



## Early Intervention (Sooner Start)

### What is Early Intervention?

Early intervention is a system of services that helps babies and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities. Early intervention focuses on helping eligible babies and toddlers learn the basic and brand-new skills that typically develop during the first three years of life, such as:

- physical (reaching, rolling, crawling, and walking);
- cognitive (thinking, learning, solving problems);
- communication (talking, listening, understanding);
- social/emotional (playing, feeling secure and happy); and
- self-help (eating, dressing).



If an infant or toddler has a disability or a developmental delay in one or more of these developmental areas, that child will likely be eligible for early intervention services.

Services may also be provided to address the needs and priorities of the child's family. Family-directed services are meant to help family members understand the special needs of their child and how to enhance his or her development.

Early intervention is available in every state and territory of the United States. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires it—Part C of IDEA; that's why you'll sometimes hear early intervention referred to as Part C.

### Who's Eligible for Early Intervention?

Eligibility is determined by evaluating the child (with parents' consent) to see if the little one has a delay in development or a disability. Eligible children can receive early intervention services from birth through the third birthday (and sometimes beyond).

Sometimes it is known from the moment a child is born that early intervention services will be essential in helping the child grow and develop. Even before heading home from the hospital, this child's parents may be given a referral to their local early intervention office.

However, some children may develop more slowly than others, experience set backs, or develop in ways that seem very different from other children. For these children, a visit with a developmental pediatrician and a thorough evaluation may lead to an early intervention referral. Parents don't have to wait for a referral to early intervention, however.

**If you're concerned about your child's development,  
you may contact your local program directly  
and ask to have your child evaluated.**

**That evaluation is provided free of charge.**

### What is a Developmental Delay?

The term "developmental delay" is an important one in early intervention. Broadly speaking, it means that a child is delayed in some area of development. There are five areas in which development may be affected:

- Cognitive development
- Physical development, including vision and hearing
- Communication development
- Social or emotional development
- Adaptive development

### Do Parents Pay for the Services?

The SoonerStart program does not collect co-payments, sliding scale fees or private insurance reimbursement for IDEA Part C services. The SoonerStart program is supported by the following funding sources: Medicaid; State general revenue; and IDEA Federal funds.

**There is no direct cost to families for SoonerStart services regardless of their income.**

### Where is My Local Office?

To find the early intervention program in your community, please visit the Oklahoma State Department of Education - SoonerStart website at:

<http://ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/2013%20Referral%20Guide%20back.pdf>



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**Within 45 calendar days of receiving a referral, the Early Intervention system must complete these critical steps:**

- screening,
- initial evaluation of the child,
- initial assessments of the child and family, and
- writing the IFSP (if the child has been found eligible).

## **Referral and Intake**

Referrals to can be made by phone, email, fax, letter, or in person to your local early intervention office.

**Referral sources are encouraged to talk with the parents before referring a child to SoonerStart. However, parental consent is not required to make a referral.**

The Referral Form can be located on the SoonerStart site at:

[http://ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/APPENDIX%20B%20-%20REFERRAL%20FORM 0.pdf](http://ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/APPENDIX%20B%20-%20REFERRAL%20FORM%200.pdf)

## **Screening, Evaluation and Assessment**

Following the intake process, a developmental screening may be completed to determine if further evaluation/assessment may be necessary.

**Parents have the right to request an evaluation of their child at any time during the screening process.**

The family's service coordinator will explain what's involved in the screening and/or evaluation and ask for your permission to proceed. **You must provide your written consent before screening and/or evaluation may take place.**

The multidisciplinary evaluation group will be made up of two or more 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. The family-centered evaluation process is to gather information to determine a child's eligibility for services.

**Parents are essential and participatory members of the evaluation team, and have a vital voice in making decisions about their child's program and services.**

**The purpose of the initial multidisciplinary evaluation is to determine a child's eligibility for IDEA Part C services.**

The initial child assessment is completed by the multidisciplinary evaluation team in conjunction with the SoonerStart eligibility evaluation. Documentation of the child's needs in each of the developmental domains along with clinical observations is recorded on the Multidisciplinary Evaluation and Child Assessment Team Summary (MECATS).



## **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)**

Having collected a great deal of information about your child and family, it's now possible for the team (including you as parents) to sit down and write an individualized plan of action for your child and family. This plan is called the **Individualized Family Service Plan**, or **IFSP**.

It is a very important document, and you, as parents, are important members of the team that develops it. An IFSP provides information detailing the early intervention services or supports a child and or his/her family receives in the SoonerStart program.

**The IFSP is a whole family plan with the parents as major contributors in its development.**

To access a copy of the IFSP form, please visit the SoonerStart website at:

[http://ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/APPENDIX%20B%20-%20INDIVIDUALIZED%20FAMILY%20SERVICE%20PLAN%200%28IFSP%29%20-%20Revised%202012-7-2012 0.pdf](http://ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/APPENDIX%20B%20-%20INDIVIDUALIZED%20FAMILY%20SERVICE%20PLAN%200%28IFSP%29%20-%20Revised%202012-7-2012%200.pdf)