

Supporting our Littlest Learners through Early Intervention Programming

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Did you know that infants and toddlers can receive special education services? There is no need to wait until they reach age 2, enter preschool or start kindergarten. If you have a concern for your infant's or young toddler's development, there are people out there to help. The program is called Early Intervention (EI) and it is available to all. And it is free!!

Young children are rapidly growing and developing. They are constantly learning new skills. Sometimes, they surprise you with how "advanced" they are. Sometimes, parents become concerned that their child is not gaining new skills and meeting milestones as they might have expected. If this is a concern, this bulletin will help to explain the people and services available to assist your child and family and how to contact them.

The Mid-State ECDC is also a resource to assist parents and professionals with such questions and concerns regarding young children's development and connects parents with the services they need.

Every child has the capacity to be everything. ~ DORIS LESSING

Evolution of Early Intervention (EI)

Early Intervention is one part (Part C) of the larger *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. A law that entitles every child to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). These laws state that any child, no matter how young, is entitled to educational services to meet their needs. Initially, enacted in 1986, it was reauthorized by Congress in 1987 and the final federal regulations became effective in 1999.

It is a national program which provides many different types of services to infants and toddlers 0-3 years old. In this state, EI is administered by the New York State Department of Public Health through the Bureau of Early Intervention. Each County Health Department has a municipal Early Intervention Official (EIO) designated to administer the Early Intervention Program locally.

See the county contact listing on page 4.



Why an Early Intervention Program?

Congress established the EI program in 1986 in recognition of an urgent and substantial need to:

- Enhance the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities
- Reduce later educational costs by minimizing the need for special education through EI
- Enhance the capacity of families to meet their child's needs

It is a family-centered and community-based program designed to identify and evaluate as early as possible those infants and toddlers whose healthy development is compromised and provide appropriate intervention to improve child and family development.



What is a Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation?

Parents are usually the first to notice a problem. Parents can refer their own children to the EIO. Or certain professionals, such as a pediatrician, can refer children if a problem with development is suspected. However, they must have the parent's permission in order to do so.

A **multi-disciplinary evaluation** is a careful examination of a child's skills, strengths and weaknesses by two or more professionals to determine current levels of functioning and how best to plan for your child. What can he do? What does he like to do? What kinds of things should he be encouraged to do next? The evaluation process consists of gathering information from parents and play-based assessments with the child facilitated by trained and certified professionals, such as special education teachers, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists and psychologists.

The evaluation looks at all areas of development:

- Physical development (growth, gross and fine motor abilities)
- Cognitive development (learning and thinking)
- Communication (understanding and using words)
- Social-emotional development (relating to others)
- Adaptive development (self-help skills, such as feeding)

You can participate in the evaluation process by...

- ⇒ Talking about your concerns about your child's development
- ⇒ Filling in paperwork and answering questions
- ⇒ Describing how your child is at home
- ⇒ Identifying how your child's development has changed over time
- ⇒ Sharing what your child does well

How is Eligibility Determined?

The results of the evaluation are used to determine whether or not your child needs EI services.

Children are eligible for the EIP if they are under three years old and have:

- 1) a diagnosed physical or mental condition that often leads to developmental problems, OR
- 2) a developmental delay in at least one area of development (communication, social-emotional, adaptive, cognitive, and physical) that meets the criteria in Department regulations.

Services are tailored to meet a child's individual needs:

- Assistive technology services and devices
- Audiology
- Family training, counseling, home visits, and parent support groups
- Medical services only for diagnostic or evaluation purposes
- Nursing services
- Nutrition services
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Psychological services
- Service coordination services
- Social work services
- Special instruction
- Speech-language pathology
- Vision services
- Health services needed to benefit from other early intervention services
- Transportation to and from EI services



Service Coordination

An Initial Service Coordinator (ISC) will be assigned, who will help the family navigate the process of obtaining services for the child—from the multidisciplinary evaluation to the first Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). The ISC will explain each step to you and help set up the necessary evaluations to see if your child is eligible. At the IFSP meeting, parents can keep their Initial Service Coordinator or choose an on-going service coordinator once their child begins receiving services. The Ongoing Service Coordinator (OSC) makes sure that you and your child receive the services that are listed in your IFSP. The OSC also helps you make changes to your IFSP when needed and makes sure your IFSP is reviewed on a regular basis.

Understanding the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

Once your child has been determined eligible for the Early Intervention Program (EIP), the next step is to develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). This must be completed within 45 days of your initial referral to the EIO. During the IFSP meeting, your child's team will meet, including you, the ISC, and evaluation team members to develop a written plan for the goals and services for your child. The IFSP is reviewed every 6 months and your child is re-evaluated annually.

Family-Centered: The plan will focus on your family and the outcomes you would like to see for your child, including:

- A statement of your child's present level of functioning.
- With your permission, a statement of your family's resources, priorities, and concerns related to your child's development.
- A statement of the major outcomes expected from EI services.
- A statement of the EI services, including transportation, needed to meet your child's and family's needs.
- A statement of the natural environments where early intervention services will be provided. "Natural environments" means settings where infants and toddlers are typically found in the community, including home and child care.
- When needed, for EI service providers to train the day care staff to meet the needs of your child.
- A physician's or nurse practitioner's order for EI services that require an order from specific medical professionals.
- A statement about other services, including medical services, that are needed by your child and family that are not provided by the EIP.
- The projected dates that services will begin, as soon as possible after the IFSP meeting, and the period of time during which the services will be delivered.

Tips for a Successful Meeting:

- Focus. If possible, have someone available to care for your child, during this time.
- Be prepared. Make a list of questions or matters you want to discuss. Have paper and a pen or pencil ready to take notes.
- Listen to what team members have to say.
- Be clear about what you want.
- Ask questions when you don't understand something.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help!
- Understand that you have the right to say yes or no to any of the services discussed
- Know that you have the right to review and make changes to the plan at any time



If your child is turning three, the IFSP will also include the steps to help your child and family change to other services, including preschool special education services.

See also, ECDC's *Guide to Preschool Special Education— Transition from Early Intervention*: <http://ecdc.syr.edu/resources/parent-guides/transition-from-early-intervention-parent-guide/>

Questions about your child's development??

Not every person is an expert on child development, when developmental milestones should occur, or red flags that may indicate an area of concern. The ECDC website offers some helpful tools and resources that you can download:

- ⇒ *Developmental Checklist Birth through 5*: <http://ecdc.syr.edu/resources/checklists/developmental-checklist-lista-verificacion-del-desarrollo/>
- ⇒ *No Reason to Wait*—Winter 2012 ECDC Bulletin: <http://ecdc.syr.edu/resources/bulletins/no-reason-to-wait/>

The Mid-State Early Childhood Direction Center is here to answer questions and point parents in the right direction to those who can help to evaluate and provide services to young children. Our services are free and confidential. 315-443-4444

RESOURCES

The Early Intervention Program: A Parent's Guide Albany, NY: The New York State Department of Health. Available: <http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/0532/>

CONTACTS:

County Health Department Early Intervention Programs

Cayuga County Health Department Programs for Children with Special Needs

8 Dill Street, Auburn, NY 13021
Phone: (315) 253-1560
Fax: 315-253-1156

Cortland County Health Department Children with Special Needs

60 Central Ave, Cortland, NY 13045
Phone: 607-753-5028
Fax: 607-753-5136

Onondaga County Health Department Special Children's Services

501 East Fayette Street, Suite B, Syracuse, NY 13202
Phone 315-435-3230
Fax: (315) 435-2678

Oswego County Health Department Children with Special Needs

70 Bunner St, Oswego, NY, 13126
Phone: 315-349-3500
Fax: 315-349-3537

Seneca County Health Department Children with Special Healthcare Needs

31 Thurber Drive, Suite 1, Waterloo, NY 13165
Phone: 315-539-1920
Fax: 315-539-9493

Tompkins County Health Department Children with Special Care Needs

55 Brown Road, Ithaca, NY 14850
Phone: 607-274-6644
Fax: 607-274-6648



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Mid-State Early Childhood Direction Center

Syracuse University
805 S. Crouse Avenue
Syracuse, NY 13244-2280

Phone:
315-443-4444
1-800-962-5488

Fax:
315-443-4338

E-mail: ecdc@syr.edu

<http://ecdc.syr.edu>

*WHILE WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN,
THEY TEACH US.*



30 Years
Caring for All Children

Workshops of Interest

The ECDC can provide information and workshops on a variety of topics tailored to the interests and needs of parents and early childhood professionals. Resources are available on such topics as general child development, developmental issues for children with special needs, coping strategies, and specific disabilities.

Workshops include:

- Including All Kids
- Parent Partnerships
- Developmentally Appropriate Practices
- Early Childhood Development: The Meaning of Red Flags
- Supporting Social Emotional Development
- Positive Guidance and Behavior Strategies
- Moving On: Transitioning Families (EI-CPSE) & (CPSE-CSE)
- What Are Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education?
- What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?
- Writing IEP Goals
- Getting Ready for Kindergarten

Who We Are

The Early Childhood Direction Center (ECDC) is a regional technical assistance center for the State Education Department providing information, referral and support to families, professionals, and community agencies concerned with young children birth to five. We are located at Syracuse University's Center on Human Policy.

*ECDC services to families are
free and confidential.*

ECDC Staff

Tracey Menapace, Director
Maria Gill, Education Coordinator
Cyndy Colavita, Office Coordinator
Rachael Zubal-Ruggieri, Coordinator of
Computer and Technical Applications