

Early Intervention: What do you need to know?

Because you work so closely with children, you observe the different ways children develop and their unique learning styles. While all children grow and develop in their own way, you may notice changes in some children that are different than those in most, or that are different in comparison to general developmental milestones. Early recognition of a child's unique learning needs requires that you know about Early Intervention.



Early Intervention is a collaborative process intended to help children and their families with developmental delays. This is done through a collection of services and supports designed to enhance the child's development. Early Intervention involves a consistent effort of parents, child care providers, Early Intervention specialists, and others involved with the child.

Be informed

Each state provides information and services for Early Intervention. In Pennsylvania, Early Intervention is funded by federal, state, and county funds, public insurance, and many other community resources. County mental health/intellectual disabilities programs administer Early Intervention programs locally for children from birth through age two (infants and toddlers).

Know and use your contacts

Contact the local mental health/intellectual disabilities program or Department of Education serving your area and request information regarding the referral process for Early Intervention (brochures and contact information). Having this information on file allows you to be prepared for families in need. **PA contacts listed on next page.*

Document your ideas

Written observations are always important in understanding each child's developmental needs. If you have concerns about a child, be sure to document these by collecting samples of work, written observations that occurred over a period of time, and written examples of the ways you have adapted your work to meet the child's needs.

Support families

It may be difficult for the family to hear concerns about their child. Often parents are frightened and unaware of where to go for help. Use active listening and share resources you have gathered from other agencies that offer support.

And remember, special concerns should be discussed at special meeting times, not at busy transition times. Give families time to plan for the meeting as well as time to absorb what was discussed. Your role will be to work with the family to identify needs, show support, and help contact the designated referral agency, not to label or diagnose the problem.



Determine eligibility

The first step to accessing Early Intervention services is to determine if the child is eligible. With parental permission, preliminary information is gathered by the Early Intervention program, and evaluations (and possibly screenings) are done to determine eligibility by the Early Intervention program.

If services are suggested by the Early Intervention specialists and accepted by the family, speak with both the family and the Early Intervention specialists about being part of the team. Early Intervention specialists are trained to share knowledge and skills to support the child, family, and others working with the child.

The Early Intervention program will assist the team in developing written plans for services. For birth to three years of age, the plan is called Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP). For children ages three to school age, written plans are called Individualized Education Plans (IEP).

*Early Intervention Information in Pennsylvania:

Early Intervention Tips for Early Education Providers

<http://bit.ly/1UjQvJG>

A Family's Introduction to Early Intervention in Pennsylvania – call 800-692-7288 or go to <http://bit.ly/1Xyu9IW>

Early Intervention Services – A resource from the Department of Public Welfare; Childcare and Early Education – go to <http://bit.ly/1pwYqXM>

