

# The Opening Utah's Doors Project

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**Project Period:** 4 Years—July 2001 to July 2005

**Funding Source:** Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Division for Children with Special Health Care Needs

**Purpose:** Some families who have a child with special needs feel confused and overwhelmed in an attempt to find services that their child needs most. Some families view the system as a complex disconnected network creating additional frustration for families who many times are already struggling. In our technically advanced society, it is unbelievable that the services available to families have not created an integrated approach for ensuring and providing services.

The Early Intervention Research Institute (EIRI) will work in partnership with nine Utah state departments, community based programs and families to develop a common enrollment/eligibility process for the families these agencies serve. The nine departments and programs agreeing to participate include: the Utah Department of Health; CSHCN program; Baby Watch (Part C) program; Medicaid; WIC program; Head Start; Department of Mental Health, Department of Education Part B preschool; and the Division of Services for People with Disabilities. A participatory action research approach will be used to create interagency common eligibility/enrollment materials (*Strategy 1*) that will be made operational through a shared data system (*Strategy 2*). The use of blended funds (*Strategy 3*) to further this effort will be pursued with the agency/program partners that collaborate on the common application materials. Although a preliminary needs assessment did not indicate a significant problem with multiple care coordinators in Utah, we will conduct a more in-depth investigation to clarify how care coordination could be made more effective in the enrollment/eligibility process (*Strategy 4*). We will refer to this as the *C-4 Model* (i.e. the *collaboration four strategies*) which will combine necessary ingredients required by the Integrated Services RFP. Conceptually, these four service integration strategies are integrally related and will be referred to as the C-4 Model. This proposal has the commitment of five Utah communities, both rural and urban, including Logan, Provo/Orem, Midvale, St. George, and Vernal.

## **State Involvement/ Time Commitment**

At the State level, there is a need for a consortium and/or a series of work groups to:

- communicate with community supervisors,
- facilitate project connections at the community level, represent their agencies needs and interests in the project,
- facilitate their agencies ability to implement the project statewide.

This consortium will meet with project staff approximately two to three each year.

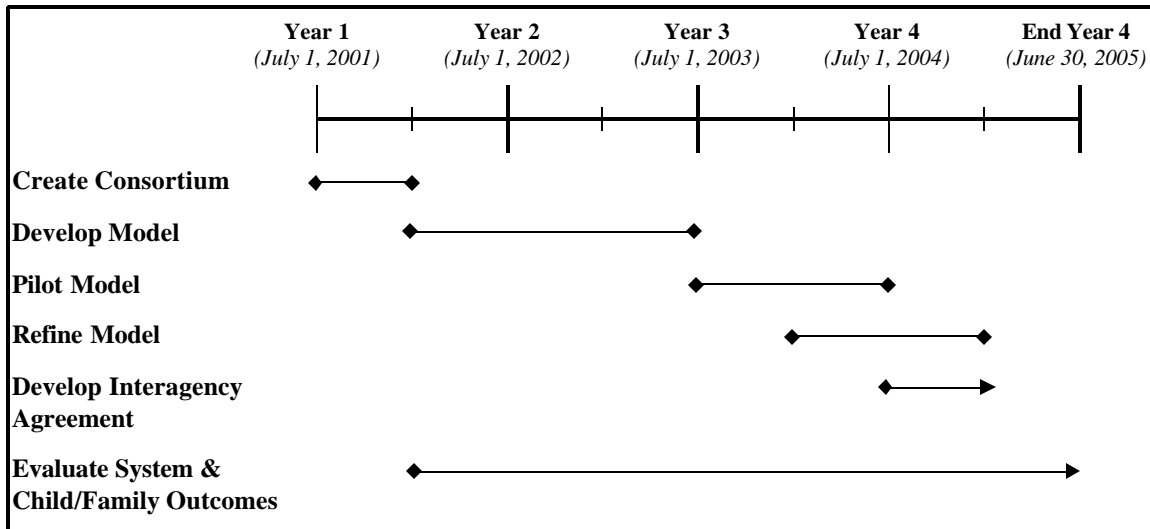
## **Community Involvement/Time Commitment**

Participating communities will be asked to:

- recruit parents and service coordinators from community agencies to participate in interviews and/or focus groups.
- make recommendations on aspects of the C-4 model
- pilot the C-4 model at the community level and provide feedback to state agencies

**Potential Strategies and Methods for Achieving the C-4 Model**

1. Common application/eligibility forms
  - interview 10 parents of children with special needs from 3-5 communities to understand time required for eligibility process and feelings toward creation of common application /eligibility process
  - interview service coordinators (SCs) in those communities who work with families to understand time requirement and attitudes toward a common application/eligibility process
2. Integrated/shared data and information systems
  - document current data integration initiatives in Utah
  - prepare summary of other state’s data integration efforts for review
  - prepare summary of data integration pros and cons (see FERPA and HIPAA)
  - convene a data sharing/integration work group
  - make recommendations on data integration
3. Blended funding
  - document current interagency blended/shared funding mechanisms
  - convene workgroup to examine blended funding possibilities to support the C-4 model
4. Single service coordinator (SC) who communicates with the family
  - use parent and SC interviews gathered at the community level to determine current overlaps and gaps in service coordination
  - convene a parent and service coordination work group to create a prototype for a streamlined/simplified model for cross-agency service coordination



**Opening Utah's Door Model**

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