

# An Early Education Provider's Guide to Early Intervention in Pennsylvania



## Partnerships with Families

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*Caring for and educating young children is exciting and challenging at the same time. As an early education provider you work in partnership with families to offer consistent, loving care for young children. You are one of a child's earliest and most important teachers. You are one of his or her earliest playmates and friends. The way a child views his or her world is influenced by your voice, touch, eyes, and smile.*

*Some children may need the extra help and support that can be offered through Early Intervention services. This brochure will describe how the Early Intervention system works and how you can help young children and their families get the help they need.*



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## Welcome

When you think of a child and how he or she is growing, you notice things like how soon he or she smiles, sits up, rolls over, or how well he or she walks, talks, holds a spoon, and feeds himself or herself. Children learn naturally during this time, by doing, by watching you and other children, and by being taught how to do different things. Because you know the children in your care so well, you might notice that one of them is growing or developing differently than other children of the same age. What you are noticing are changes in different developmental areas. The five primary developmental areas are:

- Ability to move, see, and hear—physical development

- Ability to talk, understand, and express needs—language and speech development
- Ability to relate to others—social and emotional development
- Ability to eat, dress, and take care of themselves—self help (or adaptive development)
- Ability to think and learn—cognitive development

While all children grow and change at their own rate, some children can experience delays in their development. Sometimes this can be cause for concern. Early Intervention can help.

## What is Early Intervention?

Early Intervention in Pennsylvania consists of services and supports designed to help families with children who have developmental delays. Early Intervention builds upon the natural learning occurring in those first few years. It is a process that promotes collaboration among parents, service providers, and others significantly involved with the child.

### Early Intervention:

- Answers questions about a child's development;
- Enhances the families' capacity to meet the developmental needs of their child in

the settings where children would be if they did not have a disability;

- Respects families' strengths, values, diversity and competencies;
- Supports communities to become more aware of the gifts and abilities of all its children;
- Helps prevent the need for more and costly intervention in the future;
- Develops Early Intervention practitioners' skills to work collaboratively with families, caregivers, and educators to help children grow and learn.

## Where do I tell families to get help?

A first step for any family with concerns about their child's development is to call CONNECT services.

The CONNECT Helpline staff will refer a family to the appropriate local Early Intervention agency.

The toll free number is 1-800-692-7288.

## Core Principles of Early Intervention

### Early Intervention:

- provides supports and services to infants/toddlers and young children with disabilities and their families/caregivers so that they may help the child grow and develop;
- embeds supports and services within learning opportunities that exist in the child's typical routines and within the home and community activities and/or early education programs;
- builds on existing supports and services in the family, community, and early education resources;
- provides coordinated, flexible, Early Intervention supports and services through personnel working collaboratively with the family and each other;
- provides supports and services focused on the family and child's transition between and among early education programs.

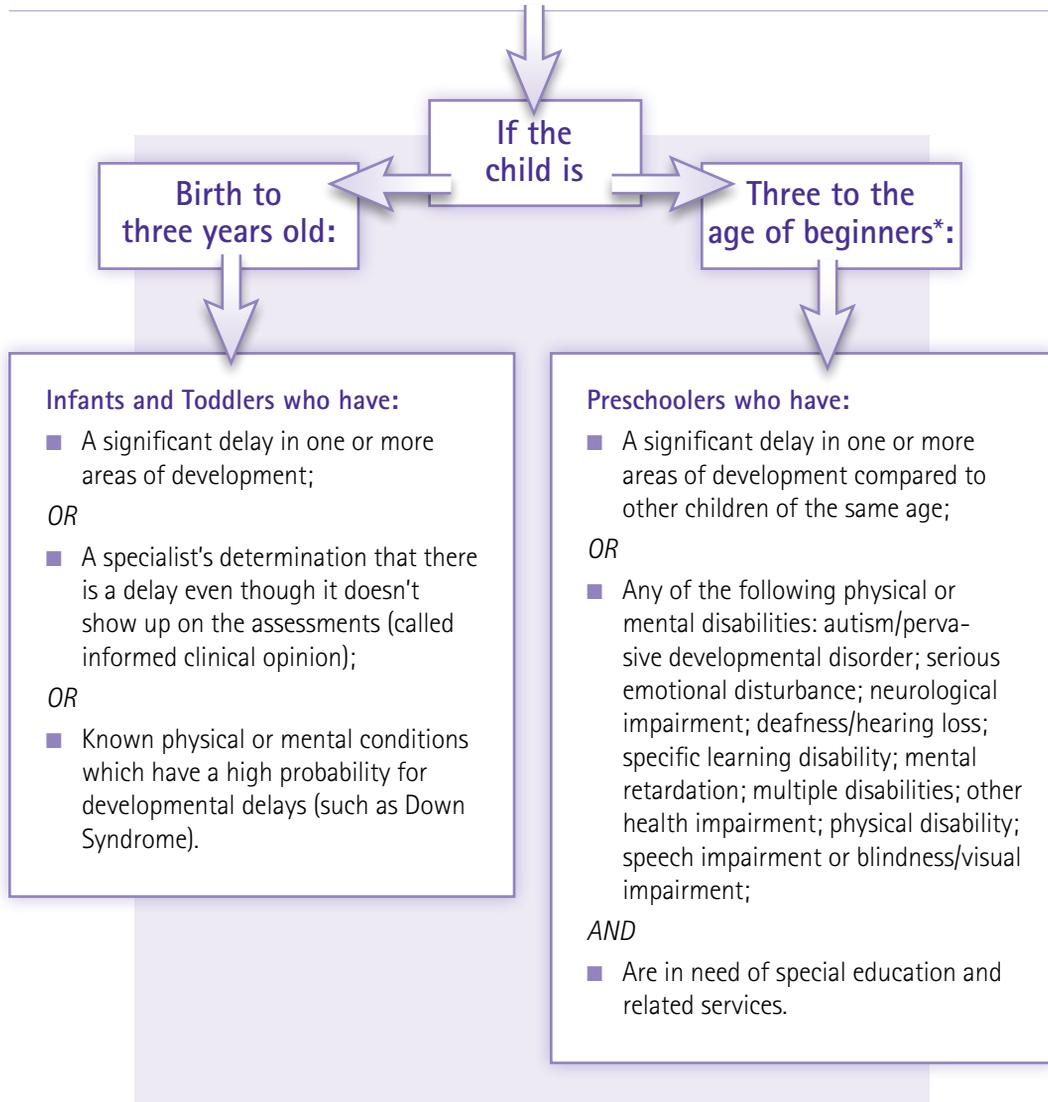
For a copy of *Early Intervention Supports and Services*, go to [www.pattan.net](http://www.pattan.net)

## What if I have concerns about a child's development?

Talking about a child's growth and development should be a common occurrence between an early education provider and the family. You should be meeting periodically with parents to share information about their child's progress and participation in your program. If you have questions about a child's growth and development, it is best to discuss your concerns with the child's family. This may be a difficult conversation. Some ideas to make the conversation more comfortable and effective for both you and the family are:

- Set a special meeting time with the family. Don't try to fit it into a busy pickup or drop-off time. Hold the meeting in an area that is private and comfortable.
- During this conversation, be positive about your willingness to work with the child and family. Assist them in accessing resources that will help support the child's success in the child care setting.
- Ask the parents to describe their perceptions of their child's development. Often families will have seen some of the same issues and have some of the same concerns.
- Recognize that this may be a difficult and emotional conversation for the family.
- Be prepared for a range of emotional responses. Take an active listening role and respect the family's feelings.
- Sometimes a parent may not share your concerns about their child's development. Keep in mind that this may be the first time they are hearing about concerns, and they may need some time to process the information and feel comfortable talking.
- Keeping communication open and using supportive listening skills, while focusing on child observations over time, is essential.
- Document your concerns by collecting samples of the child's recent work, showing samples of observations that have occurred over a period of time, and by listing the modifications that you have made to your program to meet the child's needs.
- Do not try to diagnose the problem or label the child. This is not your responsibility and should only occur after a comprehensive assessment.
- Be prepared with referral information. Provide the family with information about Early Intervention services and how to access them. Help to make the referral call if needed.

## Who is eligible for Early Intervention services?



Through a unique collaboration between the Departments of Education (PDE) and Public Welfare (DPW), the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) administers the Commonwealth's Early Intervention Program for eligible infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

At a local level, the county Early Intervention programs administer the program for infants from birth to three years of age. OCDEL contracts services through intermediate units (IUs), school districts, private agencies for local services to preschoolers from three years of age to the age of beginners.\*

\* Age of entrance into first grade

## How is the plan for Early Intervention services developed?

A plan is developed for each child who is eligible for Early Intervention services. The parent or caregiver, the early education provider (at the parent's request) and other team members develop a written plan, the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)/ Individualized Education Program (IEP), detailing the Early Intervention services and supports that the child and family receive.

The IFSP/IEP includes information on the child's strengths and needs related to his or her development, the family's concerns, and the child's strengths and needs identified in recent evaluations. Among other information, the IFSP/IEP must include a statement of the services to be provided and the setting(s) where the services will occur.

Ask the family for a copy of the IFSP/IEP so that you can support the child's development and learning within the early education program.

## Who develops the IFSP/IEP?

The family, along with other team members, decides who should be on the team and who should help write the IFSP/IEP. The best IFSP/IEP will reflect the active involvement and planning of all team members. Encourage the family to include you as a member of the team. Help the family to see all the valuable information you can bring to the IFSP/IEP process. As the child's caregiver and educator, you have valuable insight into the child's strengths and have important information on the environment in which the child spends a great deal of time.

- By identifying the special needs the child has within the early education setting. Think about what the child might need to reach his or her full potential. Adaptive equipment? Special techniques for feeding or self help skills?
- By working with the family and Early Intervention staff in developing the IFSP/IEP and in determining the types of services that might be offered at your early education program.

### You can help develop the IFSP/IEP:

- By identifying the child's unique qualities and strengths. Using this information you can begin to build a framework on which you can provide him or her with the best opportunities for learning.
- By reviewing the activities that occur in a typical day. Identify the activities in which the child has difficulties participating and those activities that work well.
- By identifying what the child really enjoys doing. Playing with water or sand? Sitting for long periods of time? Building blocks? Listening to music? How can you build on those skills to help other areas of development?



## Where are the services delivered?

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Services must be delivered in settings that are consistent with the needs of the child and family. Considerations must be made to reflect the child's best place for learning. This may include

services within the early education or other community settings. Whatever the setting, the IFSP/IEP must be based upon the strengths and needs of the child.

## Planning for transitions

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Transitions occur in the lives of families all the time and in many different ways. Families may change jobs or move to a new home. Children may join or leave your early education program. While receiving Early Intervention services, the child in your care and his/her family may experience transitions too.

### **Planning for a transition allows for a smooth transfer from one service to another.**

Transition in Early Intervention services means movement from one program to another, such as:

- From the home to an early education program;
- From an infant or toddler at-home Early Intervention service to a preschool program;
- From a toddler playgroup to a preschool program; or
- From a preschool program to kindergarten or 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

Decisions regarding the child's services and family supports are made with the family's permission. You may be able to assist the family and other team members because you know the child well. Ask the parent if you can be involved.

During the year before the child is eligible for kindergarten or 1<sup>st</sup> grade, the Early Intervention program will hold a transition meeting to discuss options for the child. This transition meeting must occur before the end of February. Kindergarten age and school age children are the responsibility of the local school district of residence. Ask the family if you might be part of the team discussing the transition to kindergarten or 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Your knowledge of the child's progress and development is important.



## Where to go for more information

### **CONNECT (Information Service for Early Intervention)**

Center for Schools and Communities  
275 Grandview Avenue, Suite 200  
Camp Hill, PA 17011  
800-692-7288  
(for TTY, dial 711 for Relay Service)

Assists families and professionals in locating state, local and national resources and information for children birth through 5; provides referrals to Early Intervention services.

### **Office of Child Development and Early Learning Bureau of Early Intervention Services**

Web Site Information

<http://www.pde.state.pa.us>, click on Pre K-12, then Early Childhood, then Early Intervention

<http://dpw.state.pa.us>, go to drop-down menu for DPW Program Offices, click on Office of Child Development and Early Learning, then Early Intervention

### **Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania**

6340 Flank Drive Suite 600  
Harrisburg, PA 17112  
888-727-2706 (toll free)

### **Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) Early Intervention Technical Assistance (EITA)**

PaTTAN works collaboratively with intermediate units in the area of professional development, technical assistance, and information dissemination to support school districts throughout the Commonwealth. Early Intervention Technical Assistance (EITA) works collaboratively with Early Intervention programs for children with developmental delays/disabilities. EITA is the birth to school age component of PaTTAN.

[www.pattan.net](http://www.pattan.net)

#### **PaTTAN Harrisburg**

6340 Flank Drive  
Harrisburg, PA 17112-2793  
800-360-7282 or 717-541-4960

#### **PaTTAN King of Prussia**

200 Anderson Road  
King of Prussia, PA 19406  
800-441-3215 or 610-265-7321

#### **PaTTAN Pittsburgh**

3190 William Pitt Way  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
800-446-5607 or 412-826-2336



## Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA)

In Pennsylvania, the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) administers both Part C and Part B, Section 619 of the federal law IDEA. Part C of that law deals with eligible infants and toddlers from birth to their third birthdays; Part B deals with eligible young children from the child's third birthday to the age of beginners (start of first grade).

### Part C

Gives rights to eligible infants and toddlers and their families from birth until the child's third birthday;

Services are developed by a team and written into an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP);

Services are delivered in a natural environment for the child and family.

### Part B

#### (Section 619 is the Preschool Section)

Gives rights to eligible young children and their families from age three to the age of beginners (start of first grade);

Services are developed by a team and written into an Individualized Education Program (IEP);

Services must be delivered in the least restrictive environment.

### In both Parts C and B:

- Eligibility is determined by an evaluation process;
- Parents are an important part of the child's evaluations as well as the design of individualized services.

### Act 212: The Early Intervention Services System Act of 1990:

- Assures eligible young children (birth until the age of beginners) and their families Early Intervention services and programs;
- Assures appropriate services under public supervision and is designed to meet the developmental needs of eligible children; and
- Assures services specifically designed to address the needs of the family to enhance their child's development.

### Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICCs)

Established by Act 212, these local councils provide for local representation from families, county administration, intermediate units, school districts, Early Intervention providers, Head Start, service coordinators, health agencies, and other community members. While each LICC is different, their overall goal is to enhance education opportunities for all children through collaboration with local and regional interagency community partners. Your LICC may be accessed by contacting your local Early Intervention program. Families are very important to the LICCs—please ask your Early Intervention program how to get involved.

## Glossary

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You may hear or see these words as you become involved in Early Intervention services.

**Act 212:** the Early Intervention Services System Act of 1990 that provides Early Intervention services for eligible children in Pennsylvania.

**Adaptive skills (functional skills):** those skills used in daily living such as eating, dressing, and toileting.

**Advocacy:** assuring that the services which are appropriate for you and your child are received. You are the best advocate for your child. You know your child best.

**Age of beginners:** the minimum age that a child can attend first grade in his or her own school district.

**Assessment:** a process that helps find your child's unique strengths and needs.

**Assistive Technology Service:** services that directly assist a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.

**Cognitive:** the ability to learn, to understand, and to solve problems.

**Developmental delay:** development later than other children of the same age in achieving cognitive, adaptive, physical, communication and social or emotional skills.

**Due process:** the procedure which guarantees a person's right to disagree, refuse, change, or permit recommended educational services.

**Due process hearing:** a legal proceeding presided over by a hearing officer who makes determinations about a child's services and supports.

**Early Intervention:** Early Intervention services can include: information on how children develop; parent/caregiver education, support services, and developmental therapies that assist in child development.

**ER:** Evaluation Report

**FAPE:** free appropriate public education guaranteed by law, at no expense to the parents and family.

**Goals/Outcomes:** general target areas of development written by the IFSP or IEP team.

**Language and speech development:** the ability to talk, express one's needs, and/or communicate.

**LICC:** Local Interagency Coordinating Council made up of parents and professionals whose purpose is to coordinate and plan for Early Intervention services in the local community.

**MAWA:** Mutually Agreed Upon Written Arrangement with the education agency providing Early Intervention services on behalf of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning in your local area for children three through five years of age.

**Mediation:** a voluntary process used for resolving disputes between parties. Mediation is conducted by a qualified and impartial mediator who is trained in effective mediation techniques.

**OCDEL:** Office of Child Development and Early Learning responsible for programs and services for children birth to the age of beginners.

**Physical skills:** the ability to move, see, and hear.

**Screening:** a process to determine if a more extensive assessment needs to be completed.

**Service Coordinator (case manager):** the individual assigned to coordinate the planning and delivery of Early Intervention services.

**SICC:** the State Interagency Coordinating Council is an advisory group, made up of parents and professionals, whose purpose is to advise the Governor and the Departments about Early Intervention issues in Pennsylvania.

**Social and emotional development:** the ability to interact with others.

**Transition:** the process of moving from one Early Intervention service to another as the unique needs of the child change.

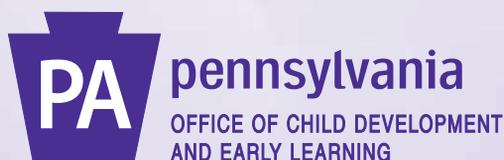
## Phone numbers to call for help or information

To find the phone number for your local Early Intervention services, **contact CONNECT EARLY INTERVENTION HELPLINE by phone at 1-800-692-7288.**

Persons who are deaf and hard of hearing, or who have speech impairments may access all voice numbers through the PA Relay Service at 800-654-5984. Persons without TDD needing to access TDD numbers can also access the PA Relay Service at 800-654-5988.

Other phone numbers that are helpful:

To access online, go to [www.pattan.net](http://www.pattan.net)



*Serving Children with Developmental Delays*