



EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

Services for infants and toddlers with disabilities

Early intervention services are for infants and toddlers, from birth through the age of two, who have a delay in one of the five areas of development: physical, cognitive, communication, social or emotional, or adaptive. Different states have different rules for early intervention services. Early intervention programs are run by a “Lead Agency,” which will have the rules for your state. Find the Lead Agency for your state in The Arc@School’s [Resource Directory](#).

How do I know if my child needs early intervention services?

To find out if your child is eligible for early intervention services, your child usually needs to be evaluated. The evaluation will include formal tests of your child and gather information from the people who know your child, like you, your child’s doctors, and other caregivers.

Some states will find children eligible based on their medical diagnosis, without doing an evaluation. Children with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and similar medical conditions are often automatically eligible for early intervention services.

It's often important for families to include their child's doctor when discussing early intervention services, because the child's medical records can be very important when deciding if a child is eligible for early intervention services.

What happens if my child is eligible for early intervention services?

The early intervention program will do a family assessment. The goal of the family assessment is to figure out what resources the family may already have, what their priorities and concerns are, and what services the family needs to help support their child.

If your child was found eligible based on their medical diagnosis and did not have an evaluation, the early intervention program will also do a child assessment. The goal of the child assessment is to understand your child's strengths as well as their needs in each of the five areas of development: physical, cognitive, communication, social and emotional, and adaptive.

The family and child assessment (or the evaluation) are very important, because the next step is to write the child's plan, and a lot of information in the child's plan comes directly from the evaluation and assessments.

Individualized Family Support Plan

The plan that says what early intervention services the child and family will receive is called an Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP).

The IFSP includes:

- The child's status: what they CAN do already
- The family's information: their concerns, priorities, and resources
- Outcomes: what the child will be able to do within the next year
- Early intervention services: what services the child needs to reach their outcomes
- Other services: any services the child is receiving from another source, like their doctor or day care
- The name of the family's service coordinator
- A transition plan: identifying the services and supports the child and family may need after the child turns three

The child's status, family's information, and early intervention services should all be identified in the child assessment and family assessment.

Where does my child receive early intervention services?

Infants and toddlers are supposed to receive early intervention services in their “natural environment.” That means they shouldn’t have to go to a special place to get their services. They should get them wherever they normally are, like at home or at a day care.

If the child will receive services in a segregated place only for children with disabilities, the IFSP must explain why they can’t reach their outcomes in a natural environment.

Where can I learn more?

You can find additional [resources online](#) or by emailing us at school@thearc.org.

