What is I-Consult?
I-Consult is a system of relationship-based professional development programs supporting agencies providing on-site consultation and coaching services to early care and education programs. The goal of I-Consult is to facilitate effective consultation and coaching services that build teachers'/caregivers' understanding and implementation of best practices. Through I-Consult programs, consultants learn to provide services that complement other forms of professional development, such as workshops or courses, by providing on-site support to help teachers/caregivers implement the targeted practices.

Who can participate in I-Consult Professional Development Programs?
The I-Consult program works with agencies that employ consultants with appropriate professional education and experiences in child development and early care and education. These agencies provide their consultants the professional development required to maintain an understanding of best practices, including the accurate and consistent use of evidence-based program quality assessment tools. I-Consult instructors and mentors partner with agency supervisors to help individual consultants reflect upon, document, and build their competencies in Content Expertise, Building Professional Relationships, Using Technical Assistance Strategies, and Applying Professionalism and Ethics.

What kind of consultation services does I-Consult support?
Through I-Consult, consultants learn to provide consultation services in four stages. Through I-Consult, the consultant learns to begin by Building a Professional Partnership with the teacher/caregiver and the teacher’s supervisor. The consultant then learns to work with the teacher and her supervisor through Joint Assessment and Planning to develop an action plan that builds on the teacher’s strengths and addresses her challenges. Through I-Consult, consultants learn to use a series of coaching activities to help the teacher to Implement the Plan by reflecting, planning, and practicing new skills. Finally, consultants learn to use their agency’s program quality assessment tool again to Evaluate and Transition the teacher/caregiver to new professional development experiences.

What key coaching activities does I-Consult support?
Through I-Consult, consultants learn to use five coaching activities to facilitate the teacher/caregiver’s reflection and intentional practice. Consultants learn to begin Observing and recording the teacher’s practices, documenting teaching behaviors that demonstrate best practices leading to desired child outcomes. Through Reflecting jointly on the observations, the consultant and teacher identify strengths and challenges. Giving feedback to the teacher, the consultant helps the teacher understand why these practices are important in helping children learn. Planning together, the consultant and the teacher decide how to help the teacher build on her strengths and address her challenges. They select and use appropriate Cueing activities that help the teacher understand, practice, plan, and implement the targeted skills.

What are I-Consult technical assistance strategies?
Through I-Consult, consultants learn to begin using Low Power Strategies (Paraphrasing, Clarifying, and Encouraging) to help the teacher/caregiver reflect upon her strengths, challenges, and goals. As they work through challenges, the consultant may need to use Moderate Power Strategies (Presenting, Problem Solving, Negotiating, and Modeling) to help the teacher select and implement new skills. As needed, the consultant uses High Power Strategies (Directing and Rewarding) to address health and safety risks.
How does the consultant choose the appropriate technical assistance strategy?
To choose the appropriate technical assistance strategy, the consultant learns in I-Consult to continually assess the teacher’s/caregiver’s Understanding of best practices and Motivation to implement these practices. With the teacher who shows high levels of understanding and motivation, the consultant only uses low power strategies to help the teacher clarify her strengths and challenges. With teachers who show lower levels of understanding, the consultant uses higher power strategies to present and model best practices. With teachers who show lower levels of motivation, consultants use higher power to negotiate timelines for planned changes. For teachers with the lowest levels of motivation, the consultant works with the supervisor or regulatory authority to direct needed changes. As soon as the teacher shows higher levels of understanding and motivation, the consultant returns to lower level power strategies.

What organizational supports are required for the I-Consult program?
Participating in the I-Consult Professional Development program requires the agency to provide five types of organizational supports. The agency implements effective practices for Recruiting and Selecting qualified consultants with both content expertise and good communication skills. The agency provides effective Pre-service Orientation to help the consultant learn to use the program quality assessment tools accurately and consistently. The agency provides Ongoing Mentoring and Coaching that enable the consultant to reflect on and use technical assistance strategies appropriately in each consulting activity. The agency provides ongoing Staff and Program Evaluation to improve programs and services. The agency provides appropriate Administrative Supports, such as professional development, technology, release time, procedures, and compensation, needed to facilitate effective consultation and supervision.

What I-Consult professional development programs are available?
I-Consult has three levels of professional development: Introductory, Credentialing, and Mentoring:

The Introductory I-Consult Program involves four workshops for consultants with appropriate content expertise and their supervisors to learn and practice the key I-Consult activities and strategies. All participants receive an I-Consult Introductory Handbook. Supervisors also receive an I-Consult Administrative Supports Handbook. After the second workshop, each consultant works with her supervisor to observe and reflect on her use of coaching activities and technical assistance strategies.

The I-Consult Credentialing Program is open to agencies whose have completed the introductory I-Consult program and at least 12 months work in early care and education consultation. This program involves four credentialing workshops where consultants work through the I-Consult Credentialing Handbook to review and reflect on each of the four competency areas. Each consultant develops a Consultation Portfolio documenting her competencies in each area. Each consultant receives three visits from an ISU mentor and a mentor from their own agency. Consultants and mentors meet to review the mentor’s observations linking consultant behaviors and client outcomes to I-Consult competencies. Consultants distribute surveys for their clients to evaluate the process and outcomes of consultation. Finally, each consultant, supervisor, and mentor participate in a Consultation Credential Validation Conference to review the portfolio, client feedback, and mentor observations. After reviewing the evidence presented, the participants decide whether the evidence is sufficient to award the I-Consult Credential to the consultant or whether additional evidence is needed.

The I-Consult Mentoring Program is open to agencies with consultants with the I-Consult credential. Mentors participate in four mentoring workshops use the I-Consult Mentoring Handbook to review key mentoring competencies, to identify their mentoring strengths, and to address identified mentoring challenges. Each mentor also receives thee visits from an ISU mentor who observes and records examples of mentoring competencies in mentor behaviors and consultant outcomes. Each mentor completes a Mentor Portfolio documenting her understanding of and skills in mentoring. After completing a year mentoring at least two consultants, the mentor participates with her supervisor and ISU
mentor in a Mentor Credential Validation Conference to review the evidence documenting the mentor observations. After reviewing the evidence presented, the participants decide whether the evidence is sufficient to award the I-Consult Mentoring Credential or whether additional evidence is needed.

Where can I find out more information about I-Consult?
More information on I-Consult is available at the I-Consult Website: www.XXXXXXXXX. For information about the cost and availability of I-Consult programs, contact Susan Hegland (shegland@iastate.edu) or Lesia Oesterreich (loesterr@iastate.edu) at Iowa State University.