

# Early Intervention: Your Child's Development (Birth - 2)



As a parent, you can refer your child to an early intervention program if you suspect your baby or toddler has a disability or delayed development. Family members, doctors, hospitals, public health nurses or childcare providers are also able to make a referral. Early intervention is concerned with all the basic and brand new skills that babies typically develop during the first three years of life, such as:

- ★ **Physical:** reaching, rolling, crawling, walking
- ★ **Cognitive:** thinking, learning, solving problems
- ★ **Communication:** talking, listening, understanding
- ★ **Social/Emotional:** playing, feeling secure and happy
- ★ **Adaptive:** eating, dressing

Child Development Services (CDS) is the early intervention agency in Maine. Once a referral has been received, CDS will contact you for further information about your child and a full evaluation will be completed. CDS must have your written permission (consent) before they evaluate your child. To make a referral, please contact the CDS Central Referral Line at 1-877-770-8883 or visit their website: [www.maine.gov/education/spced/cds](http://www.maine.gov/education/spced/cds).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that your child receive a timely, comprehensive, multidisciplinary evaluation and assessment. The purposes of the evaluation and assessment are to find out:

- ★ the nature of your child's strengths, delays, or difficulties, and
- ★ whether or not your child is eligible for early intervention services.

Multidisciplinary means that the evaluation group is made up of qualified people who have different areas of training and experience. Together, they know about children's speech and language skills, physical abilities, hearing and vision, and other important areas of development. They know how to work with children, even very young ones, to discover if a child has a problem or is developing within normal ranges. Members of the evaluation team may evaluate your child together or individually.

When conducting the evaluation and assessment, team members may get information from some or all of the following:

- ★ Doctor's reports;
- ★ Results from developmental tests and performance assessments given to your child;
- ★ Your child's medical and developmental history;

- ★ Direct observations and feedback from all members of the multidisciplinary team, including you, the parents;
- ★ Interviews with you and other family members or caretakers; and
- ★ Any other important observations, records, and/or reports about your child.

Following your child's evaluation, you and a team of professionals will meet and review all of the data, results, and reports. They will talk to you about whether your child meets the criteria under IDEA and state policy for having a developmental delay.

If your child and family are found eligible for services, there will be an Individual Family Service Plan Meeting. All team members, including you and your family, will work together to develop an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP). The IFSP is a written plan for providing early intervention services to your child and, as necessary, to your family. It is a very important document, as parents, you are important members of the team that develops it.

One guiding principle of the IFSP is that the family is a child's greatest resource and that a young child's needs are closely tied to the needs of his or her family. The best way to support children and meet their needs is to support and build upon the individual strengths of their family. So, the IFSP is a *whole family* plan with the parents as major contributors in its development. Involvement of other team members will depend on what your child needs. These other team members could come from several agencies and may include medical people, therapists, child development specialists, social workers, and others.

Your plan is a legal document designed to help everyone on your team understand what is going to happen, who is going to be involved, when and where supports will take place and for how long. This will be done by reviewing information, making choices, and developing outcomes. During these discussions, you will agree on the strategies you will use to reach those outcomes. You will also decide on activities and early intervention services that will support your goals for your child and family. The plan is tailor made to meet the needs of your child and your family and will not resemble anyone else's. It is completely individualized.



For more information on Early Intervention and other topics of importance related to children, contact Maine Parent Federation by telephone at 1-800-870-7746 (Statewide), 207-588-1933, or by email at [parentconnect@mpf.org](mailto:parentconnect@mpf.org).

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