**Physician Certification Requirements**

Specific Requirements Related to Physician Signature for Medical Necessity:

* The physician signature is required for the initial IFSP, annual IFSP and anytime a service is added or services change (as determined through the IFSP Review process). For example, physician signature is
  + Required when adding assistive technology if it can be reimbursed by family’s insurance
  + Required when increasing or decreasing frequency of services
  + Not required when the service location changes from one natural environment to another
  + Not required when ending a service
  + Not required when adding an assessment for children covered by Medicaid
* The physician signature must be dated by the physician.
* The physician certification of the IFSP is considered a part of the IFSP and must be attached to the IFSP. Medical necessity is established by the IFSP combined with physician certification.
* The IFSP must be certified as a whole (i.e. it is not acceptable to have more than one individual or agency obtain certification for individual services on the IFSP). The local system/Service Coordinator is responsible for assuring that the physician certifies the IFSP and that the physician certification is a part of the IFSP document. The local system may delegate this process, but only to one individual/agency so that physicians receive only one request for review and certification of the IFSP as a whole. If this responsibility is delegated to an individual/agency, that individual/agency must send the signed document to the local system to be filed with the IFSP in the child’s EI record.
* Service coordinators are expected to make every effort to obtain physician certification quickly enough to ensure the timely start of services. Local systems are not permitted to delay the start of supports and services while waiting for insurance authorization or physician certification, except by parent request. If there is difficulty in getting timely physician signature from the child’s primary care physician, service coordinators may seek a signature from another physician on the child’s medical team or IFSP team or may be able to get the signature of a physician assistant or nurse practitioner associated with the physician.
* In those rare instances when the service coordinator is unable to obtain the physician signature in a timely manner, Part C funds must be used, as needed, to avoid a delay in the start of services. Remember that Medicaid allows the service to start without a physician signature and will still reimburse for the service as long as the physician (or physician assistant or nurse practitioner) signature is obtained no more than 30 days after the first IFSP services (other than service coordination) begin.
* Physical therapists must follow Virginia PT regulatory requirements governing physician referrals for services and will not be able to begin services without such a referral, except under the limited exclusions specified in the PT regulations, even if Part C funds are available as payor of last resort.

Physician Signature Needed at IFSP Review…

* If the projected end date has been reached and the service will continue? **Yes**
* If a new service (other than assessment, for children with Medicaid), is added? **Yes**
* If there is a change (increase or decrease) in frequency or length of an existing service? **Yes**
* If a service ends? **No**
* If the child is discharged from early intervention? **No**
* If services stay the same but an outcome(s) and/or short term goal(s) changes? **No**
* If the only entitled early intervention service listed on the IFSP is service coordination? **No**