Trainers Trained
- ❑ Pilot tested DI Assistant Trainings:
  - ❑ The Resource Center 8 participants 4 Academies
  - ❑ Community Options Inc. 7 participants completed 10 Academies
  - ❑ Bal Swan Childten's Center/Imagine 32 participants



# Colorado Community Center Boards



Highlighted CCB numbers have participated in DISA/DITA Training as of 2-10-2011

# Pilot Testing of DI Assistant Curriculum

- ❑ Academies pilot tested with classes from 6-30 candidates
- ❑ No major revisions/changes recommended by the trainers
- ❑ Academies are very well received by participants - all reported increase in knowledge on the post tests and course evaluations
- ❑ Interactions with other DI Assistant participants in academies was reported to be rewarding both by participants as well as trainers
- ❑ Trainings triggered good teaming conversations among professionals

# Accomplishments Objective #4:

To facilitate career pathways for DI Assistants through articulated degree programs

- Articulation of the DI Assistant certificate with community colleges in process
- Next steps - Facilitate 2 + 2 articulation programs as well as transfer of CO-TOP\*EIS certificate credits to degree 4 year college programs for early intervention/ early childhood special education



# CO-TOP\*EIS: Next Steps

- Discuss CCB infrastructural issues and other issues through a taskforce/coalition (how to hire DI Assistants, job descriptions, who supervises, compensation for supervisors, coordination of training etc.)
- Train additional trainers
- 40 DI Assistants to complete the certificate in 2010-2011
- Articulation with 2 & 4 year degree programs
- Adapt the project to a Hybrid/online format
- Implement the new grant funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in collaboration with Colorado Community College System



# CO-TOP\*EIS Challenges

- **CCB reported challenges**
  - CCBs overwhelmed with many other responsibilities - DI Assistant training is one more thing to do!
  - Staffing pattern - cannot enforce training of contract providers
  - Need for DI Assistant not recognized
  - Concerns about supervision of DI Assistants in home based services
- **Geographical Challenges:** Face to face training difficult in tribal, mountain, and other remote areas of Colorado, particularly during inclement weather in winter





# *Financial challenges*

---



In tribal, mountain, and other remote areas, class sizes are small but the overhead (building, instructor costs, travel costs, etc.) remain the same (or higher than, it would be in a larger class in the Denver Metro area.

# The New Hybrid CO-TOP\*EIS Project

## Goals

- To create state DI Assistants standards that are aligned to the national personnel standards established by DEC-CEC
- To align the existing DI Assistants certificate program curriculum to the standards.
- To adapt the revised DI Assistants certificate curriculum for delivery in hybrid format (i.e. a combination of classroom and online instruction) through community colleges - enhance the accessibility and provide statewide availability.
- To train community college faculty and existing trainers to deliver the hybrid program.





# Questions?

---





# For more information, contact:

---

Ritu Chopra, PhD, Executive Director, The PAR<sup>2</sup>A Center. [ritu.chopra@ucdenver.edu](mailto:ritu.chopra@ucdenver.edu)

Geri DiPalma, MA, Coordinator, CO-TOP\*EIS Project, The PAR<sup>2</sup>A Center.

[geraldine.dipalma@ucdenver.edu](mailto:geraldine.dipalma@ucdenver.edu)