



## A Physician's Guide Referring a Child to Early Intervention In New Jersey

### **What should I do if a child is not developing as he or she should?**

Refer the child to Early Intervention for further developmental assessment as soon as possible. The first three years of life are critical to a child's future potential. Intensive, well-designed and timely intervention can improve the prospects—and the quality of life—for many children who are considered at risk for cognitive, social, or emotional developmental delays. In some cases, effective intervention can ameliorate conditions once thought to be virtually untreatable, such as autism. A well-implemented program can brighten a child's future and lessen the impact a developmental disorder has on the family. It can lead a child to greater independence, better participation in the community, and a more productive and fulfilling life.

### **What is Early Intervention?**

Early Intervention is a statewide, community-based system that offers services to infants and toddlers up to age three, as well as support for families. The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services is the lead agency for Early Intervention in New Jersey.

The mission of the New Jersey Early Intervention System is to provide quality early support and services to enhance the capacity of families to meet the developmental and health-related needs of children birth to age three who have delays or disabilities. More important, Early Intervention can help young children acquire the skills they need to grow into happy and healthy members of the community.

### **Who is eligible for Early Intervention?**

In New Jersey, a child is eligible for Early Intervention Services if he or she is under the age of three and has at least a 33% delay in one and/or a 25% delay in two or more of the following developmental areas:

- Adaptive—self-help skills, such as dressing or feeding

- ❑ Cognitive—thinking skills, including the ability to absorb, process, and understand information
- ❑ Communicative—receptive and expressive language, including understanding what is being said, following directions, and making needs known
- ❑ Physical—gross motor, fine motor, vision and hearing, motor planning, and sensory integration (i.e., the ability of the central nervous system to receive, process, and learn from sensations, such as touch, movement, sight, sound, smell, and the pull of gravity, in order to develop skills)
- ❑ Social and Emotional—interacting with children, adults, and the environment

### **How can a child and family become involved with Early Intervention?**

Just as how a primary care physician connects a patient to a specialist, a physician can also give information to a family about Early Intervention Services and assist them in making a referral. The process is simple, because anyone—physicians, caregivers, teachers, parents, and friends—can make a referral, with the family’s consent, simply by calling the Special Child Health Services Case Management Unit (SCHS-CMU) in the family’s county of residence. A list of phone numbers is provided on the opposite page.

### **What happens at the time of a referral call?**

A service coordinator will obtain basic information about the child and describe the Early Intervention Services and resources available to children and their families. The service coordinators will work with the family to determine whether a multidisciplinary evaluation of the child’s developmental levels is needed. This evaluation will focus on specific child development skills, including cognitive, language, motor, social, emotional, behavioral, and self-help. Evaluation and assessment services are provided at public expense with no cost to parents.

### **What services are provided?**

Following the evaluation and assessment, an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) will be developed if the child is eligible for Early Intervention Services. This plan will describe the services that are needed by the child and family and how they will be provided. Early Intervention Services are designed to use developmentally appropriate activities in natural learning environments that meet children’s changing needs and promote functional skills, development, and learning. Some examples of Early Intervention Services include occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language therapy, special instruction, nutritional services, and family training.

As the child approaches three years of age, the Early Intervention Service coordinator will assist children and families with the transition from Early Intervention to a preschool program and/or other support services that the child and family may need.

### **Where and how are services provided?**

An Early Intervention team, consisting of early childhood professionals from public and private agencies, serves the child and family in natural environments (i.e., settings that are most comfortable and convenient for the family). These environments may include the family’s home, child care, play group, or local community activity. Serving children in natural environments helps them to participate more easily in their everyday activities and with their peers.

The frequency of services is determined by outcome goals that are developed by the team and led by the family. Every effort is always made to communicate with families in their chosen language.

**Who pays for Early Intervention?**

Federal law requires that specific services be provided at public expense to children and families who are eligible<sup>1</sup>. These include:

- Child Find/Referral
- Evaluation/Assessment
- Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) Development and Review
- Procedural Safeguards (Family Rights)
- Service Coordination

A family may have to assume some or all of the costs for other Early Intervention Services, depending on the resources available and the parents’ ability to pay. Medicaid or private insurance can be designated payers.

**Whom should I contact?**

To learn more about Early Intervention or to refer a child for evaluation, call a Service Coordinator at the Special Child Health Services Case Management Unit in the family’s county of residence.

<b>County where child resides:</b>	<b>Telephone Number to call:</b>
Atlantic	609.645.7700 (ext. 4358)
Bergen	201.599.6153
Burlington	609.267.1950 (ext. 4-2882)
Camden	856.374.6021, 800.999.9045
Cape May	609.465.1203
Cumberland	856.453.2154
Essex	973.857.4663
Gloucester	856.262.4100 (ext. 4157)

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<sup>1</sup> The services at public expense in the New Jersey Early Intervention System are supported in part by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services with funds from state appropriation, Medicaid, and Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Hudson	201.915.2514
Hunterdon	908.788.6398
Mercer	609.730.4152, 609.730.4151
Middlesex	732.745-3100
Monmouth	732.224.6950
Morris	973.971.4155
Ocean	732.341.9700 (ext. 7602)
Passaic	973.523.6778
Salem	856.935.7510 (ext. 8470)
Somerset	908.725.2366
Sussex	973.948.5400 (ext. 62)
Union	908.889.0950 (ext. 48)
Warren	908.689.6000 (ext. 258)

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[www.state.nj.us/health/fhs/eiphome.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/health/fhs/eiphome.htm)

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