

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

Each state must provide services to children with developmental delays and to those who have a diagnosed mental or physical condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay. In addition, states may choose to serve children who are at risk of having substantial developmental delays if early intervention services are not provided.

Since every state has some discretion in setting criteria for child eligibility, definitions of eligibility may differ significantly from state to state. See [www.nectac.org](http://www.nectac.org) on the Web for a breakdown of eligibility by state.

A child may be eligible for Early Intervention Services if he or she has a delay in one 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



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## **A Pediatric Practitioner's Guide**

***Referring a Child  
to Early  
Intervention  
in the U.S.***

*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 program developed to provide services to infants and toddlers from birth to three<sup>1</sup> with disabilities, as well as support for their families. Each state submits a grant to the federal government to receive funding to help provide comprehensive and coordinated services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. A lead agency in each state administers the statewide program. Each state establishes criteria for eligibility within parameters set by the federal government, as outlined in public law.

<sup>1</sup>Some states offer services through age five.