Quick reference

What is Early Intervention?

Early Intervention is a program for children from birth through age three with disabilities, delays, or who are at risk of a delay. It helps babies and toddlers get services as early as possible. Studies have shown that providing services to very young children can prevent them from needing as much special education or other services in the future.

Early Intervention is partially funded by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C, as well as state and other funds.

You can find out more about getting started with Early Intervention at the **Early Intervention Clearinghouse**. This website has videos on how it works and step-by-step instructions. The Early Intervention Clearinghouse also has a lending library, which includes books, iPads, and WiFi hotspots.

Who is Eligible?

- Under 36 months (3 years)
- Have a physician's diagnosis of a physical or mental condition that causes a developmental delay, **or** have an identifiable developmental delay of 30% or more, **or** be at risk of substantial developmental delay because of certain risk factors

You can find **a list of eligible diagnoses** on the state's website. You can also find outmore about **developmental delays or risk factors** on the state's website. Each state can make its own rules about eligibility, so those moving from another state may or may not qualify.

Delays can be in:

- movement
- learning
- dealing or communicating with others
- behavior
- self-help skills

How Do We Apply?

- Find your local Child and Family Connections Office by entering your county and zip code into the **Office Locator.**
- You can call (800) 843-6154 if you need help finding your office.
- Your doctor can also make a referral for you.

What Happens After Referral?

1) Specialists will evaluate your child to see if they are eligible for Early Intervention.
2) If your child is eligible, your team will develop a plan called an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) with the services your child needs.
3) This plan will be reviewed after 6 months, 1 year, or as often as is needed.

What Services Can My Child Get?

Children will receive services they need to help improve their development.

Common services include:

- Physical or occupational therapy
- Speech therapy
- Developmental therapy
- Audiology or other hearing services
- Vision services
- Assistive technology
- Health, medical, nutrition, or diagnostic services

You can find **a complete list of services and service providers at the Early Intervention Clearinghouse.**

Where Are Services Provided?

Services are provided in your home, daycare, or another community location where your child lives or plays.

Sometimes services may be provided virtually. You may choose to have virtual services or not.

How Long Do I Have to Wait?

- After referral, you will receive a phone call from your Child and Family Connections (CFC) office within **two business days** to answer questions and schedule an intake.
- A free evaluation of your child and an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) will be provided within **45 days** of referral.
- Services will start no more than **30 days** after you agree to your child's IFSP.

Currently, Illinois has a provider shortage; however, it is your child's legal right to receive services within these timelines.

How Much Does It Cost?

The evaluation is free. If your child is eligible, you may pay a small monthly fee based on your income. Many families do not pay a fee. If you have private insurance, it may reduce your costs. You can find **information about family fees** on the state's website.

What Happens When My Child Turns Three?

If your child still needs help, your Early Intervention team will help your child transition to Special Education services through your school district. You can find out more about the **Transition Process at the Early Intervention Clearinghouse**.

If your child turns three during the summer, you can stay in Early Intervention until the new school year.

What If I Don't Agree with My Team or Don't Get Services on Time?

You can ask for a meeting to address your concerns. If that does not work, you can file a complaint, ask for mediation, or ask for a hearing. You can contact **Equip for Equality** at 312-895-7355 for more help.

Resources

- Early Intervention Clearinghouse: **https://eiclearinghouse.org/**
- Start Early: **https://www.startearly.org/**
- Raising Illinois: **https://www.raisingillinois.org/**