

# Making Decisions about the Delivery of Practice-Based Coaching

*Developed by: Meghan von der Embse and Ashley MacNish*

To ensure the successful implementation of the Pyramid Model, the program-wide leadership team is responsible for developing a comprehensive plan to provide professional development to all staff. A critical component of the professional development plan is integrating evidence-based coaching with training and support to help practitioners effectively use the specific evidence-based practices within each tier of the Pyramid Model.

Using Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) strengthens program quality, sustains the use of Pyramid Model practices, and leads to growth in social and emotional skills in young children. Creating a positive, supportive coaching culture begins with developing a coaching plan for the program and communicating it to all program staff. PBC is not a one-size-fits-all coaching framework, but one that can be adapted to meet the unique needs of programs and practitioners. This resource can help the leadership team decide how to integrate PBC into the program's professional development plan while differentiating it across the program.

A program's **comprehensive professional development plan** is a structured approach to ensure the continuous learning and growth of staff within the program. Key components of a professional development plan include:

- ▶ **Ongoing support:** Professional development should include continuous support, training, and ongoing coaching on the implementation of Pyramid Model practices.
- ▶ **Various learning experiences:** Learning opportunities can be offered in multiple formats, including practice implementation, peer connections, and traditional formats like workshops, online courses, and webinars.
- ▶ **Accountability and success:** A successful plan includes clear action steps, timelines, necessary resources, regular check-ins, and celebrations of program and practitioner achievements.



## Strategic Decision-Making for PBC Implementation

Planning for practitioner coaching involves more than identifying and training coaches. The program leadership team needs to define who will be coached, the type of coaching, and the frequency and duration of coaching sessions. Decisions will include how to ensure adequate coaching time, how to schedule staff to provide coverage for coaching meetings, and which materials will be needed to support effective coaching. Leadership teams will want to capture decisions about coaching in a written plan or incorporate them into program policies and procedures. While coaching plans may be fluid from year to year, a written plan accessible to all staff will help the leadership team communicate and share coaching decisions across the program. Leadership teams are encouraged to explore additional guidance for training and supporting coaches using the [Program Leadership Team Guide: Implementing Practice-Based Coaching](#) within the Pyramid Model and the [Early Intervention Leadership Team Guide: Program-Wide Support for Pyramid Model Implementation](#) within Early Intervention Services.



### Determining Coaching Delivery Methods

The leadership team can collaborate with coaches and practitioners on their ideas, perspectives, and experiences with different coaching formats. To select the appropriate coaching format for practitioners, leadership teams must first become familiar with the available options. Across all formats, a coach will be needed to guide the process, provide support, and monitor implementation and outcomes.

#### Coaching Partner Formats:

Below are the various coaching partner formats that can be used for PBC.



► **Individual**, often called expert coaching, is the format most leadership teams will be familiar with. Expert 1:1 coaching involves an expert in the Pyramid Model and PBC providing coaching to practitioners. Leadership teams can explore the Classroom Practitioner Coaching Guide for detailed information on individual coaching.



► **Group coaching** involves an expert coach providing PBC to a group of practitioners through facilitated group meetings. For detailed information on group coaching, refer to the NCPMI Group Coaching Approach.



► **Reciprocal peer coaching** involves two practitioners supporting each other through the PBC cycle with guidance and support from the coach.



► **Self-coaching** occurs when a practitioner independently engages in the PBC cycle, using materials to develop an action plan and a process or technology for focused observation and self-reflection. The coach supports the practitioner throughout the self-coaching process.

### Determining the Format for Coaching Delivery

In the delivery of PBC, the team can use the information and data they have gathered from practice implementation tools (e.g., Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool [TPOT], Teaching Pyramid Infant-Toddler Observation Scale [TPITOS], Early Intervention Pyramid Practices Fidelity Instrument [EIPPF]), coaching logs, and through conversations with practitioners in the program to determine the best fit of a coaching format for their practitioners.

**If the data and information indicate that:****Then a good fit might be:**

- ▶ Practitioners need a high level of support to implement Pyramid Model practices.
- ▶ Practitioners express a desire for individualized coaching or support.
- ▶ The program can identify a coach and provide sufficient time and resources to support teachers with 1:1 coaching.



Individual coaching

- ▶ Several practitioners would benefit from coaching around similar Pyramid Model practices (e.g., teaching friendship skills).
- ▶ Practitioners are willing to collaborate in a small group of 6-8 peers.
- ▶ The program can identify a coach with facilitation skills to lead group coaching meetings.



Group coaching

- ▶ A pair of practitioners has complementary strengths and can support one another.
- ▶ Practitioners are willing to collaborate and to support another teacher in the PBC cycle.
- ▶ The program can provide practitioners time to observe and reflect with a fellow coaching partner.
- ▶ The program can identify a coach who can guide the reciprocal peer coaching process.



Reciprocal peer coaching

- ▶ Practitioners who might benefit from improving a specific Pyramid Model practice (e.g., transitions).
- ▶ Practitioners are highly motivated, reflective, and knowledgeable about Pyramid Model practices.
- ▶ Practitioners can access learning materials (e.g., books and webinars).
- ▶ The program can identify a coach who can guide the self-coaching process.



Self-coaching

Leadership teams can maximize resources by being flexible with coaching formats. For example, in the first year, a program might have the resources to offer individual coaching to two practitioners and group coaching to five. The following year, they could shift the seven practitioners from the previous year to group or peer coaching, while three new practitioners receive individual coaching. This adaptability allows the program to meet evolving needs and resource availability.

## Coaching Delivery Modalities

The leadership team can differentiate PBC approaches and boost efficiency by exploring different coaching modalities. Incorporating modalities beyond live, face-to-face coaching, such as distance coaching, enables coaches to coach more practitioners by eliminating travel time (when coaching across multiple program sites). Distance coaching also allows coaches to create flexible schedules that accommodate practitioners' scheduling needs.



Leadership teams can explore integrating technology to help coaches maximize their time and enhance their coaching strategies. Common technologies that support coaching implementation include video recordings, videoconferencing, and web-based coaching platforms and applications. Videoconferencing and web-based meeting platforms enable the coach and the practitioner to participate in all components of the coaching cycle actively.

If the leadership team is interested in the use of technology in the delivery of PBC, they should discuss the following considerations:

- ▶ How will the program train practitioners and coaches to use technology?
- ▶ Does the program have a system to collect video permissions for use in recorded focused observations? How are families informed of the purpose of using video in the classroom?
- ▶ Does the program have access to any coaching platforms to support distance coaching?
- ▶ How will the program support practitioners who might need additional support with technology (e.g., recording observations, sharing video, and participating in virtual meetings)?

Coaching might include the following variations when distance coaching is incorporated:

- ▶ The coach conducts a live observation during an early interventionist home visit, then meets virtually with the practitioner via a meeting platform for reflection and feedback.
- ▶ A practitioner records a focused observation and shares it with the coach. Then, the coach and practitioner meet virtually for reflection and feedback.
- ▶ The coach completes a virtual observation (live via technology) and meets with the practitioner virtually for reflection and feedback.

## Realistic Expectations

Implementing Practice-Based Coaching across a program requires planning and time. Setting realistic goals and expectations for coaching should be part of developing a coaching plan for the program. When establishing these expectations, it is helpful to consider the following:



- ▶ **Start small.** It is often most feasible to start small with coaching. Recognize that coaching can occur in phases and begin with a realistic, manageable number of practitioners. Not all practitioners will need individual, expert coaching. Many programs start with one or two practitioners eager or willing to be the first to participate in the coaching process.

► **Plan for universal professional development.** Provide training in Pyramid Model practices and help bridge training to practice implementation through additional professional development supports that can be made available to everyone in the program. Use data to identify professional development topics where all staff may need support, and reserve specific topics or supports for one-on-one or more intensive coaching efforts. Universal activities might include:

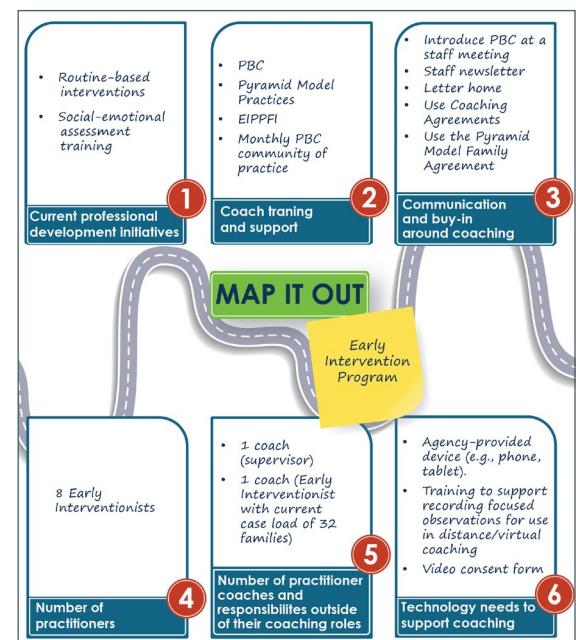
- Creating practice challenges for staff to learn about a social-emotional practice at a staff meeting, try it out, and then report back at the next staff meeting.
- Encouraging staff to share and highlight implementation examples on social media.
- Offering “Make and Take” workshops where staff can create visual schedules, scripted stories, or other materials they might use with children and families.
- Creating a Pyramid Model staff newsletter featuring staff implementing practices with children.

► **Prioritize coach development.** Coaches will need time to learn and practice coaching strategies and new skills. Consider providing coaches with an initial, smaller caseload to allow for time to practice and to build their confidence and expertise. Many coaches benefit from focused experience with individual coaching before using different coaching formats to deliver PBC.

► **Map it out.** The leadership team will want to quantify available resources and how they will affect what is possible in delivering PBC. This includes knowing the number of practitioners in the program, the number of practitioners trained in Pyramid Model practices, the number of available coaches, and the current time allocation for coaching activities (e.g., observations and debriefing meetings). Use this information to determine the gap between needs and resources to inform the development of a realistic coaching plan.

► **Determine the criteria for selecting practitioners to receive coaching.** Leadership teams will have access to data and other information to make data-informed decisions about which practitioners might be the best fit for initial coaching supports. Data to consider:

- Observation data: Use data from observations (e.g., TPOT, TPITOS, EIPPF) to identify practitioners who might benefit from focused support in specific Pyramid Model practices.
- Strengths and Needs Assessment: Gather input from practitioners on their perceived strengths and needs, as well as the particular areas where they would like coaching support. Use the strength and needs assessment as part of PBC or a survey of practitioners (e.g., [Pyramid Model Practices Implementation Checklist for Infant and Toddler Classrooms](#), [Pyramid Model Practices Implementation Checklist for Preschool Classrooms](#), [Early Intervention Implementation Checklist](#)).
- Benchmarks of Quality: Consider program-wide goals and identify practitioners whose growth aligns with the leadership team’s priorities.
- Practitioner workstyle or personality characteristics: Survey practitioners on how they like to collaborate or work with others (e.g., using the [Classroom Collaboration Workstyle Discussion Guide](#)).



- Practitioner preference: Survey practitioners to determine their preferences for different coaching formats. Include options for the current program year and additional years to accommodate preferences for when coaching begins.
- Experience and skill level of practitioners: Practitioners will be at different stages in implementing social-emotional practices and in their need for professional development. A skilled practitioner might not require or need the same level of support as a new practitioner in the workforce.

► **Set a clear timeline.** When the program introduces a new approach to PBC delivery, they should set a timeframe for piloting the coaching. This allows the program to collect data on its effectiveness and use that information to inform its next steps. For example, a team might introduce peer coaching and try it for 3 months to assess whether the coach's caseload is manageable and whether there are initial improvements in Pyramid Model practices.

► **Get Creative.** Coaching delivery might look different from year to year, especially as program practitioners receive coaching and demonstrate high levels of practice implementation. Allowing for fluidity and creativity in coaching formats helps sustain the excitement around coaching while still meeting staff's professional development needs. For example, after a year of 1:1 coaching, some practitioners might benefit from continued coaching for fidelity, while a group of practitioners moves to a sustainability-focused format. This might include an option to attend regular Pyramid Model training and request coaching on an as-needed basis. The practitioners continue to implement the Pyramid Model practices learned in training and have access to PBC should they need additional support. The following table illustrates how a large program might map out coaching decisions.

### Example Coaching Decisions for Large Program (18 Practitioners)

Format	Number Practitioners	Frequency	Next Steps
1:1 Coaching	4 Practitioners	Bi-Weekly for eight coaching cycles	Review data to explore other coaching options
Group Coaching	6 Practitioners	Bi-Weekly for eight sessions	Review data explore other coaching options
Training with Requested Coaching	4 Practitioners	6, 45-minute training sessions throughout the year. Access 4 individual coaching sessions.	
Peer Coaching	To be determined	Monthly coach check-in	

## Monitoring Implementation and Outcomes

During monthly leadership team meetings, the team should review coaching challenges and successes and provide coach support and guidance. Monthly leadership team meetings should also include ongoing conversations around coaching data. The leadership team can use coaching data to identify actions that will make coaching more effective and increase practitioners' implementation of social and emotional teaching practices. Topics to add to the monthly leadership team meetings might include:

- ▶ Establish timelines to start collecting data using practitioner coaching logs and to review coaching log data and progress (e.g., monthly at leadership team meetings).
- ▶ Collect staff feedback on coaching to gauge their perspectives on whether it was effective, feasible, and supportive.
- ▶ Analyze coaching log and practice implementation data using the Look-Think-Act process. Leadership teams are encouraged to explore additional guidance for evaluating the implementation and outcomes of PBC using the [Program Leadership Team Guide](#), the [Early Intervention Leadership Team Guide](#), and the [Look-Think-Act](#) process for coaching log data to:
  - Monitor the intensity and outcomes of coaching efforts
  - Identify trends and patterns in practice implementation
  - Inform adjustments to coaching strategies

The following table provides suggestions for when the program leadership team might review their coaching implementation, along with questions the team can use to assess the quality and impact of PBC in the program.

## Questions and Considerations for the Leadership Team

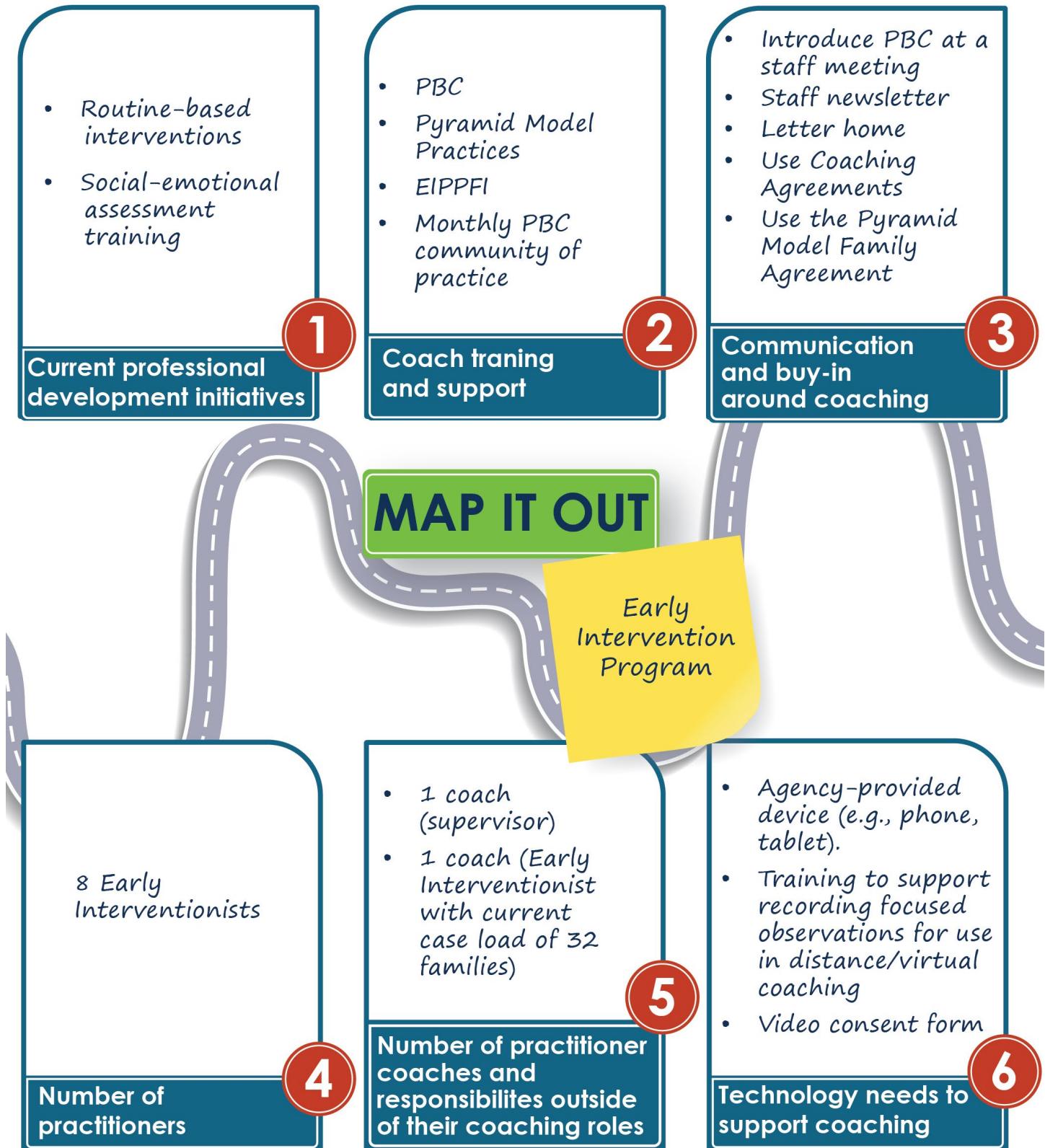
### Initial Planning

- Have coaches completed strengths-and-needs assessments with practitioners?
- Have the practitioners identified for coaching received training in the practices?
- Are all staff and coaches able to use the identified technology? Are additional technology supports needed?
- Have coaches initiated the use of practitioner coaching logs?
- Has the leadership team mapped out resources for coaching? (see sample in this document)?
- Do we need to explore additional training on coaching formats and delivery options (e.g., technology use, recording focused observations, and peer-coaching forms)?
- Do staff feel the universal professional development activities are helpful?

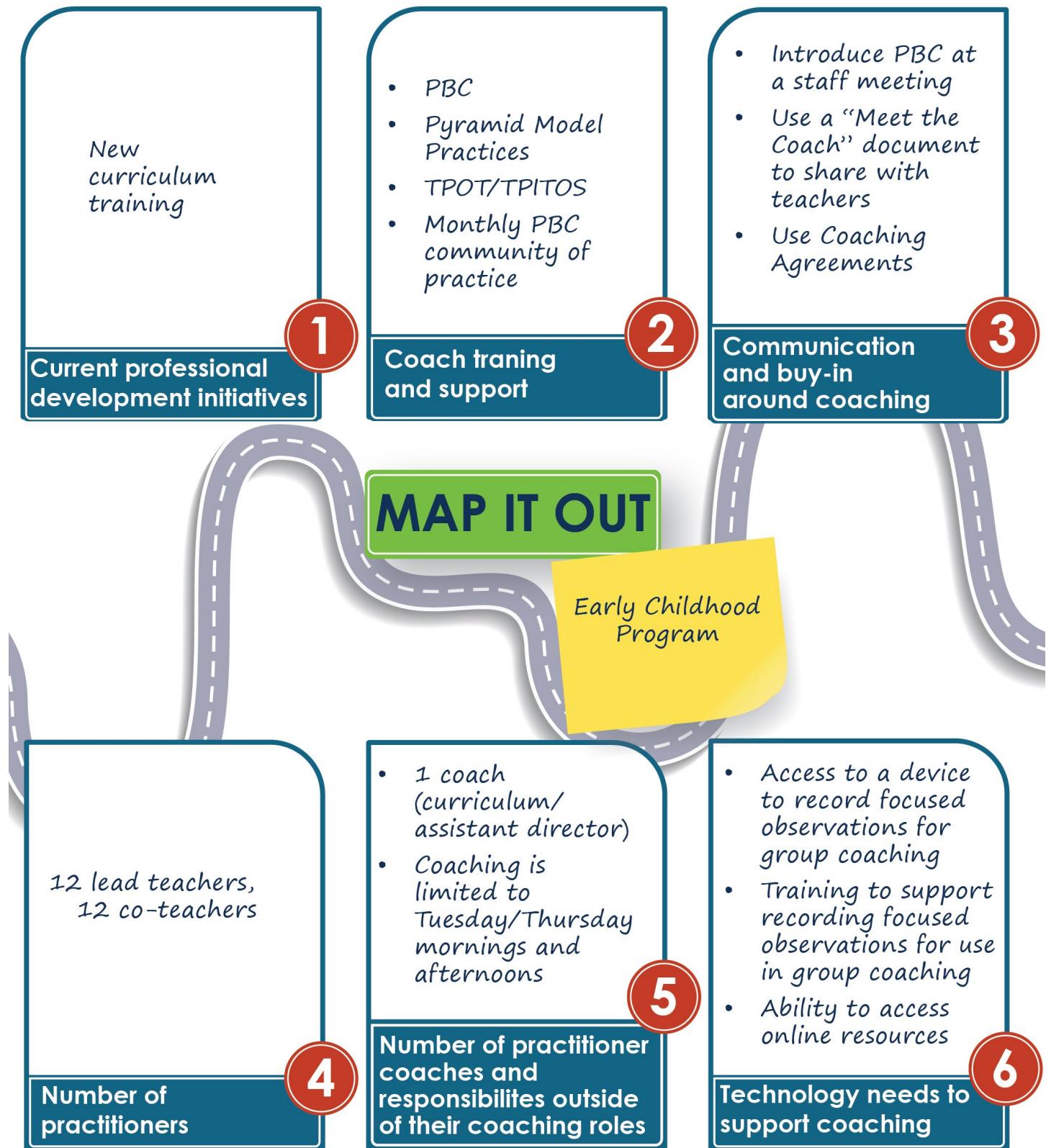
### Ongoing Coaching

- Are practitioners making progress? Is there EIPPF/TIPOT/TPITOS data that supports the need for additional coaching for practitioners?
- Are practitioners reporting that coaching is helpful?
- Are coaches able to meet the expectations of coaching?
- Have coaches reviewed data from their practitioner coaching logs? Has our leadership team completed regular reviews of coaching practitioner logs?
- Did the coaching format we selected work?
- Are there coaching formats that were more effective at improving implementation outcomes?
- Are practitioners who received coaching maintaining their practice use over time?
- If changes are needed to coaching caseloads, has the leadership team accommodated scheduling changes or allowed additional coaching time?
- Do we have the capacity to provide intensive coaching to practitioners who need more support (e.g., move from group coaching to individual coaching)?
- Are we able to recruit additional coaches or add additional delivery formats?
- Have we determined the process for adding additional practitioners for coaching the following year?

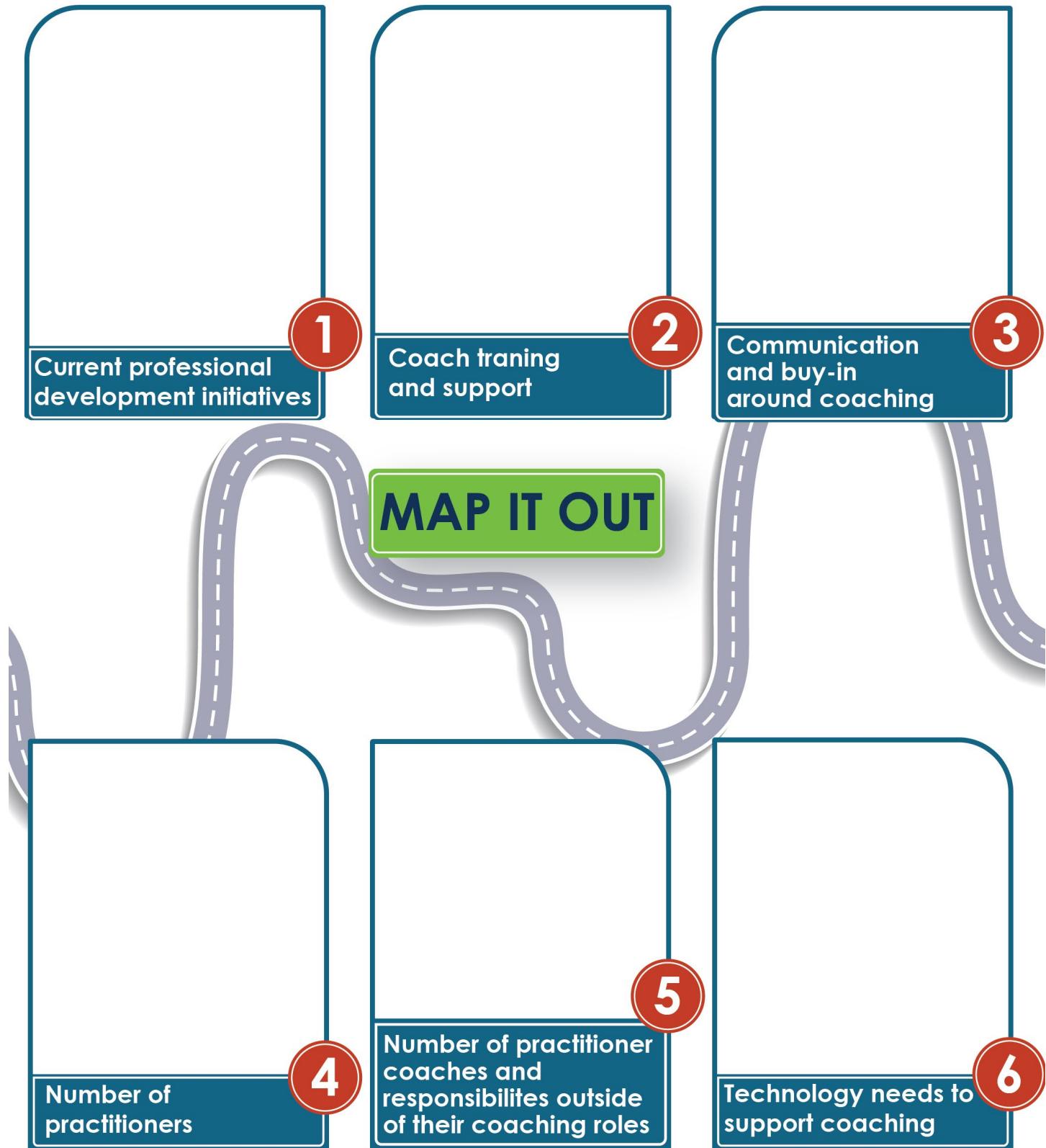
## Example Map It Out: Early Intervention Program



## Example Map It Out: Early Childhood Program



Use this “Map it Out” template to identify the resources your program has and what is needed for your coaching plan.



## Resource Links Throughout this Resource

- Using Practice-Based Coaching (PBC):  
<https://www.challengingbehavior.org/document/evidence-what-we-know-about-practice-based-coaching/>
- Program Leadership Team Guide: Implementing Practice-Based Coaching:  
<https://www.challengingbehavior.org/document/program-leadership-team-guide-implementing-practice-based-coaching-within-the-pyramid-model/>
- Early Intervention Leadership Team Guide: Program-Wide Support for Pyramid Model Implementation:  
<https://www.challengingbehavior.org/document/early-intervention-leadership-team-guide-program-wide-supports-for-pyramid-model-implementation-within-early-intervention-services/>
- Pyramid Model Practices Implementation Checklist for Infant and Toddler Classrooms: <https://www.challengingbehavior.org/document/pyramid-model-practices-implementation-checklist-for-infant-and-toddler-classrooms/>
- Pyramid Model Practices Implementation Checklist for Preschool Classrooms: <https://www.challengingbehavior.org/document/pyramid-model-practices-implementation-checklist/>
- Early Intervention Implementation Checklist: <https://www.challengingbehavior.org/document/early-intervention-implementation-checklist/>
- Classroom Collaboration Workstyle Discussion Guide: <https://www.challengingbehavior.org/document/classroom-collaboration-workstyle-discussion-guide/>