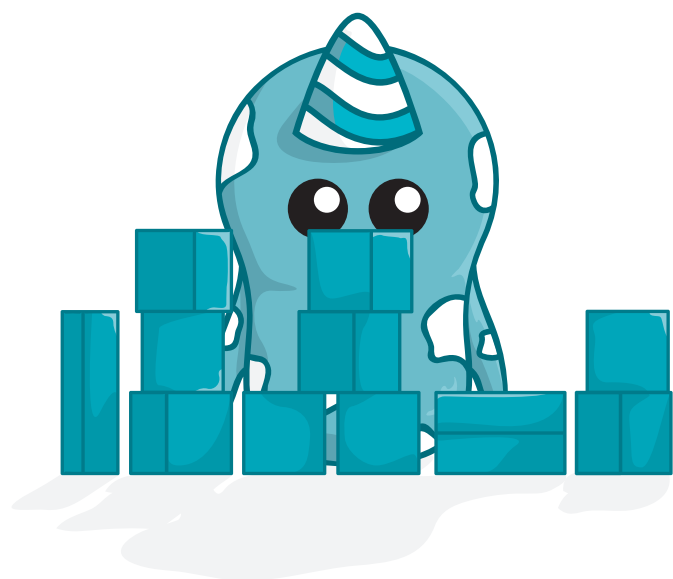


# A Family Guide to Inclusive Early Learning in Pennsylvania



**Written by**  
**Education Law Center**  
**[www.elc-pa.org](http://www.elc-pa.org)**



# **A FAMILY GUIDE TO INCLUSIVE EARLY LEARNING IN PENNSYLVANIA**



Education Law Center

[www.elc-pa.org](http://www.elc-pa.org)

Copyright © 2012 Education Law Center and  
Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council.

*The ELC is a nonprofit public interest law center  
working to ensure that all Pennsylvania's children  
have access to a quality public education.*

EDUCATION LAW CENTER

- 429 Fourth Avenue  
Suite 702  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
(412)-258-2120
- 1315 Walnut Street  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
(215)-238-6970

First edition.

This publication is supported by a grant from the  
Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council.

We also want to express our appreciation  
for the writers, Nancy A. Hubley, Esq.,  
Jenny Lowman, Esq., Maura McInerney, Esq.,  
Sarah Min, Esq., and Kate Welch; and for our  
legal interns, Joseph Lopez and Mary Bertlesman,  
who spent time researching and editing.

Book design and illustrations by  
Vincent Mendiola II ([vincentmendiola.com](http://vincentmendiola.com)).

Permission to reprint, copy or distribute this  
material is granted provided it is reproduced as  
a whole, distributed at no more than its actual  
costs, and displays this copyright notice. Any other  
reproduction is strictly prohibited.

# CONTENTS

---

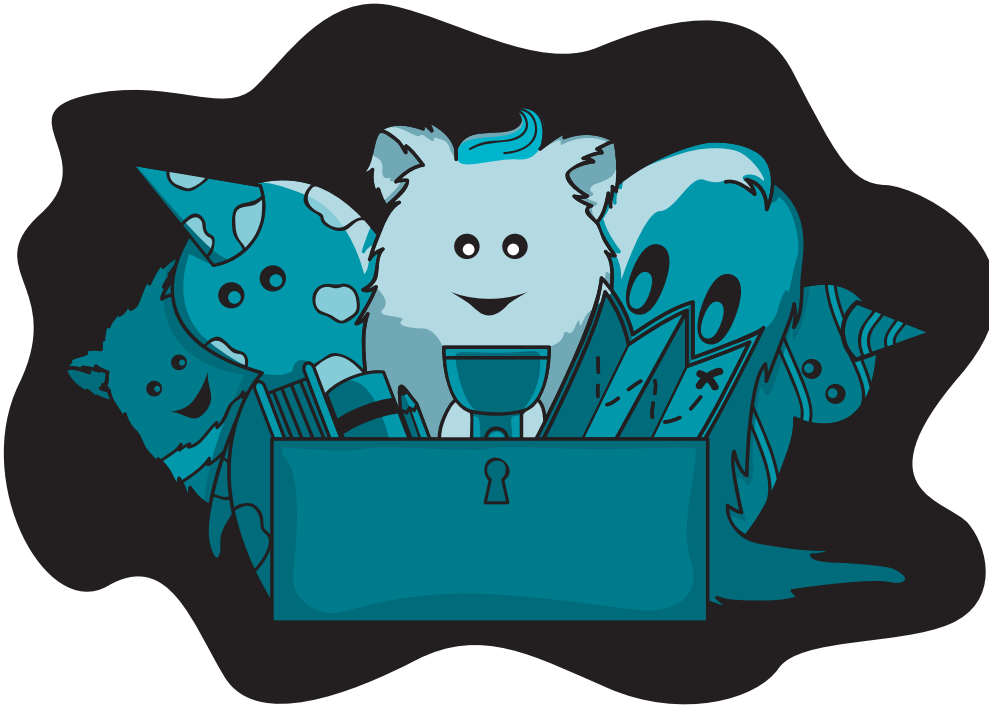
1	Introduction	7
	1.1 Overview	7
	1.2 Early Learning is Important for All Children	8
	1.3 Early Childcare and Learning in Pennsylvania	8
	1.4 Inclusive Early Learning	9
	1.5 Key Terms and Definitions	11
2	Child Development	13
	2.1 Child Development Benchmarks	13
	<b>Parent Tool #1:</b> Some Questions Parents Can Ask about a Child's Development	14
	2.2 Ages & Stages	15
3	Quality Learning Programs	17
	3.1 Finding Quality Early Learning Programs	17
	<b>Parent Tool #2:</b> Five Steps to Selecting an Early Learning Program	18
	3.2 How to Spot a Quality Program	19
	<b>Parent Tool #3:</b> Parent Checklist to Find a Quality, Inclusive Early Learning Program	20
	3.3 Parent Involvement	22
	<b>Parent Tool #4:</b> Getting Involved in Your Child's Early Learning Program	23
4	Where to Begin	25
	Early Childhood Learning Programs by Age	25
	Nurse-Family Partnership	26
	Parent-Child Home Program	28
	Child Care Works	30
	Early Head Start	33
	Infant and Toddler Early Intervention	35
	Head Start	38
	Pre-K Counts	41
	Preschool Early Intervention	44

5	Introduction to Early Intervention Services	47
5.1	Overview	47
	<b>Parent Tool #5: Your Legal Rights in Early Intervention</b>	50
5.2	Infant and Toddler Early Intervention Services – Children under Age 3	51
	<b>Parent Tool #6: How Your Service Coordinator Can Help You</b>	55
	<b>Parent Tool #7: Tips to Help Prepare for an IFSP/IEP Team Meeting</b>	56
5.3	Preschool Early Intervention Services – Children from Ages 3 to 5	58
5.4	Transition at Age 3, School Age and Beyond	63
	<b>Parent Tool #8: Parent Checklist for Successful Transitions</b>	64
6	Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Early Childhood Learning Opportunities for Special Populations	65
6.1	English Language Learners	65
6.2	Young Children Experiencing Homelessness	66
6.3	Children and Families Involved in the Child Welfare System	69
6.4	Young Children with Developmental Delays and Disabilities	71
7	Conclusion	77
8	Appendix	79
8.1	Resources	79

# INTRODUCTION

---

# 1



## 1.1 Overview

The *Family Guide to Inclusive Early Learning in Pennsylvania (Guide)* is designed to be a quick and easy resource to inclusive early childhood learning programs in Pennsylvania. Inside, we describe each program and tell you who is eligible and how to apply. We provide parent tools, problem-solving tips, and information about your legal rights. We also link you to websites and other resources to help you navigate the full range of early childhood opportunities in Pennsylvania and to get any necessary supports and services your child may need to grow and develop through early childhood.

When problems arise in early learning programs, we hope you will be able to turn to this guidebook for information and resources. Whether your child is refused enrollment, asked to leave, your family moves, or other things prevent your child from benefiting from early learning opportunities, we hope the information and resources included here will help.

Our goal is to help ensure that all young children have access to quality early learning opportunities so they can grow and learn and be ready for school.

## 1.2 Early Learning is Important for All Children

Decades of research prove that early learning experiences in the first five years of your child's life are the most important. Whether she spends time at home with you or a relative, or with other children in a family or childcare center, these early experiences prepare your child for school and shape your child's lifelong learning.



### Note:

In Pennsylvania, when a specific program is not free, the federal government provides money in the form of childcare subsidies called Child Care Works [5], which helps low-income working families pay for early childcare and education programs for young children up to school age, as well as before- and after-school programs for children to age 13 (up to age 19 if the child has a significant disability).



### Resource:

To find private childcare, you can call the Child Care Information Services (CCIS) [21] at 1-877-4-PA-KIDS.

Children who receive quality early education do better in kindergarten and in school overall. They are less likely to repeat a grade or require special education services, and are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college. Recent research shows that even the most vulnerable children – children living in poverty, experiencing homelessness, learning English, and with developmental delays and other disabilities – can make up developmental gaps with high quality early learning opportunities.

## 1.3 Early Childcare and Learning in Pennsylvania

### Overview

Early childcare and learning programs come in many forms and sizes. Some are provided in family homes, others in public and private programs or centers. Limited public funding for early childcare and education programs can make it difficult for parents to find and enroll their child in an appropriate one. However, there are publicly funded programs that offer free early childcare and education programs for children from low-income families, such as **Head Start** [3, 8], **Early Head Start** [1, 8] and **Pre-K Counts** [9]. The **Early Intervention (EI) Service Program** [2, 6] provides additional services for children with developmental delays and disabilities at no cost to parents, regardless of a family's income.

Finding and enrolling your child in the right public program can be difficult. Programs have different names, are funded by different pots of money, and are operated by different public agencies with different laws, policies and procedures. This can be even more difficult for parents who are adjusting to a young child with special needs and/or who are challenged by poverty, learning English, or unstable housing. It is easy to become overwhelmed.

There are additional private early learning programs and opportunities for young children, including home caregivers, private childcare and preschool programs. The *Guide* focuses only on the publicly funded programs – those that use federal (United States) or state (Pennsylvania) dollars to operate. Government dollars come with rights for your child and legal responsibilities of the early childcare and education program. These are discussed later in the *Guide*.



## Office of Child Development and Early Learning

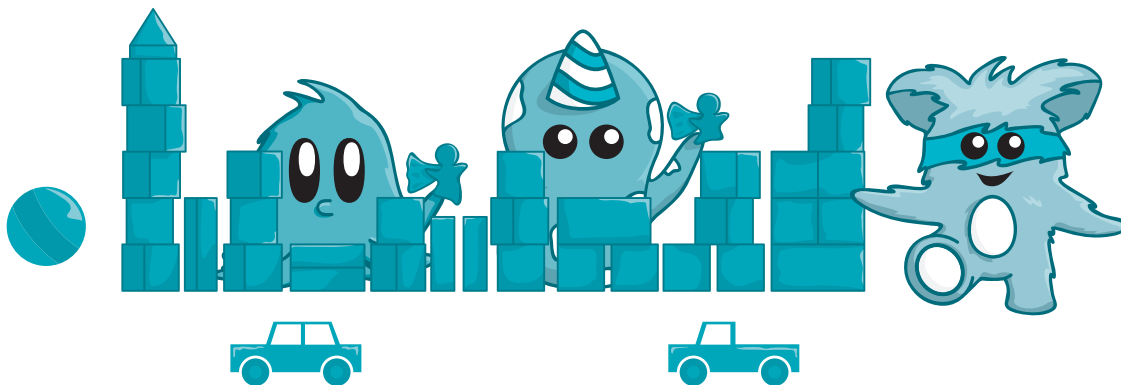
In 2007, Pennsylvania created the interagency **Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL)** [24]. OCDEL is a collaboration between the **Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE)** [22] and the **Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW)** [23]. OCDEL developed and oversees a coordinated state system of early childhood learning programs and services, including EI programs. These are designed, among other things, to meet the developmental needs of young children and to prepare them for school.

OCDEL has four bureaus, one of which is the **Bureau of Early Intervention Services (BEIS)** [18]. BEIS oversees the Infant and Toddler and Preschool EI programs in Pennsylvania. Another is the **Bureau of Early Learning** [19], which oversees all early childhood learning programs in Pennsylvania.

OCDEL is committed to ensuring that all children with developmental delays and disabilities in Pennsylvania receive EI services in natural environments. It has extensive resources to help parents and providers ensure that these children have access to and are properly supported in early learning programs.

OCDEL's efforts to make sure that all young children from birth through age five throughout Pennsylvania have quality early learning opportunities are supported by the **Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood** [15] and program standards called **Keystone STARS (Standards, Training Assistance, Resources and Support)** [11, 12]. To learn more about these, turn to [page 19](#) of this guidebook.

### 1.4 Inclusive Early Learning



“Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of an individual to participate in or contribute to society” (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)). 20 U.S.C. §§1400(c)(1).  
*This begins with participation in early childhood learning programs.*

Belonging is a basic need of all children. Whether a child has a disability, is learning English, or is part of a family experiencing homelessness, a child needs to participate in appropriate social and learning experiences, with necessary supports and services. Research shows that all children benefit when they grow, play and learn together. This is called “inclusion.”

Inclusion is not just an issue for early education. It is also about preparing children early to actively participate as equal members of their early childcare programs, families, schools and communities.

Inclusion is especially important for children with developmental delays and other disabilities. The federal law, the **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)** [28], provides for equal access to public accommodations for children with disabilities. The ADA requires public early childcare and education programs to have admission policies that don't discriminate against children with disabilities. It also requires these programs to make reasonable modifications to policies, practices and services. These include compliance with physical access requirements to help children with disabilities participate.

Other laws, including the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, have similar requirements that prevent the programs discussed throughout the *Guide* from discriminating against children with disabilities in early childhood learning programs, including **Head Start** [3, 8], **Pre-K Counts** [9], and other public and private programs that accept public dollars.



**Note:**

OCDEL [24] holds inclusion as one of its highest values for the education of young children.

“Shared Values from the Office of Child Development and Early Learning”:

Infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children with developmental delays and other disabilities should be supported in the same environments as their siblings, their neighbor's children and other children without disabilities.

If a child is already in an early learning program when they are identified as eligible for EI, their supports should be provided in that setting.

All EI programs should be engaged in ongoing self-assessment of their levels of inclusion and set rigorous and measurable targets to increase inclusive opportunities for early education and community settings for infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children.

Inclusion is not defined as a location where services are provided; it is active participation with supports.

Inclusion and high quality individualized supports are important values for families and need not compete with one another.

There are multiple professional development resources available to local programs that can be used across early childhood learning programs to support inclusion.

There is no type of child who cannot be successfully included, there is just more that we need to learn.

The structure of OCDEL supports better coordination of early education programs and can assist in local problem-solving when inclusion meets roadblocks.

Everyone benefits from inclusion.



The **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** [30] also includes provisions in both **Part C** [32] (children from birth to age three) and **Part B** [31] (children from age three through school age) that protect the rights of young children with disabilities to receive their EI [2, 6] programs in settings where children without disabilities spend their time.

**Law:** For infants and toddlers with developmental delays, Part C of the IDEA requires that, to the maximum extent appropriate, EI services shall be provided in natural environments (places where children without delays spend their time) and that a child can only receive services in another setting when the parent and family service team determine that services cannot be achieved satisfactorily in the natural environment.

For preschool children with developmental delays or disabilities, Part B of the IDEA requires that young children be educated with children without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate, and that removal to special classes or separate schools can only occur if the nature and severity of the child's disability is such that education in the regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. This legal requirement is called being educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE).



**Resource:** OCDEL's Guidelines to Support the Early Intervention Process: Inclusion [70] is designed to support inclusive early learning programs. Another resource on the subject is Circle of Inclusion [39].

For young children living in poverty or experiencing homelessness, belonging is also important. However, inclusion is far more challenging when children spend time in shelters or transitional housing and move from place to place. Federal and state laws, such as the **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento)** [33], have provisions to help ensure these children also have access to quality early learning experiences, including Head Start and Pre-K Counts. For example, children experiencing homelessness have priority status and are categorically eligible for Head Start programs. To learn more about early learning opportunities for these children and answers to frequently asked questions, go to [page 65](#) of this guidebook.

## 1.5 Key Terms and Definitions

Words often take on special meaning when they are used in laws and policies and in the early childcare and education system. Parents who learn these words find it easier to navigate the early childhood learning system and to get their children what they need. Sometimes the professionals who work within the system use abbreviations and letters to refer to entire phrases, such as "ASQ" to mean "Ages and Stages Questionnaire," or "IFSP" to mean "individualized family service plan." Always ask for an explanation of a word, abbreviation or phrase that you are not sure you understand. Chances are, you are not the only one who is confused.



### Some quick notes about words used in this guidebook:

The word **parent** is used throughout the *Guide* to refer to anyone who is the primary caregiver of a young child – including the birth parent, adoptive parent, legal guardian, grandparent, aunt or uncle, and others who may stand in as “parents” for young children.

We use the phrases **early childcare and education** and **early childhood learning programs** to refer to all the programs for young children from birth to age 5. We know that some programs offer care, and others are more structured learning programs. For purposes of the *Guide*, we assume all early childcare programs are also learning programs.

We use the terms “school age” and age 5 to mean the age at which children start kindergarten. We refer to the age at which children start first grade as the “age of beginners,” which is usually age 6 in most school districts.



**First Steps:** The *Guide* provides some links to glossaries and lists of abbreviations and acronyms (in Spanish too!) [66, 67, 69] to help you make sense of the language and “alphabet soup” of early childhood learning programs.



2

### 2.1 Child Development Benchmarks

All children grow and develop at their own pace. Keep in mind that babies do not all develop at the same rate, and there is a wide range of what is considered on track. Your child may be ahead in some areas and slightly behind in others. Children learn naturally during their first five years by doing and by watching you and other children. They also learn when they are taught a new skill.

As a parent, you can share your observations with your pediatrician, childcare provider, or relatives and friends to explore whether your child’s development is on track and if there are further steps you should take.

**Child Development:** When you think about your child’s development, it helps to focus on the five primary developmental areas for young children and reflect on how your child is growing in each one. The five areas of child development are:

1. Physical development – ability to move, see and hear.
2. Cognitive development – ability to think, learn and solve problems.
3. Language and speech development – ability to talk, understand and express needs.
4. Social and emotional development – ability to play, relate and get along with others.
5. Adaptive development (self-help skills) – ability to eat, dress and care for oneself.



**Resource:**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides a detailed list of developmental milestones by age, beginning at 2 months (in English and Spanish) [36]. To learn more about developmental milestones, see the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Developmental Milestones [48] and “Watch Me Grow” [76].

## Parent Tool #1: Some Questions Parents Can Ask about a Child's Development



- Does my child appear to lag behind other children on developmental skills? Does my child socially engage with others? Maintain eye contact? Laugh? Seek attention?
- Has my doctor or other health professional expressed a concern about my child's development?
- Does my child have a known physical or mental condition with a high probability of causing a developmental delay?
- Was my child born under three pounds?
- Did my child spend time in a neonatal unit at birth?
- Has my child been affected by illegal substance abuse or alcohol?
- Has my child received attention from the child welfare system?
- Has my child experienced unstable housing or moved recently?  
Is my child homeless?

Sometimes a parent notices something different about her child that makes her wonder whether her child is developing at an appropriate pace. Trust your instincts. Look for help if you think something doesn't seem right about your child's development. Other times, your child's pediatrician, childcare provider, or relative may express concerns about your child's development. Though all children develop at their own pace, some young children lag far behind their same-age peers, and their families need additional support and services during this critical period.



.....

### Contact:

Child Care Information Services (CCIS) [21] or call 1-877-4-PA-KIDS

**CONNECT Helpline** 1-800-692-7288 (if your child has or may have developmental delays or disabilities)

Special Kids Network (SKN) [86] or call 1-800-986-4550 (provides help for families of children with special health care needs)

See also: OCDEL's *A Family's Introduction to the Early Intervention System in Pennsylvania* [66], Education Law Center's (ELC) *The Right to Special Education in Pennsylvania: A Guide for Parents and Advocates* (includes a section on Preschool EI rights) [61] and ELC's *The Right to Early Intervention for Infants and Toddlers and Their Families in Pennsylvania: A Handbook for Parents* [60].

.....

## 2.2 Ages & Stages

When public agencies begin to assess whether your child is making appropriate developmental progress, they often use a series of age-appropriate questionnaires designed to identify children who need further evaluations. This is usually called a “developmental screen.” Pennsylvania agencies most often use a screening tool called the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ) to gather information about how your child is functioning in the five developmental areas discussed above. There is also an ASQ that focuses even more on social and emotional development of young children called Ages and Stages Questionnaires: Social-Emotional (ASQ:SE).

ASQ and ASQ:SE are being used in Pennsylvania to screen children under age 3 who are involved in the child welfare system to determine if they need further evaluations for early intervention services. Developmental screens are also permissible as one of the first steps when a child is referred for early intervention services. To learn more about how screening works in the Infant and Toddler EI system, turn to [page 51](#).



### Contact:

You may also find it helpful to contact disability advocacy organizations such as the Disability Rights Network (DRN) at 1-800-692-7443 [78], Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership Center (PEAL) at 1-866-950-1040 [81], Parent Education Network (PEN) at 1-800-522-5827 [82] or Parent to Parent (P2P) at 1-888-727 2706 [84].

---

### Resource:

OCDEL [24] provides a helpful resource, “Watch Me Grow” [76], where you can look up your child’s age and use a checklist to determine if your child is on track for development. Five developmental tasks are listed for each three-month period of your child’s life. As you complete the checklist, it will help you determine if your child may need some additional help or supports, beginning with an evaluation for Early Intervention (EI) [2, 6] supports and services. Keep in mind that young children grow and develop at different rates and can vary as much as six months in some things they are able to do or not do for their age.



---

**First Steps:** *If you have concerns about your child’s development or know your child has a developmental delay or disability, you may want to learn more about EI services. Every county in Pennsylvania provides EI services and supports for eligible children. Parents who have questions about their child’s development may contact the **CONNECT Helpline** at 1-800-692-7288. CONNECT assists families in locating resources and provides information regarding child development. It can connect you directly to your county’s EI program. Another place you will find help is the **Special Kids Network (SKN)** [86], which funds programs that help children and young adults with special health care needs.*





**Resource:**

To learn more about the rights of infants and toddlers and preschoolers with developmental delays, see OCDEL's publications, including *A Family's Introduction to the Early Intervention System in Pennsylvania* [66].

Some young children live in families challenged by a lack of stable housing, involvement with the child welfare system, learning English, or a combination of these circumstances. These experiences often present additional challenges that require different supports and services. To learn more about the rights of these special populations and to find specific information and additional resources to help guide families and children in these circumstances turn to [pages 65–78](#).

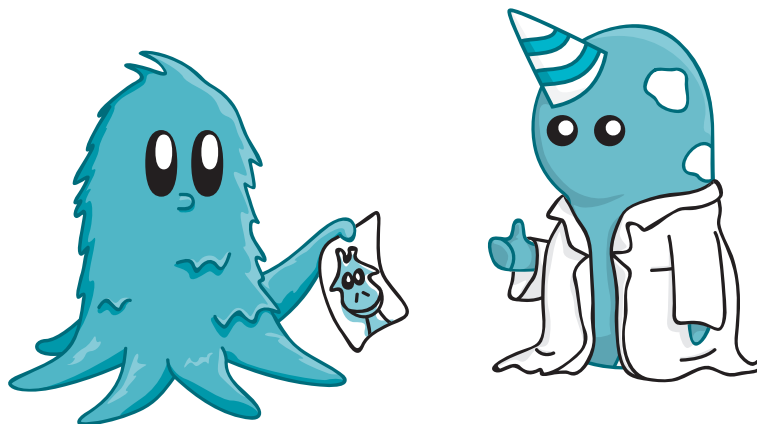
*To learn more about general early childhood learning opportunities, go to [page 25](#) for an explanation of the eligibility criteria, programs and services offered by the various government-supported early childhood learning programs in Pennsylvania, or visit **COMPASS** [56], call the **CONNECT Helpline** (1-800-692-7288), or go to **Child Care Information Services (CCIS)** [21] for more information and resources as you take your first steps.*



## QUALITY LEARNING PROGRAMS

---

# 3



### 3.1 Finding a Quality Early Learning Program

The quality of your child’s early learning program directly impacts your child’s ability to learn and grow. Children learn early how to learn and build healthy relationships with peers and adults. An appropriate, quality program is key. The resources provided in the *Guide* should help make it easier and less confusing to find the right program for your child.

**First Steps:** *Talk with family and friends* about what you want from an early childcare or learning program. You may want to write down what is most important. [See Parent Tool #2 on [page 18](#).]



*Talk with the people at your local **Child Care Information Services (CCIS)** [21] office* to get information about the programs and services that are currently available in your area.

*Think about what you can afford and whether your child might be eligible for **Child Care Works** [5] subsidies (subsidies are money given to you by the government to help pay certain expenses), **Pre-K Counts** [9], **Head Start** [3, 8] and/or **Early Intervention (EI)** [2, 6] services.* If your child is a preschooler, you may also want to talk to your local school district, area charter schools and private providers to find out who offers pre-K programs. To learn more about specific early childhood programs, turn to [page 25](#).

If your child has or might have a developmental delay or disability, you can start by calling the **CONNECT Helpline** at 1-800-692-7288. They are there to provide you with information about where to go for help in your area. CONNECT can tell you how to contact your local EI provider. They will help you determine if you want to explore your child’s eligibility for EI. To learn more about EI, turn to [page 47](#).

## Parent Tool #2: Five Steps to Selecting an Early Learning Program



CCIS regional  
telephone numbers:

Western Region:  
1-800-222-2149

Central Region:  
1-800-222-2117

Northeast Region:  
1-800-222-2108

Southeast Region:  
1-800-346-2929

Or, to find your local  
CCIS office, call  
1-877-4-PA-KIDS  
(1-877-472-5437)

**Step One:** Contact the CCIS [21] office nearest you and explore your options. You can also review the program guides on pages 25–46 of the *Guide* to explore which programs might be appropriate for your child.

**Step Two:** Select a program and call to find out more.

- a. Interview the caregivers or program staff. See Parent Tool #3 on page 20 for some questions to ask.
- b. Ask questions about eligibility and how to enroll. If you have concerns about your child’s development or she has a disability, you may want to mention it.
- c. Ask the program if it is working on a **Keystone STARS** [11, 12] rating, and if so, find out at which level the program is placed. For more information on STARS, see page 19.

**Step Three:** Check references.

- a. Ask other parents (if you don’t know any, ask the program for some names).
- b. Check out the home, center or program online (look for the facility’s certification history) [72].
- c. Call your regional CCIS office. Ask if there have been any complaints.

**Step Four:** Pick a quality program that will work for your child and family.

- a. Visit the home, center or program. Use Parent Tool #3 on page 20 of the *Guide*.
- b. Based on what you have seen and heard, pick the place that allows your child to be happy and to grow and learn best.

**Step Five:** Stay involved.

- a. Ask how you can talk with caregivers.
- b. Ask how you will know about your child’s day.
- c. Ask about visiting and observing your child.
- d. Get involved in the activities of the program – help out!

From: OCDEL’s “Five Steps to Selecting a Child Care Provider” [68].

## 3.2 How to Spot a Quality Program

### Early Learning Standards for Young Children

Pennsylvania adopted **Learning Standards for Early Childhood** [14] in 2004 to identify effective practices and provide guidance and high standards for early education for all children from birth through second grade. These standards outline the cognitive, social and physical skills a child should gain as she grows, learns, and develops. They also provide guidance for activities to support a child's development in early childcare and learning programs and at home. Early childhood teachers and administrators can follow these standards to promote early learning and to prepare your child for future learning in school.

The **Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood: Infant-Toddler** [15] are divided into three age levels: infant (birth to 12 months); young toddler (9 to 27 months); and older toddler (24 to 36 months). Pennsylvania is in the process of developing pre-K learning standards of its own, and in the meantime, it has adopted national pre-K learning standards. The **Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood: Pre-Kindergarten** [16] are designed for young children ages 3 and 4. These guidelines overlap since young children develop at varying rates that may require working with different levels of material. The standards are intentionally flexible as many concepts should be introduced early, but formal instruction or mastery of the topics should come much later in development, perhaps not until kindergarten.

### Program Standards for Early Learning

**Keystone STARS (Standards, Training Assistance, Resources and Support)** [11, 12] is a quality rating system that promotes quality improvement in early learning and school-age childcare programs. A STARS designation informs parents that their children are in a safe, respectful environment in which they are learning new things every day to support their current and future successes in school and in life.

Childcare providers participating in Keystone STARS receive the resources and training opportunities they need to achieve higher childcare standards. There are four **Keystone STARS levels** [13] (with the fourth being the highest). At each level, programs must meet standards in four key areas: staff education, learning environment, leadership/management, and family/community partnerships. The higher the STAR level means the higher the quality of the program.

The performance standards for STARS are guided by the principle that quality early learning programs are the foundation for children's later educational success, and the belief that investment in the early care and education of Pennsylvania's children is an investment in the future.

## Parent Tool #3: Parent Checklist to Find a Quality, Inclusive Early Learning Program



### Children

- Do teachers and caregivers call the children by their names?
- Are the children engaged in activities? Receiving individual attention?
- Are the children comforted, when needed, by staff and other children?
- Do you see and hear a variety of developmental activities taking place?
- Do children have opportunities to control objects and events in their environment?
- Are the activities based upon the child's level of functioning? Can they self-initiate and choose activities on their own?
- Are learning materials accessible to children with special needs? Is there a policy on positive discipline? Are there behavior supports?
- Is time-out used, and if so, when? How long are children expected to stay in time-out?
- Is this a place your child would enjoy? Do the children appear happy?

### Parents

- Will childcare personnel help you develop goals for your child?
- Do personnel provide parents with regular schedules of activities and events?
- Do teachers and caregivers describe their communication practices as "open"?
- Does the provider encourage parents to drop in and visit at any time? Are parents welcome to volunteer?
- Is your initial reaction upon entering the site a positive one?



**Resource:**

See also the quality care checklists offered by OCDEL [24] and Child Care Aware [37].

**Staff**

- Are staff involved with children at eye-level?
- Do staff welcome and say goodbye to each child daily?
- Do adults speak positively about all the children?
- Are there sufficient personnel to respond in the event of an emergency?
- Are caregivers trained in early childhood development and special needs?
- Are caregivers culturally competent? Are they sensitive and appreciative of diversity?
- Are teaching staff available to attend meetings with other agencies?
- Do those who work with the children receive support themselves?

**Facility**

- Are the rooms bright and cheerful without being overwhelming?
- Does the **Department of Public Welfare (DPW)** [23] certify the provider?
- Does the provider participate in **Keystone STARS** [11, 12]? If so, at what **level** [13] are they?
- Are there appropriate toys and materials for children of all ages and cultures?

**Safety**

- Does the facility appear orderly and clean?
- Are hazardous materials locked away?
- Is there a policy on dealing with food allergies?
- Is there an emergency plan and is it posted? Is there a plan for moving non-mobile children in case of an emergency (such as portable cribs)?

### 3.3 Parent Involvement

Young children under the age of five come to early childhood learning opportunities with a parent, family member, or other caregiver. **Parent involvement** and **parent engagement** are terms often used by professionals to talk about involving families in decisions about their children and the services they receive. Sometimes you will be involved directly with your child and his early care and learning program. For example, if your child receives EI [2, 6] services, you are a critical partner in all decisions made about his eligibility, enrollment, program and services. You have legal rights to information and participation. To learn more about your role in the EI system, go to [page 50](#).

Even if your child is not involved in EI services, you can be involved in your child's early learning program. For example, the **Parent-Child Home Program** [4] will help you learn how to read and play with your child and connect to other community services in ways that promote your child's early learning. The **Nurse-Family Partnership** [7] program also offers help to first-time mothers with low incomes with pregnancy, child development, and how best to support early learning. You are your child's first teacher and your involvement in early learning is critical to your child's success in school and in life.

Parent involvement is also critical to the success of early childhood learning programs locally and at the state level. At other times, you may want to be involved in broader community engagement and advocacy efforts.



## Parent Tool #4: Getting Involved in Your Child's Early Learning Program



There are some simple ways you can be involved in your child's program:

- Talk with the teachers, staff, and other professionals about your child and the early learning program. What's working? What isn't?
- Build relationships with your child's caregivers and service providers to help improve the quality of your child's experience.
- Share information and experiences with other parents; telling stories about what works and what doesn't helps everyone move forward.

You can also be engaged in activities with others to improve early childhood learning:

- Advocate for your own child's access to quality early learning programs or help other parents with the same issues. You can do this by participating on a board or committee, locally or with **OCDEL** [24].
- Participate in one of the state-mandated parent groups (see **First Steps** below) established to help form inclusive community partnerships among parents and providers focused on early learning for young children.
- Join an advocacy group such as the Statewide Coalition of Early Intervention Advocates (contact the **Education Law Center (ELC)** to find out more [79]).

**First Steps: Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICC)** [65] The law requires Pennsylvania to have a **State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC)** [27] and LICCs that meet regularly and include diverse stakeholders (such as parents of children with disabilities) interested in EI to build partnerships, identify issues and solve problems around inclusion. The LICCs report to the SICC.

**Local Education and Resource Networks (LEARN) Teams** [64] While **OCDEL** [24] recently cut funding for these teams, local entities such as the United Way are working on a plan to support this program; at the time of publication, these teams still exist to provide services with decreased funds and hours. LEARN teams include parent, providers, policy makers and community members. These teams work throughout Pennsylvania's 67 counties to inform, educate and motivate community members on quality early learning.

Notes:

Lined writing area consisting of 30 horizontal blue lines.



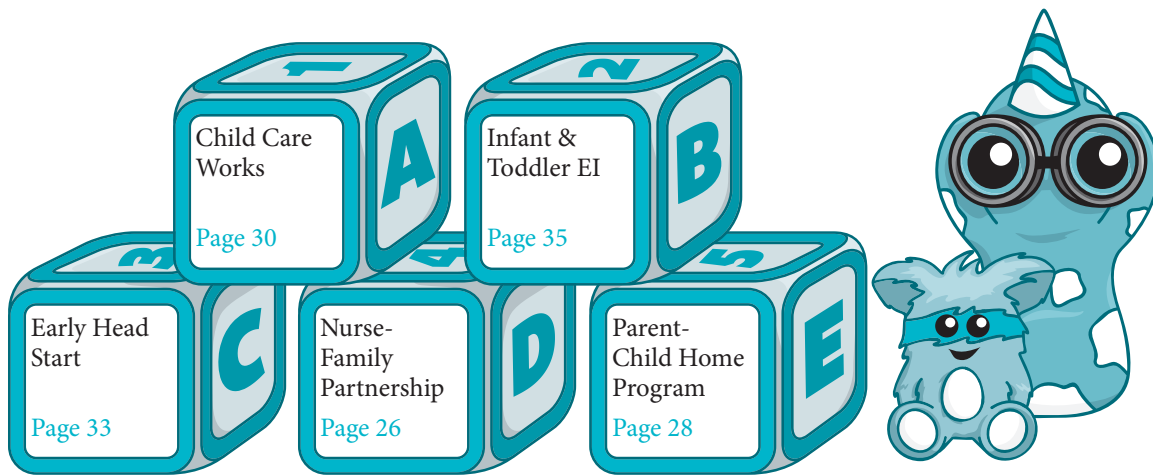
## WHERE TO BEGIN

---

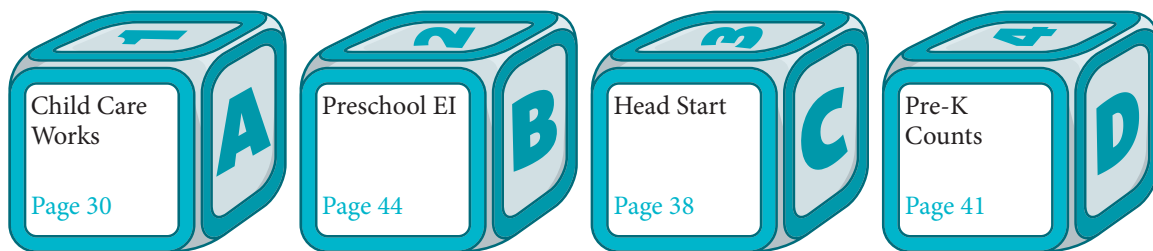
Now that you have a map of the landscape of early education, you need to find the program that is the best fit for your child. Below are some simple steps to direct your path through this guidebook.

# 4

**If your child is birth to age 3, please see these programs:**



**If your child is ages 3 to 5 (the age of school beginners), please see these programs:**



**Program Name:**

**NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP**

**Description:**

Nurse-Family Partnership is a free program that helps first-time mothers have a healthy pregnancy and also supports them after their baby is born. The program is currently available through local agencies in 40 out of 67 counties in Pennsylvania.

**Services:**

Nurse-Family Partnership pairs each woman in the program with a trained nurse, called a “Nurse Home Visitor.” The nurse provides regular home visits, usually every week or every other week, beginning early in the pregnancy and continuing after the child is born until the child turns two. Nurse Home Visitors help mothers stay healthy during pregnancy and prepare to give birth. They also provide information and advice about parenting, child development, and how to support a family.

**Eligibility:**

Nurse-Family Partnership is for low-income women who are pregnant with their first child.

**How to Enroll:**

To enroll in the program, contact your regional Nurse-Family Partnership agency as soon as possible after you find out that you are pregnant. You can find contact information for your regional agency at the Nurse-Family Partnership website:

<http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/locations/Pennsylvania/find-a-local-agency>

You can also get more information by calling the Nurse-Family Partnership national office at (303) 813-4313.

**Cost:**

The services of the Nurse-Family Partnership are free to eligible mothers.

**Where to Go with Concerns:**

If you are not happy with the services you are getting, contact your regional Nurse-Family Partnership office.

Authorizing Law:

Not applicable. Nurse-Family Partnership is a nonprofit, charity organization.

Implementing Regulations:

Not applicable.

Funding:

Not applicable.

Responsible Federal Agency:

Federal Medicaid funds; Pennsylvania general funds; and local and private organizations and foundations.

Responsible State/ Local Agency:

Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL).

Resources/ Websites:

**Pennsylvania Nurse-Family Partnership Website:**

<http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/>

**Pennsylvania Location Finder Website:**

<http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/locations/Pennsylvania/find-a-local-agency>

**Program Name:**

**PARENT-CHILD HOME PROGRAM**

**Description:**

The Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) provides a home visitor to help parents learn how to read to and play with their children in a way that promotes early learning and builds a positive parent-child bond.

**Eligibility:**

PCHP is for families who:

- Enroll their children between 18 months and 2 years of age and participate for two years.
- Are challenged by low levels of education, poverty, literacy and language barriers, and/or are isolated and not accessing community services.

**How to Enroll:**

Contact the PHCP location nearest you.

**Cost:**

PCHP is free to families in 25 counties in Pennsylvania.

Authorizing Law:	Not applicable.
Implementing Regulations:	Not applicable.
Funding:	Funded through private and public funding.
Responsible Federal Agency:	Not applicable.
Responsible State/ Local Agency:	Not applicable.
Resources/ Websites:	<a href="http://www.parent-child.org">http://www.parent-child.org</a>
Pennsylvania Locations:	<a href="http://www.parent-child.org/about-us-where-we-are.html#us">http://www.parent-child.org/about-us-where-we-are.html#us</a>

**Program Name:**

**CHILD CARE WORKS**

**Description:**

Child Care Works is a Pennsylvania program that helps low-income families pay for childcare while parents work or attend school. Under this program, the government pays a part of the family’s childcare costs (called a “subsidy payment”), and the family pays a part of its childcare costs (called a “family co-pay”). The co-payment may be as little as \$5.00 per week and varies according to your income and the number of people in your family.

Parents choose their own childcare provider, and all payments go directly to that childcare program.

**Services:**

Child Care Works provides payments to help families cover childcare costs. The program also provides referral services and information about quality childcare providers.

**Eligibility:**

To be eligible for Child Care Works:

- You and your family must live in Pennsylvania.
- You must have a child or children under age 13 who need childcare while you work or attend an education program.
- All children in care must be United States citizens or lawful permanent residents.
- Your family’s income cannot be more than 200% of the federal poverty income guidelines. For example, a family of four must earn less than \$46,100 in 2012 to be eligible (2012 Annual Federal Poverty Guidelines are located on [page 32](#)).
- Each parent or guardian in your household must (a) work 20 or more hours per week, OR (b) work 10 hours or more and go to school for 10 hours or more per week, OR (c) have a promise of a job that will start within 30 days of your application.
- Each parent or guardian must have proof of identification.



**Note:**

A parent or caretaker under age 18 may be attending a full-time education program, but is not required to attend in order to receive funding.

### How to Enroll:

You can enroll in Child Care Works by using COMPASS, which is an online application that allows Pennsylvanians to apply for many health and human service programs. Find COMPASS online at: <https://www.humanservices.state.pa.us/compass.web>. Click on the “Apply Now” button or use the PDF form available at: [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_251851\\_1222290\\_0\\_0\\_18/CY\\_868.pdf](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_251851_1222290_0_0_18/CY_868.pdf).

You can also mail, fax or hand in a paper application to your local Child Care Information Services (CCIS) agency. Call CCIS at 1-877-4-PA-KIDS (877-472-5437) if you do not know where to send the application or if you need help completing the application.

### Cost:

Parents pay for part of the cost of the childcare, and the government pays for the other part.

### Waiting Lists:

A family can legally be placed on a waiting list for a Child Care Works subsidy. If funds are not available to enroll a child after a family has been found eligible for a subsidy, an eligible child must be placed on a waiting list on a first-come, first-served basis.

### Where to Go With Concerns:

If you have concerns or a complaint about a childcare program, or would like to report a childcare provider that is operating without a license, contact the Regional Child Development Office for your county. You can also complete an online complaint form, which is available at the Child Care Works website listed below.

#### Regional Child Development Offices:

- Western Region: 800-222-2149
- North Central - Harrisburg: 800-222-2117
- North Central - Scranton: 800-222-2108
- Southeast Region: 800-346-2929

For all of your childcare questions and needs, contact your local Child Care Information Services (CCIS) agency (go to <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/helpfultelephonenumber/childcareinformationservices/index.htm> to find your local agency), or call CCIS at 1-877-4-PA-KIDS.

**Authorizing Law:**

Public Welfare Code, 62 P.S. §§ 201-211.

**Implementing Regulations:**

55 Pa. Code §§ 3041.1 – 3041.189.

**Funding:**

United States Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW).

**Responsible Federal Agency:**

Office of Child Care in the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

**Responsible State/Local Agency:**

CCIS in the Pennsylvania DPW.

**Resources/Websites:**<http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/forchildren/childcareearlylearning/childcareworkssubsidizedchildcareprogram/index.htm>**Resource:**

2012 Annual Federal Poverty Guidelines

**Tip for Families of Children with Special Needs:**

Parents can receive Child Care Works subsidies until their child is 19 years old if the child's disability causes her to be incapable of caring for herself.

Household Size	100%	133%	150%	200%	300%	400%
1	\$11,170	\$14,856	\$16,755	\$22,340	\$33,510	\$44,680
2	\$15,130	\$20,123	\$22,695	\$30,260	\$45,390	\$60,520
3	\$19,090	\$25,390	\$28,635	\$38,180	\$57,270	\$76,360
4	\$23,050	\$30,657	\$34,575	\$46,100	\$69,150	\$92,200
5	\$27,010	\$35,923	\$40,515	\$54,020	\$81,030	\$108,040
6	\$30,970	\$41,190	\$46,455	\$61,940	\$92,910	\$123,880
7	\$34,930	\$46,457	\$52,395	\$69,860	\$104,790	\$139,720
8	\$38,890	\$51,724	\$58,335	\$77,780	\$116,670	\$155,560
For each additional person, add	\$3,960	\$5,267	\$5,940	\$7,920	\$11,880	\$15,840

Many of these programs base eligibility on whether a family falls below a certain percentage of the federal poverty guidelines. We provide these guidelines so you can get a sense of where your family fits.



**Program Name:**

**EARLY HEAD START**

**Description:**

Early Head Start (EHS) is a special Head Start program that provides free education, health, and social services for pregnant women and families with children under age 3. The federal government funds EHS programs. EHS services may be offered at a center or in the family’s home. There are currently nearly 40 EHS programs throughout Pennsylvania.

**Services:**

EHS programs offer services to help children grow academically, physically and socially. EHS programs also help families get needed social services to help them become self-sufficient.

**Eligibility:**

EHS programs serve pregnant women and children birth to age 3 whose income is below the federal poverty guidelines. In 2012, this means that a household of four people must have an income below \$23,050 to be eligible for EHS. To see the federal poverty guidelines, turn to [page 32](#) of this guide.

**Cost:**

EHS services are free of charge to eligible families.

**How to Enroll:**

Families can apply for EHS services through their local EHS provider. You can find a program in your community through the Head Start Center Locator (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices>) or at the following website: <http://paheadstart.org/index.php/head-start-in-pa/local-head-start-information/>.

**Waiting Lists:**

A family can legally be placed on a waiting list for EHS services.

**Where to Go With Concerns:**

If you are not happy with your child’s EHS program, contact your local EHS office. If you believe that the program does not meet requirements for the health, safety and education of children, you can file a complaint with the main Office of Head Start (OHS) at this website: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/about/contact>.

**Authorizing Law:**

Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. § 9801 et seq.).

**Implementing Regulations:**

45 C.F.R. §§ 1301-1311.

**Funding:**

Funding for EHS programs comes directly from the federal government to the local program, called a “grantee.” Grantees can be public or private agencies, including local educational agencies, like intermediate units (IUs), and public and private nonprofit and for-profit agencies, like hospitals and social service agencies. The federal government provides 80% of the yearly costs and local programs must raise the remaining 20% of costs.

**Responsible Federal Agency:**

OHS, an office of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

**Resources/ Websites:**

**Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center’s Head Start site (includes links to finding a Head Start program and links to the Head Start law):**

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs>

**Head Start Resources for Parents:**

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/For%20Parents>

**Pennsylvania Head Start State Collaboration Office (PA HSSCO):**

[http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Programs\\_HS\\_HSSCO](http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Programs_HS_HSSCO)

**Pennsylvania Head Start Association (PHSA):**

<http://paheadstart.org>

**Program Name:**

**INFANT AND TODDLER EARLY INTERVENTION**

**Description:**

The Infant and Toddler Early Intervention (EI) program provides free supports and services to families with infants and toddlers who have delays in their growth and development. There is an EI office in each county in Pennsylvania.

**Services:**

EI can include services like parent education and developmental therapies that help children grow and develop. All services should be provided in “natural environments.” These are settings where the child would normally grow and learn if he or she did not have a disability, such as the family’s home, the child’s daycare center, and other places that are familiar to the family and child.

All EI services must be “family centered,” which means that they must be based on each family’s individual needs. It also means that the family must be included in the planning and decision-making process. A team of people, including the parents, decides which services are needed and creates a written plan, called an individualized family service plan (IFSP).

Common EI services provided to infants and toddlers include service coordination, nutrition services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) and/or verbal behavior therapy. Children can receive many other types of services through the EI program.

**Eligibility:**

The Infant and Toddler EI program is for children from birth to age 3 who have a 25% delay in one or more areas of development (physical, mental, communication, social/emotional, or adaptive), OR who have a physical or mental condition that is very likely to result in a developmental delay (e.g., Down syndrome).

Children who are at risk for developmental delays have a right to be tracked to make sure they are making good developmental progress. This includes children with low birth weights; children who are born very early; children with high levels of lead poisoning; children affected by drug or alcohol abuse; and children who have been seriously abused or neglected.

### How to Enroll:

A parent, guardian, or anyone else who cares for the child – including doctors, teachers and caseworkers – can refer the child to find out if he or she is eligible for EI services. The child will then be screened to decide if a full evaluation should be done. A parent has the right to request a full multidisciplinary evaluation at any time – before, during or after a screen is done to determine if a child is eligible. Once requested with the parent’s consent, the EI provider must conduct the full evaluation.

If you are worried about your child’s development and would like to explore EI services, call the **CONNECT Helpline** (800-692-7288), and someone will help you get started.

### Cost:

Infant and Toddler EI services in Pennsylvania are free to all eligible children and their families.

### Waiting List:

The EI program cannot have a waiting list for any services. It is illegal to place a child on a waiting list for an EI evaluation or for EI services, including speech therapy and other therapies.

### Where to Go With Concerns:

If you are not happy with your child’s EI services, contact your family’s service coordinator, or request a meeting with someone from your local EI office.

If you still have a problem, contact the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) at 877-472-5437 to discuss your problem or file a complaint.

**Authorizing Laws:**

Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. § 1431 et seq.) & PA Early Intervention Services System Act (or Act 212) (11 P.S. §§ 875-102 – 875-503).

**Implementing Regulations:**

34 C.F.R. Part 303 & 55 Pa. Code § 4226.1 et seq.

**Funding:**

Federal IDEA funds.

**Responsible Federal Agency:**

United States Department of Education (ED).

**Responsible State Agency:**

Bureau of Early Intervention Services (BEIS) in the OCDEL.

**Responsible Local Agency:**

Offices of Early Intervention in the county Offices of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disabilities (also known as county Offices of Mental Health/Mental Retardation (MH/MR)).

**Resources/ Websites:**

**Early Intervention at the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE):**

[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/early\\_intervention/8710](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/early_intervention/8710)

**Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN):**

<http://www.pattan.net>

**Program Name:**

**HEAD START**

**Description:**

Head Start is a federal government program that provides free education, health and social services to low-income families with children from ages 3 to 5. The goal of Head Start is to help young children gain the skills they need to succeed in school and life.

There is a Head Start program in every county in Pennsylvania. Local organizations receive money directly from the federal government to run a Head Start program. Many Head Start programs offer center-based services where children go to a preschool. In some rural areas, Head Start may be a home-based program where trained home visitors provide services to families in their homes.

Pennsylvania also operates a Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP). The state provides its funding to local organizations to operate Head Start programs which must follow the same rules as the Head Start programs that receive federal funding directly.

**Services:**

The Head Start and Head Start Supplemental programs offer many different services to help children grow academically, physically and socially. These may include part-day or full-day preschool, support for children with disabilities, medical and dental checkups, health and nutrition education, and parenting skills training. Head Start also provides support and referrals to help families meet other needs, such as employment, housing or adult education.

**Eligibility:**

Head Start programs are for families with children from ages 3 to 5 whose income is below the federal poverty level. Head Start especially welcomes children with disabilities and children experiencing homelessness. Some exceptions may apply to Head Start's general eligibility guidelines, so please make sure to contact your local Head Start provider to find out if your family is eligible for services. To view the federal poverty guidelines, go to [page 32](#) of this guide.

**How to Enroll:**

Families can enroll in Head Start services through their local Head Start provider. You can find the program in your community through the Head Start Center Locator: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices>.

**Cost:**

All Head Start services must be provided free of charge to eligible families.

**Waiting Lists:**

Head Start programs can legally have a waiting list for enrollment.

**Where to Go with Concerns:**

If you are not happy with your child's Head Start program or have a complaint, contact your local Head Start office. If you believe that the program does not meet requirements for the health, safety and education of children, you can file a complaint with the main Office of Head Start (OHS) at this website: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/about/contact>.

**Authorizing Law:**

Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. § 9801 et seq.).

**Implementing Regulations:**

45 C.F.R. §§ 1301-1311.

**Funding:**

Funding for Head Start programs comes directly from the federal government to the local program, called a "grantee". Grantees can be public or private agencies, including local educational agencies, like school districts and intermediate units (IUs), and public and private nonprofit and for-profit agencies. The federal government provides 80% of the yearly costs and local programs must raise the remaining 20% of costs.

**Responsible Federal Agency:**

OHS, an office of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

**Responsible State Agency:**

Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) administers the HSSAP.

**Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center’s Head Start site (includes links to finding a Head Start program and links to the Head Start law):**

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs>

**Head Start Resources for Parents:**

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/For%20Parents>

**PA Head Start State Collaboration Office (PA HSSCO):**

[http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Programs\\_HS\\_HSSCO](http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Programs_HS_HSSCO)

**PA Head Start Association (PHSA):**

<http://paheadstart.org>

**HSSAP:**

[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pre-kindergarden/8708/head\\_start/522201](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pre-kindergarden/8708/head_start/522201)

**Early Head Start National Resource Center (has FAQs for parents that are also available in Spanish):**

<http://www.ehsnrc.org/FAQs.htm>



**Tip for Families of Children with Needs:**

At least 10% of a Head Start program’s enrollment must be children who are eligible for special education or early intervention services. A Head Start program may not deny enrollment to a child based on the child’s disability or severity of the disability. Head Start programs must try to work with other state and local agencies to provide appropriate services for children with disabilities.

Head Start programs must develop and use a “disabilities service plan” to make sure that all parts of the program are appropriately involved in the inclusion of children with disabilities and their parents in the program. Head Start programs cannot discriminate against children with disabilities. Head Start rules have many protections for children with disabilities.



**Program Name:**

**PRE-K COUNTS**

**Description:**

Pre-K Counts is a Pennsylvania preschool program that provides free, high quality education to help get young children ready for school. 57 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties currently have Pre-K-Counts classrooms.

**Services:**

Pre-K Counts provides half-day or full-day pre-kindergarten programs. These programs use a curriculum that will help children grow academically and socially. Pre-K Counts classrooms offer small class sizes (no more than 20 students per teacher and aide). Pre-K Counts programs have teachers who are trained to teach young children. The programs must provide at least 180 days per year of pre-kindergarten.

**Eligibility:**

Pre-K Counts is for children who:

- Are between age 3 and the entry age for kindergarten in the school district where the child lives; and
- Are at risk of school failure due to income (family income is below 300% of the federal poverty level, or a family of four earning not more than \$69,050 in 2012), language (English is not the child's first language), or special needs issues.

**How to Enroll:**

To find information about Pre-K Counts programs in your community, visit the Early Childhood Provider Search at: <https://www.humanservices.state.pa.us/Compass.Web/ProviderSearch/pgm/PSWEL.aspx>.

A list of all the Pre-K Counts agencies is also available at: [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_251851\\_1209606\\_0\\_0\\_18/Enrollment Contact List 2011-2012.pdf](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_251851_1209606_0_0_18/Enrollment%20Contact%20List%202011-2012.pdf).

Contact the Pre-K Counts program closest to you for information about classroom locations and how to enroll.

**Cost:**

Pre-K Counts is free to eligible families. However, the program may charge for additional portions of the day (like extended childcare).

**Waiting Lists:**

Pre-K Counts classrooms can legally have waiting lists.

**Where to Go With Concerns:**

If you have a concern or complaint about your Pre-K Counts program, call your Regional Child Development Office.

Regional Child Development Offices:

- Western Region: 800-222-2149
- North Central - Harrisburg: 800-222-2117
- North Central - Scranton: 800-222-2108
- Southeast Region: 800-346-2929

**Authorizing Law:**

Act 45 of 2007 (as amended in 2008 and 2010), 24 P.S. § 15-1511-D – 24 P.S. § 15-1516-D.

**Implementing Regulations:**

22 Pa. Code Chapter 405 (available at [www.pacode.com](http://www.pacode.com)).

**Funding:**

Pre-K Counts funding comes directly from the state of Pennsylvania.

**Responsible Federal Agency:**

Not applicable.

**Responsible State/Local Agency:**

Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL).

Resources/  
Websites:

**Pre-K Counts at the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE):**

[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pre\\_k\\_counts/8742](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pre_k_counts/8742)

**Early Childhood Programs at the Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality:**

[http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Programs\\_PreK\\_Families](http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Programs_PreK_Families)



**Tip for Families of Children with Special Needs:**

Pre-K Counts programs must be open to children with developmental delays or disabilities, or both, and must provide inclusive environments.

A child may not be denied admission to a Pre-K Counts program because of a delay or disability.

**Program Name:**

## **PRESCHOOL EARLY INTERVENTION**

**Description:**

The Preschool Early Intervention (EI) program provides free supports and services to families with preschoolers who have disabilities or delays in their growth and development. Services are provided through local intermediate units (IUs), school districts, and other agencies that serve preschool children.

**Services:**

Preschool EI can include services like parent education and developmental therapies that help children learn and grow. These services must be provided in the “least restrictive environment.” This means that the child must be allowed to learn with other children without disabilities, if possible. Such settings may include neighborhood preschools, charter schools, and preschool programs like Pre-K Counts and Head Start.

A team of people, including the parents, decides which EI services are needed and creates a written plan, called an individualized education program (IEP), for the child. This plan describes the child’s developmental goals and the services that will be provided to help the child meet these goals.

Common EI services include, among others, speech therapy, occupational therapy and physical therapy. Children can receive many other types of services through the EI program.

**Eligibility:**

The Preschool EI program is for children ages 3 to 5 or the start of first grade who need special education (specially designed instruction) and related services because they have:

- (a) a delay of 25% or more in one or more areas of child development (physical, cognitive, communication, social/emotional or adaptive),
- OR
- (b) a physical or mental disability (autism/pervasive developmental disorder; serious emotional disturbance; neurological impairment; deafness/hearing loss; specific learning disability; intellectual disability; multiple disabilities; other health impairment; physical disability; speech impairment; or blindness/visual impairment).

### How to Enroll:

A parent can ask for an EI evaluation at any time. A parent or guardian must provide written permission before the child can be tested for eligibility. Once a parent gives permission, the EI provider has 60 calendar days to test the child and let the parent know if the child is eligible.

If you are worried about your child's development and would like to explore EI services, call the **CONNECT Helpline** (800-692-7288), and someone will help you get started.

### Cost:

EI services for preschoolers in Pennsylvania are free to all eligible children and their families.

### Waiting Lists:

The EI program cannot have a waiting list for any services. It is illegal to place a child on a waiting list for an EI evaluation or for EI services, including speech therapy and other therapies.

### Where to Go With Concerns:

If you are not happy with your child's EI services, contact your preschool program supervisor and request an IEP Team meeting to discuss your concerns.

You can also contact the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) at 877-472-5437 to discuss your problem or file a complaint. You can also request mediation or file for a due process hearing with the Office for Dispute Resolution.

**Authorizing Law:**

Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. 1400, et seq. and the Pennsylvania Early Intervention Services System Act (or Act 212) (11 P.S. §§ 875-102 – 875-503).

**Implementing Regulations:**

34 C.F.R. Part 300; 22 Pa. Code §§ 14.151-14.158.

**Funding:**

Federal IDEA funds.

**Responsible Federal Agency:**

United States Department of Education (ED).

**Responsible State Agency:**

Bureau of Early Intervention Services (BEIS) in the OCDEL.

**Responsible Local Agency:**

IUs, school districts and/or private organizations.

**Resources/ Websites:**

**Early Intervention at the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE):**

[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/early\\_intervention/8710](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/early_intervention/8710)

**The IDEA at the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP):**

<http://idea.ed.gov/explore/home>

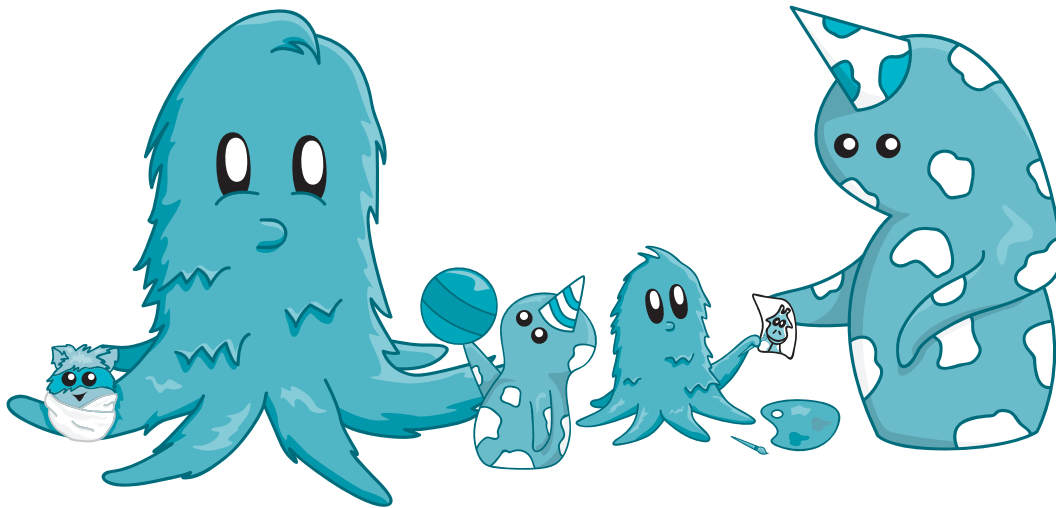
**Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN):**

<http://www.pattan.net>

## INTRODUCTION TO EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

---

# 5



### 5.1 Overview from Birth to Age 5

- **Early Intervention (EI) [2, 6] services must be provided at no cost to parents, regardless of a family’s income.** Although you can be asked to use Medical Assistance and even private health insurance to help fund EI services, it cannot be required. You cannot be forced to apply for Medical Assistance or to use insurance if it would result in a direct or indirect cost to you.
- **EI services must be family-centered and put in a written document known as an individualized family service plan (IFSP) for infants and toddlers or an individualized education program (IEP) for preschool children.** This plan outlines out the EI services you can expect your child and your family to receive based on outcomes and goals that are unique for your child. It is the “contract” between you and the provider of EI services. You are the expert on your child. You and your child’s dreams, hopes, visions and suggestions are critical to inform the development of this plan.
- **EI services can be provided directly to your child** to help improve developmental and educational growth. EI services can also provide needed support and adaptations at home and in your child’s early childcare or educational program. EI staff can also provide help to other people in your child’s life, such as the childcare staff or the parent, so that these individuals can help the child learn and develop. This is particularly important if your child needs supports to spend time in natural environments with children without disabilities.

- ***EI services include information, training, and other support for your family*** to help with your child’s development; EI services can help train and support staff at early learning programs and help coordinate services, too. EI providers can help families answer questions about their child’s development.
- ***EI services must be provided by qualified personnel.*** Qualified personnel can include special educators, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, psychologists, social workers, nurses, nutritionists, family therapists, orientation and mobility specialists, pediatricians and other physicians, early interventionists, service coordinators, and audiologists.
- ***For infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities,*** the law (**Part C** of the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** [32]) requires that, to the maximum extent appropriate, EI services must be provided in natural environments (the setting where the child would be if he or she did not have a delay or disability), and only when services cannot be provided satisfactorily in the natural environment, as determined by the parent and the family service team, can the child receive services in another setting.
- ***For preschool children with disabilities,*** the law (**Part B** of the **IDEA** [31]) requires that young children are educated with those without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate, and that removal to special classes or separate schools can only occur if the nature and severity of the child’s disability is such that education in the regular classes with the use of **supplementary aids and services** [73] cannot be provided satisfactorily. This is called being educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

### **Who is Responsible for EI in PA?**

At the state level in Pennsylvania, the **Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL)** [24] is responsible for overseeing all early childhood learning programs, including EI services, for children from birth to age 5 (the year of school beginners). OCDEL is a collaboration between the **Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE)** [22] and the **Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW)** [23]. OCDEL has four bureaus, one of which is the **Bureau of Early Intervention Services (BEIS)** [18]. BEIS oversees the Infant and Toddler and Preschool EI programs in Pennsylvania.

At the local level, the *county human services office* administers Infant and Toddler EI programs for children from birth to age 3. These county offices have different names across the state – sometimes they are referred to as the Office of Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities, the Office of Behavioral Health/Intellectual Disabilities, or the Office of Mental Health/Mental Retardation. In turn, the county office contracts with a wide variety of agencies to provide EI services to young children. You may have to ask the county administrators to



help you find the right name of the office in your county charged with administering Infant and Toddler EI programs.

For preschool children, OCDEL, through the BEIS, contracts with local **intermediate units (IUs)** [63], some school districts, and a few private agencies to administer Preschool EI programs. The local IU, school district or private agency is responsible for administering EI services in its geographical area. These groups may also contract with a wide variety of providers to ensure children with disabilities receive appropriate preschool programs.

### Legal Rights

Throughout the EI process (determining if your child is eligible, developing a service plan and implementing your child’s IFSP or IEP), you must be advised in writing of your legal rights and when you can exercise them regarding referrals, screening, evaluations, programs, services, and placements. These rights are often referred to as your *procedural safeguards* or your *due process rights*. This means that you have the right to prior written notices of the decisions of public agencies and opportunities to agree or disagree as you move through the EI service system. See Parent Tool #5 on [page 50](#) for more information.



**Note:**

If you disagree with EI providers about your child’s program or services, or your child is not receiving the services in his or her IFSP/IEP, there are many ways to address these and other problems that arise. These include meetings and informal discussions, mediation, administrative due process hearings, formal complaints to OCDEL [24], and court.



## Parent Tool #5: Your Legal Rights in Early Intervention



1. **You have the right to request or refuse services at any time.** EI [2, 6] services are voluntary. You have the right to agree or disagree with all or some of the recommendations about your child’s eligibility, services, or program. You can agree to all or some of the services offered to your child and family. You can withdraw your child at any time.
2. **You have the right to access your child’s EI records and decide how they are used and shared with others.** There are federal and state laws that require EI agencies and personnel to keep your information confidential and only share it with others with your prior permission.

You may be asked for information about your child or your family that seems a bit too personal to share (for example, your social security number, race or citizenship status). This information may be helpful to the EI providers but is not required. You may decide to answer these questions voluntarily, but you can also refuse. If you do not answer these questions, your child should still be evaluated and her services should not be affected by your refusal.



**Note:**

EI records include: referral information and correspondence (including letters, faxes and emails), screening and assessment records, evaluation reports, IFSPs and IEPs, progress notes and service coordination notes and reports, tracking plans, provider and therapists records and reports, and any other records the EI system creates, uses, or maintains regarding your child and family.

3. **You have the right to written notices and opportunities to challenge decisions throughout the EI process.** Your procedural safeguards include the right to see all of your child’s records and to have prior written notice (PWN), meaning an explanation, of any recommended action the EI provider wants to take regarding your child’s EI program. The EI provider must also provide you with a written explanation any time the provider refuses to provide a service you requested for your child.
4. **You also have the right to informal and formal opportunities to disagree with the EI service providers.** You have the right to use the problem-solving strategies discussed on [page 57](#) and [62](#) of the *Guide*, including filing a complaint with **OCDEL** [24], asking for mediation and/or an administrative hearing or, ultimately, filing a formal legal complaint in court.

5. **You have the right to continuation of your child’s EI services while your dispute proceedings are pending.** This right is often called *pendency* or *stay put*. Your child should stay in the same placement and continue to get all of the services currently set forth in her IFSP or IEP until your disagreement is resolved. You always have the right to work with the EI provider to change all or some of your child’s program if you can reach an agreement. Pendency applies even when your child is moving from the Infant and Toddler EI system to the Preschool EI system at age 3 and when your child is moving from the Preschool EI system to kindergarten or first grade. See also OCDEL’s announcement on transition of toddlers [92] and the Basic Education Circular (BEC) on transition [88].

.....

**Note:**

If you disagree with EI providers about your child’s program or services, or your child is not receiving the services in his or her IFSP/IEP, there are many ways to address these and other problems that arise. These include meetings and informal discussions, mediation, administrative due process hearings, formal complaints to OCDEL [24], and court.

.....



## **5.2 Infant and Toddler Early Intervention Services - Children under Age 3**

EI [2, 6] services are provided to eligible infants and toddlers and their families at no cost to parents. EI supports and services should help maximize your child’s development and build upon the natural learning opportunities in your family’s daily routines.

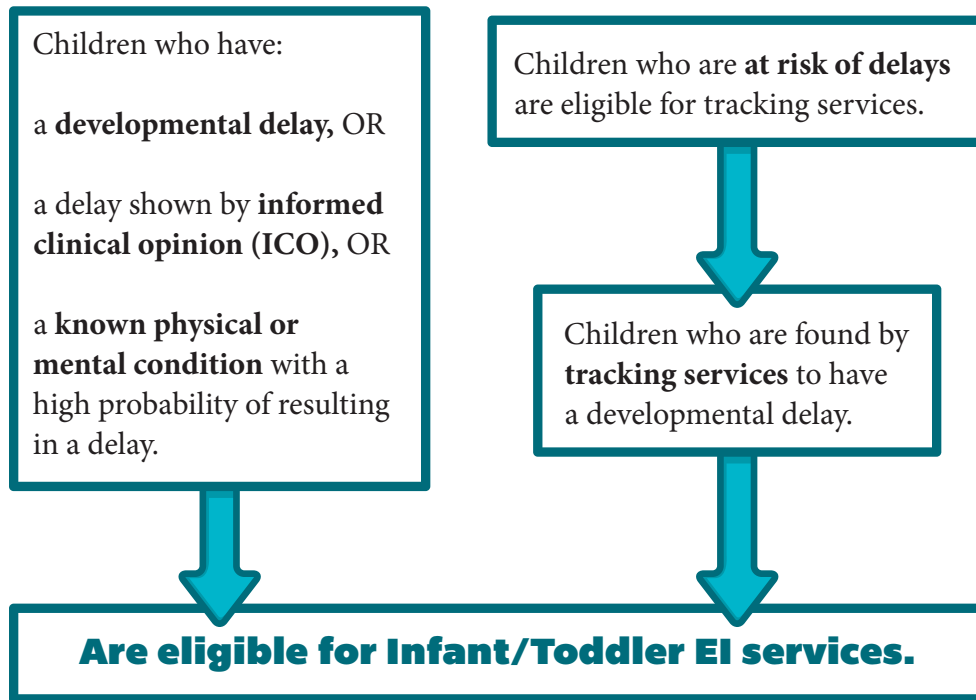
At the heart of EI is a partnership between families and EI personnel focused on the unique needs of your child. Your family is your child’s greatest resource. You are an equal partner and help decide what supports and services you and your child need.

**First Steps:** Once your child is referred to the EI services system, you will be given the name of a person to help you through the process of assessing your child’s needs and getting the appropriate services. This person is called a service coordinator. Your service coordinator is there to help you and the EI system meet the needs of your child.

## Making Sense of the Infant and Toddler EI System

**Eligibility:** We have provided the chart below to help you understand whether your child is eligible for Infant and Toddler EI services.

### Who is Eligible for Infant and Toddler EI from Birth to Age 3?



A **developmental delay** means that a child has a delay of 25% or more for the child's age or is 1.5 standard deviations below the mean on appropriate standardized tests in one or more of the following areas of development: cognitive, communication, physical, social/emotional, or adaptive (self-help) skills.

**Informed clinical opinion (ICO)** includes observation by experts, including parents, and similar approaches to form an opinion about whether children have a delay.

**Known physical or mental conditions** with a high probability of resulting in a delay include fetal alcohol syndrome, failure to thrive, and Down syndrome.

Children **at risk of delay** include those who: have/had birth weights under 3.3 pounds; have been cared for in neonatal units; have confirmed dangerous levels of lead poisoning; have been affected by illegal substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms from prenatal drug exposure; or have been seriously abused or neglected as found by the children and youth system.

**Tracking services** are monitoring of a child's development by county EI professionals to determine if children experience delays.

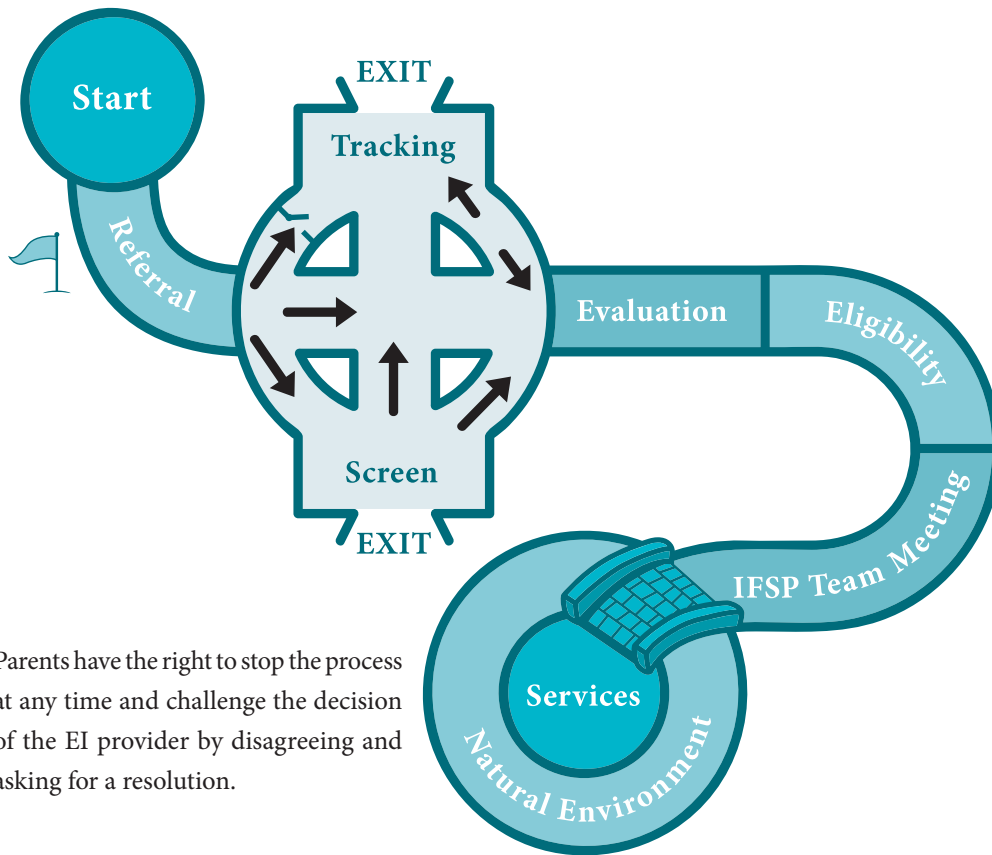
## How the Infant and Toddler EI System is supposed to work :

If you want to know how the infant and toddler EI system works – follow the map below. It takes you from start (an initial referral) through the options of tracking and screening to a full evaluation and on to the development of your child’s individual family service plan (IFSP). If all goes well, the system will move you forward as easily as playing a board game – one step at a time. We have provided timelines and explanations along the way to help you stay on track. We also hope you will use the links and resources to answer your questions and to learn more about how the Infant and Toddler EI system works.





**Resource:**  
See the annotated IFSP/IEP form [87].

## Here to There 0–3



★ Parents have the right to stop the process at any time and challenge the decision of the EI provider by disagreeing and asking for a resolution.

### Legend:

-  **Referral** – Anyone can refer a child for EI services, including a parent, caregiver, doctor or provider.
-  A child is eligible for tracking if an interview finds him or her to be at risk of delays (see [page 52](#)).

### Timelines:

From start to finish, this process should take **no longer than 45 calendar days**.

If a child will be **tracked**, the family must be contacted **every three months**. Parents can request less or no further contact.

**Evaluations** must be completed, an IFSP Team convened, and an IFSP developed **within 45 days of the child’s referral to the EI system**.

Parents must be invited to the IFSP Team meeting **at least 5 calendar days before the IFSP Meeting**.

Once the IFSP is completed, the **child’s services must begin within 14 calendar days**.

The IFSP must be reviewed **every 6 months** or more often as needed.

An **IFSP meeting** must be held **at least once a year** to evaluate the IFSP and revise it, if necessary.

A parent can disagree with the EI provider **at any time** and ask for mediation, an administrative due process hearing to resolve the dispute. Once a parent requests dispute resolution, the child continues to get the services currently set forth in the IFSP until the dispute is resolved. This is called “pendency” and applies even when a child is turning 3 and moving from the infant and toddler EI system to the preschool EI system.

**Tracking** – Children who are eligible for tracking and screening services in EI are those with very low birth weights, those who have spent time in neonatal intensive care, those who have been exposed to lead, those who have been exposed prenatally to drugs and/or alcohol, or those who have a history with the child welfare system due to abuse or neglect. A child who is involved in the child welfare system or who has been seriously abused or neglected or impacted by substance abuse must be referred to EI by the public agencies serving the child in order to determine the child’s need for an evaluation beyond screening.

**Screening** – Children referred to the EI system can be screened to determine if they are in need of a full evaluation for EI services. But a parent can request a full evaluation at any time before, during or after the screening process, regardless of the result, to determine if the child is eligible for EI services. To learn more about screening, see OCDEL’s introduction to EI [66].

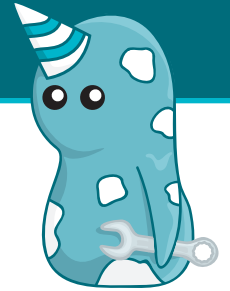
**Evaluation** – An evaluation cannot be done until a “parent” gives written consent for their child to be evaluated. It must be completed by a qualified professional and the conclusion cannot rely on a single test result. You can share whatever information you like about your child or family and cannot be required to pay for all or part of the evaluation. To learn more about evaluations, see OCDEL’s introduction to EI [66].

**IFSP Development** – A team of people, including the parent, your service coordinator and the person who conducted your evaluation – and anyone else the parent would like to include make up the IFSP Team. The Team reviews the results of the evaluation and develops a written plan of services called an IFSP. To see an IFSP form with notes and directions, see OCDEL’s annotated version [87].

**EI Services** – EI services include services provided directly to the child, information, training and other supports for the family. EI services must be provided by qualified professionals, listed in the IFSP and must be provided at no cost to the parent.

**Natural Environment** – The law requires the IFSP Team to ensure that, “to the maximum extent appropriate” to meet the needs of the infant or toddler with a developmental delay, EI services must be provided in the child’s “natural setting.” This is the setting where your child would spend her day if she did not have a developmental delay. This can be home or a community setting, including an early childcare program.

## Parent Tool #6: How Your Service Coordinator Can Help You



Your service coordinator can help you:

- Understand how the EI [2, 6] system works.
- Monitor your child’s developmental progress.
- Understand your legal rights and the responsibilities of the public agencies.
- Understand the choices you have to make.
- Coordinate with other community services, including medical and health (such as helping you apply for medical insurance for your child), and other early childhood learning programs such as Head Start [3, 8], Nurse-Family Partnership [7], and other public and private programs that could serve your child or family.
- Participate as another team member in the development and review of your child’s written IFSP.
- Help your child transition into other community supports, services and programs.

### Resource:

OCDEL provides an annotated IFSP/IEP form to help you and EI providers develop appropriate EI programs and services for young children. You can find this at the PaTTAN website [87].

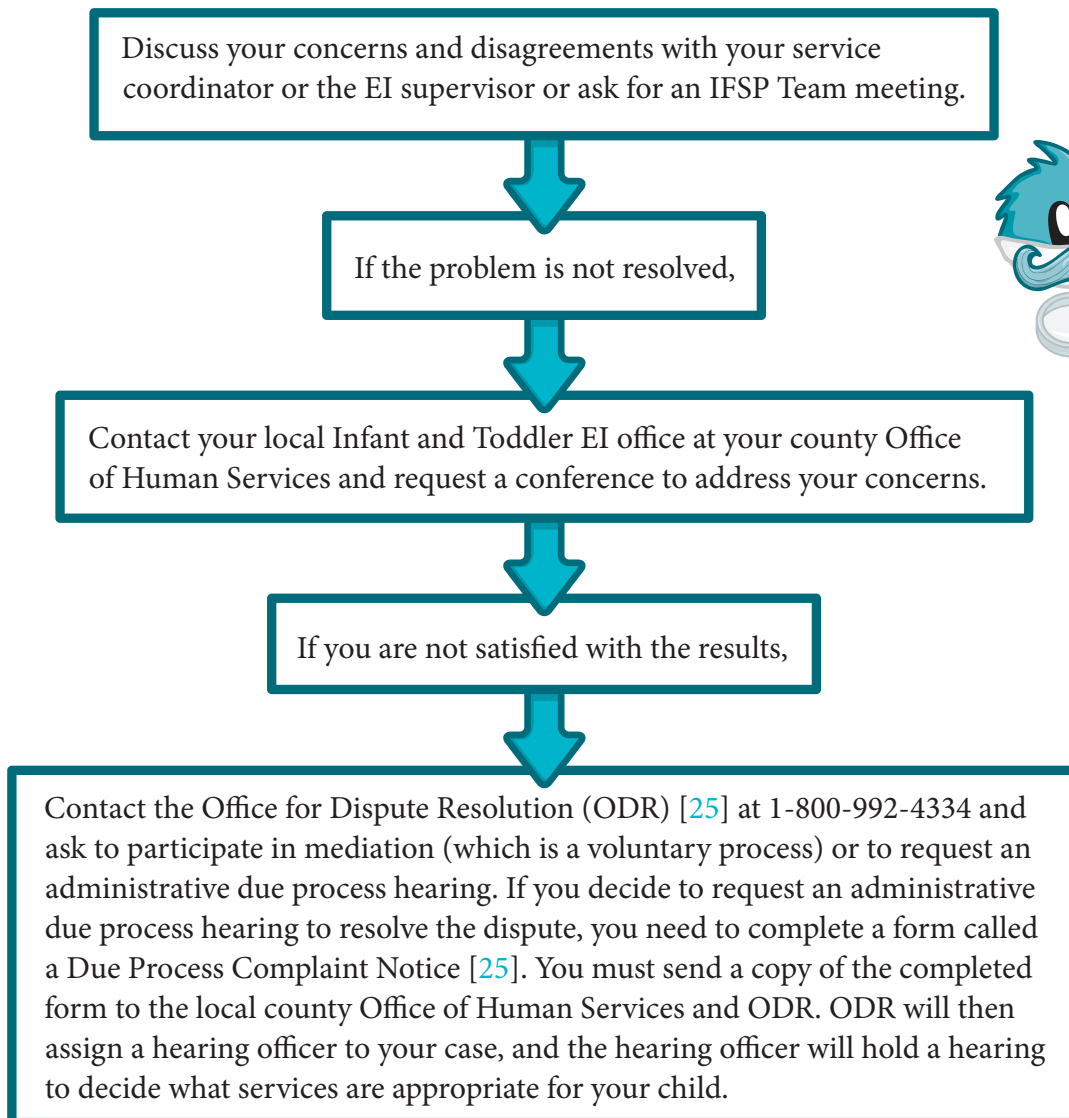
## Parent Tool #7: Tips to Help Prepare for an IFSP/IEP Team Meeting



- Write it down:** Make a list of the top three things most important to you and what you want to talk about at a meeting. Stick to it.
- Ask for copies:** Make sure you get a copy of your child's IFSP/IEP. You have a right to it. Your child's IFSP/IEP is the contract between you and the EI [2, 6] agency. It is an important legal document, and you need to know what is in it. If you sign something, ask for a copy of it with your signature.
- Take someone with you:** It can be hard to hear people talk about your child's needs. Be prepared for an emotional experience; don't go to IFSP/IEP Team meetings alone. Take someone with you to support you, to be a second pair of ears, and to reflect with you after the meeting (What was said? What was decided? Who promised to do what? What are the next steps?).
- Ask questions:** Don't be afraid to ask for more information or an explanation if you don't understand something. You can always ask for more time to read a document. Take a break to go read it alone or ask to take it home. Don't let yourself be rushed into agreeing with or signing something you don't understand. You can always ask that a meeting be continued at another time or moved to another day if you feel overwhelmed or need more time to digest everything.



## Problem Solving in the Infant and Toddler EI System



You do not have to go through any or all of the steps listed above before asking for mediation or a hearing. You can ask for mediation or a due process hearing at any point in time if you think your child's EI services are inappropriate. You can also call OCDEL at 717-346-9320 to discuss issues and/or to file a complaint if your child is not getting the services listed on his or her IEP or required timelines have not been followed.

While you are waiting for mediation or a hearing to end, your child should continue to get all of the services currently set forth in her IFSP, unless you agree to something different [88].

## 5.3 Preschool Early Intervention Services – Children from Ages 3 to 5

The law gives children who are 3 to 5 years old with a developmental delay or disability and need specialized instruction the right to a free appropriate preschool program. These programs and services are called **Preschool Early Intervention (Preschool EI)** [2, 6].

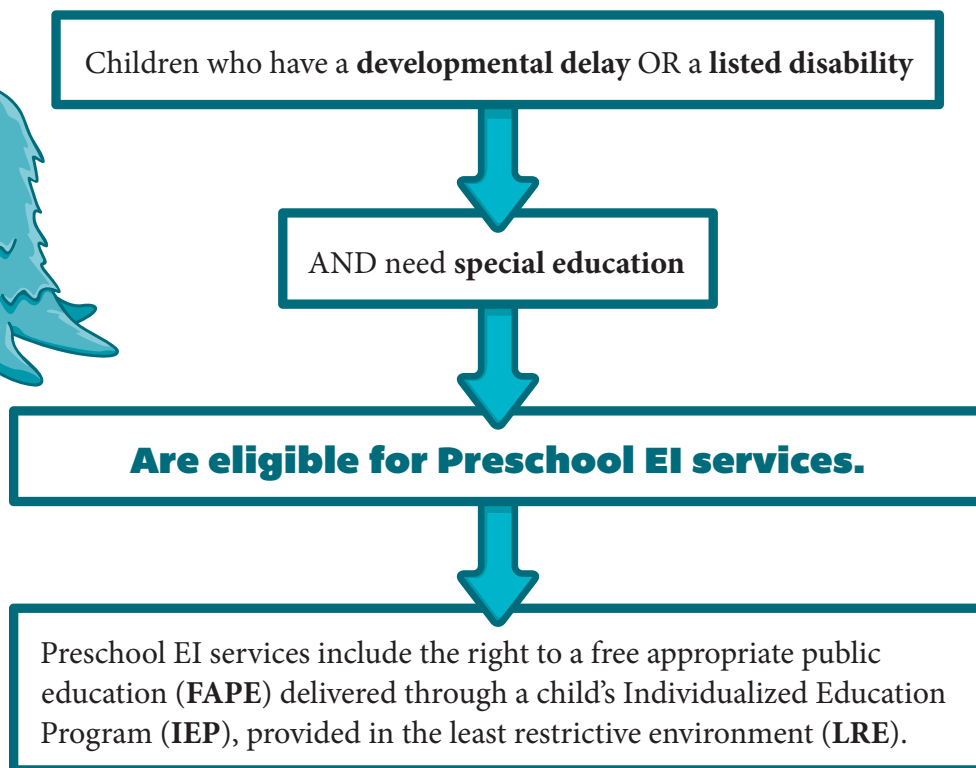
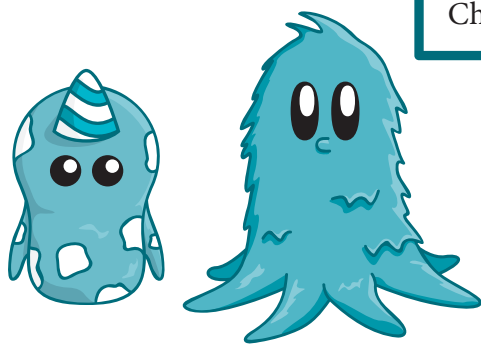


**First Steps:** If you think your preschool child may be entitled to Preschool EI services, you can contact the **CONNECT Helpline** at 1-800-692-7288 and they will give you the name and contact information for your local Preschool EI agency. You can ask for your child to be evaluated for services. They should explain the process, get your written consent for an evaluation, and schedule an evaluation.

### Making Sense of the Preschool EI System

**Eligibility:** We have provided the chart below to help you understand whether your child is eligible for Preschool EI services.

#### Who is Eligible for Preschool EI from Ages 3 to 5?



A **developmental delay** means that a child has a delay of 25% or more for the child's age or is 1.5 standard deviations below the mean on appropriate standardized tests in one or more of the following areas of development: cognitive, communication, physical, social/emotional, or adaptive (self-help) skills.

**Listed disabilities** include: autism, deafness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment (including blindness). There are 13 total listed disabilities found in federal law at 34 C.F.R. Section 300.8 [53].

**Special education** is defined as "specially designed instruction." Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability, and to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards of the public agency.

A special education program provides an eligible child with **FAPE** if the program is reasonably calculated to allow the child to receive meaningful educational benefit measured in relationship to the child's individual potential.

An **IEP** is a written document that contains measurable goals, and the special education and other related services (like occupational therapy, speech therapy, and/or physical therapy) a child will receive to work toward those goals.

A child who receives Preschool EI services has the right to receive those services in the **LRE**, which means the child has the right, to the maximum extent appropriate given the child's needs, to be educated with children who are not disabled in a typical preschool or early childcare setting, and that special classes or other removal from the general education environment should occur only when the nature and severity of the child's disability is such that education in the regular environment cannot be achieved satisfactorily with the use of **supplementary aids and services**.

**Supplementary aids and services** are critical elements in supporting the education of children with disabilities in regular classes and their participation in a range of other school activities. Supplementary aids and services can be accommodations and modifications to the curriculum, or the manner in which that content is presented or a child's progress is measured. But that's not all they are or can be. Supplementary aids and services can also include direct services and supports to the child, as well as support and training for staff who work with that child. Determining what supplementary aids and services are appropriate for a particular child must be done on an individual basis and reflected in the child's IEP.

## How the System Works:

If you think your child may be eligible for EI services and want to know how the Preschool EI system works, follow our map below. It takes you from the start of the evaluation process to developing your child's written plan for services, and explains the steps along the way.

### ◆ Here to There 3-5 ◆

The evaluation must be completed and the evaluation report written **within 60 calendar days of the parent(s) signing the consent form** giving permission to evaluate.

The meeting to write the IEP must be held **within 30 calendar days after the evaluation is finished.**

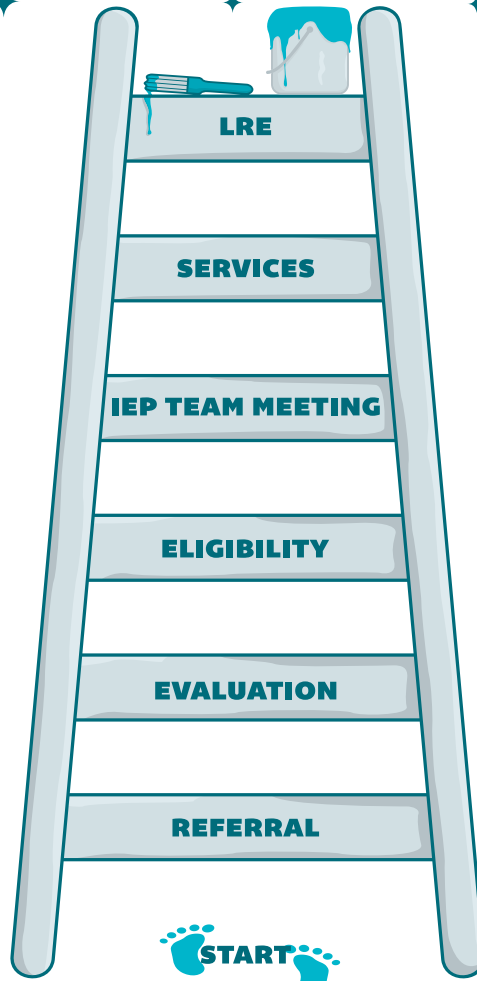
Services must be provided **within 14 calendar days after the IEP is written** and approved by the parent.

The IEP Team must meet **at least once every year.** Your child must be re-evaluated **every two years.**



#### Resource:

OCDEL provides an annotated IEP to help parents and Preschool EI providers develop appropriate programs and services for preschool children. You can find a copy at PaTTAN's website [87].



Call the **CONNECT Helpline at 1-800-692-7288**  
to be referred to the appropriate EI agency.

Parents have the right to stop the process and challenge the decision of the EI provider **between every step.** Additionally, the child has the right to continue to get the services in the current IEP pending final resolution of mediation or due process.

Preschool EI services are provided in coordination with local **intermediate units (IUs)** [63], school districts, or private agencies through a wide variety of providers.

### **Inclusive Preschool EI Services**

Preschool EI services are often provided in public and private early childhood settings. Your child's Preschool EI program and related services can be provided to her during the program and activities of her early childcare program, whether in **Head Start** [3, 8], **Pre-K Counts** [9], or another public or private program. To make this work for your child, you will need to get the EI providers to communicate and coordinate with one another.

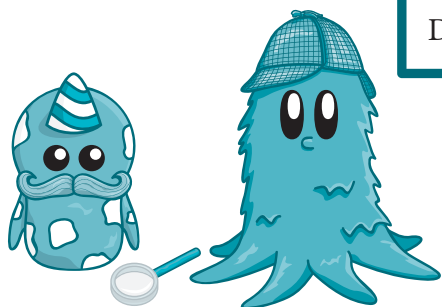
**First Step:** Get everyone on the same page – literally. Be sure your early childhood program has a copy of your child's IEP and can help him work on the same goals and outcomes you have identified in the EI system. Be sure your early childhood program and your EI providers are in communication about your child's program and services, and are keeping in mind the goals and outcomes you have identified for your child. If possible, have the childcare or early childhood program staff attend the IEP Team meeting and help with setting goals in the IEP.



Sometimes an early childcare or education program tells you that your child cannot enroll in the program or that they do not have the supports and services to meet your child's needs. Other times, you are told your child must be toilet-trained or have some other developmental skill to be eligible for admission. To help you understand what the law requires, we have provided answers to some frequently asked questions (see [page 65](#)).

When your child is enrolled in an early childcare or education program, or you are considering enrollment, and also needs EI services, it becomes a bit confusing to know who pays for what. The **Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)** [51] at the United States Department of Education (ED) has a policy [53] that helps explain when your child may be eligible to have the EI system pay all or some of the costs of early childcare and education programs.

## Problem Solving in the Preschool EI System



Discuss your concerns and disagreements with your child's IEP Team.

If the problem is not resolved,

Put your concerns in writing, ask for another IEP Team meeting, and ask that the supervisor of the Preschool EI program attend the meeting.

If you are not satisfied with the results,

At any point in time, you may contact the Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) at 1-800-992-4334 and ask to participate in mediation which is a voluntary process or to request an administrative due process hearing. If you decide to request an administrative due process hearing in order to resolve the dispute, you need to complete a form called a Due Process Complaint Notice [25]. You must send a copy of the completed form to your preschool EI program and ODR. ODR will then assign a hearing officer to your case, and the hearing officer will hold a hearing to decide what services are appropriate for your child.

You do not have to go through any or all of the steps listed above before asking for mediation or a hearing. You can ask for mediation or a due process hearing at any point in time if you think your child's EI services are inappropriate. You can also call OCDEL at 717-346-9320 to discuss issues and/or to file a complaint if your child is not getting the services listed on his or her IEP or required timelines have not been followed.

While you are waiting for mediation or a hearing to end, your child should continue to get all of the services currently set forth in her IEP, unless you agree to something different.

## 5.4 Transition at Age 3, School Age and Beyond

Transitions are a fact of life. Everyone experiences transitions – new jobs, new houses, new schools, new friends, and even new family members. Planning for transitions helps smooth what can sometimes be a challenging path from the familiar to the new.

Young children under the age of 5 experience multiple transitions in their daily routines and over time in their lives. Some children go to early childcare programs in the morning, transition to an **EI** [2, 6] or **Head Start** [3, 8] program in the afternoon, and then return to their early childcare program before being picked up to go home at the end of the day. Over the course of five years, some young children also transition from hospital to home, from home to infant and toddler childcare programs, from childcare to EI programs, from EI to preschool programs, and ultimately to school-age programs.

### Transition to Preschool EI Services

When your child turns 3, she will move from the Infant and Toddler EI program to a Preschool EI program. If she continues to have both a developmental delay and also demonstrates a need for special education services, she will remain eligible for EI services. Not all children who are eligible for Infant and Toddler EI and related services are eligible for Preschool EI services.

The decisions about what your child needs before, during and after the transition should be thoughtfully planned based on your child’s needs. Both the Infant and Toddler EI and Preschool EI program personnel should be involved in the transition planning.

At least 90 days before your child’s third birthday, you will be asked to participate in an IFSP Team meeting focused on transition planning. At this meeting, the team will discuss the preschool options for your child and begin the process of preparing you and your child for the transition to new programs and services. The Preschool EI program may want to evaluate your child. No change can be made in the IFSP at any time during this process without written notice to you and your consent.

### Transition from Preschool EI Programs to School-Age Programs

One year before your preschooler is eligible for kindergarten or first grade, you will be asked to participate in a transition planning meeting with your child’s IEP Team to prepare a plan for the programs, supports and services your child needs to move successfully from preschool to school-age programs. This meeting must take place before the end of February of the year in which your child will start school [90]. If your child is of kindergarten age and you decide to have her receive EI services for one more year, your local school district will become responsible for the cost of your child’s services [91]. You and your child’s IEP Team will still decide what services your child will receive.



#### Resource:

OCDEL  
Announcement,  
“Transition of Toddlers  
to Preschool or Other  
Community Services”  
[92], provides detailed  
information about  
the rights of children  
and families through  
transition and the pro-  
cedures that must be  
followed.

## Parent Tool #8: Parent Checklist for Successful Transitions



**To help plan your child's transition, you will need to ask for information that includes answers to the following questions:**

- What does my child need to transition smoothly and successfully?
- What supports and services have to be provided to my child?
- Who will be involved in the transition planning and implementing the transition plans?
- When is the transition going to take place? What are the important dates?
- Will my child have to change programs, services, service providers, or transportation?
- How will I prepare my child for transition? Who will help me?

**To plan for transition, keep your child's individual needs in focus and ask these questions:**

- What are the skills my child needs to learn to be successful in the new school environment?
- What routines and settings provide natural opportunities to develop and practice these skills?
- What adaptations or changes can be made to my child's current program to help him adjust to the new school environment (e.g. learning how to use stairs, ride a bus, and use a shared bathroom; or identifying books, toys and other equipment to support his transition and learning)?
- Are there community or family resources to help support learning in the new setting?

No change in your child's IEP can be made without notice to you and your consent. Both the preschool program personnel and your school-age program should be involved in the transition planning for your child with you. The decisions about what your child needs before, during and after the transition should be thoughtful and planned based on your child's needs.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS) ABOUT EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

# 6



Native language for an individual who is deaf, hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired, or who has no written language means the “mode of communication that is normally used by the individual” (such as sign language, Braille, or oral communications).

In order to be eligible for Child Care Works [5], your child must be a United States citizen or lawful permanent resident.



### Note:

Early Intervention (EI) [2, 6]: Evaluations to find out if your child is eligible for EI services must be done in your child’s language unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. All meetings, parent permission forms and notices about your child’s EI plan should also be in your native language.

### 6.1 English Language Learners

If you or your child cannot speak English, you have rights as English language learners (ELLs).

**Q1:** *Who is an English language learner (ELL)?*

**A1:** An English language learner is someone who cannot speak, read, write, or understand English at all or very well. As an ELL, you have rights under United States and Pennsylvania laws. Your native language is the language you and your child normally use.

**Q2:** *Can your child be denied access to early childhood programs because he or she is an ELL?*

**A2:** No. Your child has a right to participate in early childhood programs just like children who are English speakers, as long as your child is otherwise eligible for the program. (See program guides on [pages 25–46](#) of this guide for specific program requirements.)

**Q3:** *What rights do parents have as ELLs?*

**A3:** Generally, providers of early childhood services and programs must provide language access for ELLs. This means that the provider must arrange for someone who speaks your language to translate written information and interpret for you when necessary. The provider must also take steps to include you and offer interpretation at program activities (such as parent conferences, open house events, etc.). For more information about your language access rights, visit the **Limited English Proficiency** website [43].

**Q4:** *What other rights do ELL families have?*

**A4:** Certain early childhood programs focus on helping eligible ELL children and families. Some of these programs are listed below:

- **Pre-K Counts** [9] encourages providers to enroll children who are at risk of failing in school, which includes ELLs.
- All **Early Intervention (EI)** [2, 6] services must be provided in a way that is sensitive your family’s language and culture.
- **Head Start** [3, 8] staff should be trained to work with ELL families and children. The program can help ELL children learn English, and teach you how to support your child in learning English.

**Q5:** *What can I do if I think my rights as an ELL have been violated?*

**A5:** First, contact the local office for your program. If this does not solve your problem, you can send a complaint to one of the following government agencies. You can find complaint forms on their websites, along with information about how to complete them.

- Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) on filing a complaint [74].
- Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the United States Department of Education (ED) [49].
- Office for Civil Rights in the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [50].

**Children are homeless if:**

1. They lack “a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence”;

OR

2. They live in shelters, shared housing due to loss or economic hardship (*doubled up*), motels, hotels, trailer parks, or are abandoned in hospitals;

OR

3. They are “awaiting foster care placement” (typically an out-of-home placement for a child in care that lasts up to 30 days).

## **6.2 Young Children Experiencing Homelessness**

Early learning experiences can provide young children experiencing homelessness with a stable and fixed program of services that helps promote social and emotional growth in the midst of often chaotic lives. Early childhood learning opportunities that target “at-risk” populations (such as **Head Start** [3, 8], **Pre-K Counts** [9] and **EI** [2, 6]) can provide a child with the early cognitive and social skills he needs to be successful in school. To learn more about these programs and how to enroll, see the program guides on [pages 25–46](#) of the *Guide*.

By age 5, we know that most of a child’s brain has been developed. As a result, young children are more open to learning than adults, but also more vulnerable. Negative experiences like trauma or exposure to domestic violence, alcohol, drugs, unstable living conditions, and a lack of appropriate early childhood learning opportunities can have a significant impact on young children. This is particularly true for young children who are experiencing homelessness.

**Q1:** *Can my child be denied enrollment in an early childhood program because I am homeless?*

**A1:** No. The federal law called the **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento)** [33] requires children experiencing homelessness to have equal access to public preschool programs. Your child has a right to participate in all early childhood programs just like other children, as long as he is otherwise eligible for the program.

**Q2:** *Are there early learning programs that focus on young children experiencing homelessness?*

**A2:** Yes. Certain early childhood programs focus on helping eligible children and families experiencing homelessness. Some of these programs are listed below:

- All EI programs must also include young children experiencing homelessness in their efforts to identify, locate, and evaluate children for EI services. While your child has a right to equal access, this is only to the extent that programs and spaces are available, or when a program is required by law to prioritize children experiencing homelessness.
- Children experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible for Head Start services. Head Start programs must prioritize children who are homeless for enrollment. Applicants for new Head Start programs must have a plan to meet the needs of children who are homeless. This can include transportation if they also provide transportation for same-age, non-homeless children.
- Pre-K Counts programs specifically focus on children at risk of educational failure due to poverty, which includes children living in poverty and experiencing homelessness.
- **Nurse-Family Partnership** [7] and the **Parent-Child Home Program** [4] often deliver their services to parents and children living in shelters, transitional housing, or other “doubled-up” arrangements.

**Q3:** *I am staying at a shelter. How do I find out more about early childhood learning programs and whether my child is eligible for programs or services? Where do I start?*

**A3:** You can ask the shelter provider to help you learn more about child development and early learning. They may also be able to refer you to programs or services to help you help your child learn and grow, including finding an appropriate early childhood program. You may also want to have your child screened or evaluated for EI services if you have concerns about his social and emotional or cognitive development. To learn more about where to start and what is available, go to [page 25](#).

**Q4:** *Can my child be enrolled in Head Start if I don't have copies of my child's immunizations records or an address?*

**A4:** Yes. A child can enroll in Head Start without documentation (immunizations, records, birth certificates, and proof of residency). Head Start programs should try to enroll children without these on a priority basis.

**Q5:** *Is a preschool program required to provide transportation for my child who is homeless?*

**A5:** In some circumstances, yes. These programs must provide comparable services, meaning that they only have to transport a young child experiencing homelessness if they also provide transportation for same-age, non-homeless children.

**Q6:** *Does my child have a right to stay in his prior preschool program if we move again?*

**A6:** No. Under McKinney-Vento, the right to stay in the child's school of origin (i.e., the child's current school or the school the child attended when she first became homeless) only applies to children of compulsory school age. This doesn't mean that you can't ask to have your child stay in their current program and try to work it out informally with the early childhood provider.

**Q7:** *What can I do if I think my child's rights in a preschool program are being violated because we are experiencing homelessness?*

**A7:** First, discuss the problem with the preschool provider. If you can't resolve the problem, ask to speak to the regional homeless coordinator responsible for preschoolers. Finally, call the state homeless coordinator at the Pennsylvania Department of Education and ask to file a formal, written complaint.

**Q8:** *Is there anyone in a school district who can help me?*

**A8:** Yes. School districts and providers must have a person called a liaison to help families and children experiencing homelessness enroll in Head Start, Early Head Start, and other public preschool programs, including Title I preschool programs.

**Q9:** *Does my child have the right to a developmental screen or full evaluation from the EI service system even if I don't have a permanent home?*

**A9:** Yes. All parents have the right to request that their child receive an EI developmental screen or full multi-disciplinary evaluation to determine if their child has a developmental delay or other disability that makes them eligible for EI services. EI programs are required by law to locate, identify and evaluate young children experiencing homelessness, too.

To find the name of the liaison in your school district responsible for Pre-K children, contact your school district or your McKinney-Vento Regional Coordinator or call "CONNECT" at OCDEL. 1-800-692-7288

## 6.3 Children and Families Involved in the Child Welfare System

Young children involved with the child welfare system are children who have been found dependent by a juvenile court and placed in the care of another adult, often a foster home. They are among the most educationally at-risk and are also at great risk of developmental delays. It is estimated that over half experience developmental delays. This is four to five times the rate of the general population. Access to quality early learning opportunities and supplementary services often provides the additional support they need during the critical first years of their development.

**Q1:** *Does a child who lives in a foster home have the right to go to preschool?*

**A1:** Yes. Under Pennsylvania law, children who reside in foster care must be treated the same as children who reside with their parents. They are entitled to enroll in all early childhood and EI [2, 6] programs so long as they are otherwise eligible. They cannot be discriminated against because they are in foster care. Their residence is where they live with a foster parent, relative or other guardian; or, if a child is in a residential placement, where the placement is located.

**Q2:** *Does a child in the child welfare system have the right to be evaluated to determine if he has a developmental delay or disability and needs EI services?*

**A2:** Yes. In addition, the law requires a child's caseworker to automatically refer a child who is anywhere from birth through age 2 for an EI screen and/or evaluation when the child: has been or is the subject of a substantiated case of child abuse or neglect; is affected by illegal substance abuse or withdrawal due to prenatal drug exposure; had a low birth weight (3.3 pounds or less) and/or spent time in a neonatal intensive care unit; or has been or is the subject of substantiated trauma due to family violence.

**Q3:** *Are children in the child welfare system eligible for Head Start?*

**A3:** Yes. Children in care are automatically eligible for **Head Start** [3, 8] regardless of family income. Head Start state directors must develop a plan to enhance services for children in foster care and those referred by child welfare agencies.

**Q4:** *Does a child in foster care have any rights under the McKinney-Vento Act?*

**A4:** In some cases, yes. Under **McKinney-Vento** [33], a child is homeless if she is living in a shelter or awaiting foster care placement (in a placement that typically lasts for 30 days or less). (See FAQ on Children Experiencing Homelessness on page 66 of the *Guide*.)

**Q5:** *Do children with disabilities in foster care have any special rights?*

**A5:** Yes. Under the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA)** [30], Pennsylvania must have policies and procedures to ensure timely assessment, appropriate services, and continuity of services for children with disabilities

Providers applying to open new Head Start programs must have a plan to meet the needs of children in foster care, including transportation. Funding is available through Head Start for staff training, child counseling, and other services to address the needs of children in foster care or those referred by child welfare agencies.

who are in foster care, including that children are promptly identified, located, and evaluated to determine eligibility for EI services.

**Q6:** *Who makes EI decisions for a child with disabilities in foster care?*

**A6:** A child's parent must give written consent for an initial evaluation and for EI services. The parent is a member of the individualized family service plan (IFSP)/individualized education program (IEP) team and participates in the development of the IFSP/IEP the child will receive.

**Q7:** *Who is a parent for the purposes of EI services?*

**A7:** The law defines a parent to include the following people in a child's life:

- birth or adoptive parent,
- legal guardian,
- individual with whom the child lives who is acting as the parent,
- foster parent,
- surrogate parent appointed by a school district or a court, OR
- individual appointed by a court to make education decisions on behalf of a child.

Unless a court has decided that another person should make education decisions for a child, an active birth or adoptive parent is the child's special education decision maker.

**Q8:** *Can a caseworker ever make EI decisions for a child in foster care?*

**A8:** No. The IDEA prohibits anyone involved in the care of the child from making special education decisions.

The only exception to this rule is if the child needs an initial evaluation, does not have a parent (as defined in Q7), is in the custody of a child welfare agency and despite reasonable efforts, the EI agency cannot discover the whereabouts of the parents. In these very limited circumstances, a case worker may be asked by the court to consent to an initial evaluation. Soon thereafter, a parent should be identified for the child.

**Q9:** *Can my child receive services from more than one system?*

**A9:** Yes. Children in foster care often receive EI services to address their developmental delays, and can receive these services in a Head Start or Pre-K Counts program.

**Q10:** *What can I do if I have a disagreement with a preschool program about enrollment or services?*

**A10:** Discuss the problem with the preschool provider. If you can't resolve the problem, ask to speak to the school administrator responsible for preschoolers. Finally, contact OCDEL to speak with an EI adviser [24].

## 6.4 Young Children with Developmental Delays and Other Disabilities

To learn more about the rights and services for infants and toddlers and preschool-age children with developmental delays or disabilities, turn to [pages 47–64](#), where they are explained in detail. This section is designed to answer questions that often come up when a child with a developmental delay or disability is also involved with another early childcare or education program and there appears to be a conflict.

**Q1:** *I know there cannot be waiting lists for young children to receive EI services, but can there be waiting lists for Pre-K Counts programs?*

**A1:** Yes. But if there is a waiting list for a **Pre-K Counts** [9] program, the EI [2, 6] provider must offer the parent another appropriate placement that meets the child's need to be in the least restrictive environment (LRE), meaning a preschool program where children without disabilities spend their time.

**Q2:** *Can there be a waiting list for a Head Start Program?*

**A2:** Yes. But, if there is a waiting list for a local Head Start program, the EI provider must offer the parent another appropriate placement that meets the child's need to be in the least restrictive environment (LRE), meaning a program where children without disabilities spend their time.

**Q3:** *Can a childcare provider simply refuse to accept my child because he has a developmental delay or other disability?*

**A3:** No. Childcare providers generally cannot exclude a child just because he or she has a certain type of disability, like an intellectual disability or autism. Childcare services and preschool programs that are funded or operated by the government, such as Head Start and Pennsylvania's Pre-K Counts program, must comply with the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** [28]. The ADA also applies to privately-run childcare centers that are not operated by religious organizations.

The ADA requires that childcare providers (including a providers operating out of center or out of a family childcare home) not discriminate against persons with disabilities on the basis of disability – they must provide children with disabilities with an equal opportunity to participate in the childcare center's programs and services. Centers cannot exclude children with disabilities from their programs unless their presence would pose a *direct threat* to the health or safety of others or require a *fundamental alteration* to the program.

Each child's situation must be considered individually on a case-by-case basis. Centers cannot make assumptions about how a child with a disability is likely to behave

or what a child might need based on their past experiences with other children with disabilities.

Centers have to make *reasonable modifications* to their policies and practices to integrate children with disabilities into their programs unless doing so would be a fundamental alteration to the center's program, or would place an undue burden on the program.

For much more information about how the ADA applies to childcare centers, please see "Commonly Asked Questions About Child Care Centers and the Americans with Disabilities Act" [54] or visit the **Child Care Law Center's** website [38].

Pennsylvania also has a state law called the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (PHRA) that provides similar protections for individuals with disabilities as the ADA does. More information about the PHRA is available from the **Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission's (PHRC)**[26].

**Q4:** *Can a childcare center or early learning program refuse to accept a child with a disability who is not toilet trained?*

**A4:** It depends. If a center or program provides diapering or toileting help for young children at the center, then the center must reasonably modify its policies and provide diapering services for older children who need it due to a disability. Such centers generally cannot reject children older than three who need diapering because of a disability.

If a center does not provide diapering for any child at the center regardless of their age, the center may still need to provide diapering for a child who needs diapering because of a disability if the diapering is a *reasonable modification* to the center's program. The center should consider factors including, but not limited to: 1) whether children without disabilities are young enough to need some toileting assistance when, for instance, they have accidents; 2) whether providing toileting assistance or diapering on a regular basis would require a childcare provider to leave other children unattended; and 3) whether the center would have to purchase diapering tables or other equipment.

**Q5:** *Is a childcare center ever required to provide any accommodations or supports for my child with a disability?*

**A5:** Yes, in some cases. As discussed above, under the ADA, childcare providers must make a case-by-case assessment of what the child with the disability needs to be fully integrated into the childcare program. Once they know what is needed, they must assess whether *reasonable accommodations* can be made. In practical terms, what is reasonable will vary. Generally, the three most important variables are (1) the needs of the child with a disability, (2) the accommodations requested, and (3) the resources



available to the program. Because family childcare homes generally have fewer resources and a smaller staff than centers, they may be required to do less. The accommodations, however, must be based on *individualized assessments* of the child's needs and the program's ability to make the necessary modifications.

In addition, the ADA requires that childcare centers provide *auxiliary aids and services* to children with disabilities to enable effective communication unless such an accommodation would fundamentally alter the nature or the program or pose an undue burden (such as a significant difficulty or expense). Such *auxiliary aids and services* could include assistive listening systems (like an FM auditory trainer) or a communication board. More information about the ADA's *auxiliary aids and services* provision is available at: <http://www.ada.gov/pcatoolkit/chap3toolkit.htm>.

**Q6:** *Do all childcare and education programs have to be physically accessible for children with disabilities?*

**A6:** Existing privately-run childcare centers must remove those architectural barriers that limit the participation of children with disabilities if removing the barriers is *readily achievable*, that is, if the barrier removal can be easily accomplished and can be carried out without much difficulty or expense. Installing offset hinges to widen a door opening, installing grab bars in toilet stalls, or rearranging tables, chairs and other furniture are all examples of barrier removal that might be undertaken to allow a child who uses a wheelchair to participate in a childcare program.

Centers run by government agencies must insure that their programs are accessible unless making changes imposes an undue burden; these changes will sometimes include changes to the facilities.

“Newly” constructed privately-run child care centers – those designed and constructed for first occupancy after January 26, 1993 – must be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. This means that they must be built in strict compliance with the ADA Standards for Accessible Design. New centers run by government agencies must meet either the ADA Standards or the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards.

**Q7:** *Can a childcare, preschool, or Head Start program require me to get a TSS worker for my child in order for my child to continue to attend the program?*

**A7:** It depends. A center must make reasonable modifications to meet the child's needs related to his or her disability. It is possible that, if reasonable modifications are made to the center's program, the child could participate in the center's program without 1:1 support. In addition, depending upon the size and resources of the center, the center itself might have to provide your child with 1:1 support as a reasonable accommodation.

If the child would be a direct threat to the safety of others without 1:1 support, then the center does not have to admit the child or keep them in the program. However, other systems, such as the EI system or the behavioral health system, might be able to provide your child with the 1:1 support she needs to stay in the childcare, preschool, or Head Start program. If so, then the program must allow your child to enroll and/or stay in the program.

**Q8:** *My child has a medical diagnosis. Is she automatically eligible for EI services?*

**A8:** No. A child with a medical diagnosis like cerebral palsy, epilepsy, cystic fibrosis, etc. is not automatically eligible for EI services. Any information that you have about your child's medical needs should definitely be shared with the team of people who will evaluate your child, but a medical diagnosis alone does not make a child eligible for EI services. There is a process for deciding if your child is eligible for Infant and Toddler or Preschool EI services. That process is described on [page 52](#) and [58](#) of this guide.

**Q9:** *Why must my child change EI service providers when he or she turns 3?*

**A9:** The Infant and Toddler EI program and the Preschool EI program in Pennsylvania are the financial and legal responsibility of two different governmental agencies. The **Department of Public Welfare (DPW)** [23] administers the Infant and Toddler EI program, while the **Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE)** [22] administers the Preschool EI program. When a child moves from the Infant and Toddler EI program to the Preschool EI program, the responsible governmental agency changes, and so do the child's EI service providers. There are exceptions to these general rules that allow a child to continue in an Infant and Toddler EI program or service after age 3; these are explained in more detail in OCDEL's transition policies [92]. However, the fiscal responsibility for the child's EI program still shifts to the preschool provider at age 3.

**Q10:** *Can my child have her EI services provided to her at her childcare center or preschool program?*

**A10:** Yes. A child who receives EI services can, and often should, have those services provided to her where she goes for childcare or for her preschool program. In fact, the law prefers that children from birth to age three with developmental delays receive their EI services where they would be if they did not have a delay (called their *natural environment*) – and for many young children, that is often in a childcare program. Preschoolers with delays or disabilities have the right to receive their EI services with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate to their needs (called the least *restrictive environment*, or LRE). See pages [11](#) and [61](#) for more discussion on this topic.

**Q11:** *Must the EI system provide my child with a 1:1 aide if he or she needs it to be included in a typical childcare or preschool program?*

**A11:** It depends. Remember that a child who is eligible for EI services must be provided with an appropriate program. If the child needs interaction with nondisabled peers to receive an appropriate program, and the only way the child will get such interaction is with a 1:1 aide to support her in a typical childcare or preschool program, then the EI system should provide the child with a 1:1 aide for at least part of the time that the child spends at the childcare center or preschool program. However, the EI system is not required to provide every eligible child with 1:1 support. The type and amount of support depends on a child's individual needs.

**Q12:** *Can a Preschool EI provider ever be required to pay for a private preschool placement for my child who receives Preschool EI services?*

**A12:** Yes, depending upon the individual circumstances of your child's case. The Preschool EI agency may have to pay for some, or all, of your child's placement in a private preschool program with nondisabled children if your child needs such a placement to receive an appropriate program in the least restrictive environment (LRE), and a public option is not available. The Preschool EI agency is not required to create a regular classroom in order to provide your child with LRE *but* the agency is required to consider a continuum of possible alternative placement options, including private school programs for nondisabled preschool children. The agency must at least inquire into whether regular education options are available within a reasonable distance to implement your child's IEP. The private preschool program also must be accredited under state law to be a possible placement; see the Office of Special Education Programs' (OSEP) letter on LRE in Preschool EI [52].

**Q13:** *My child receives EI services. Those services have been provided to her at her childcare program. We now have switched childcare providers, and the new one is not in the county in which we live. Must the EI system transport her across county lines to her new childcare provider?*

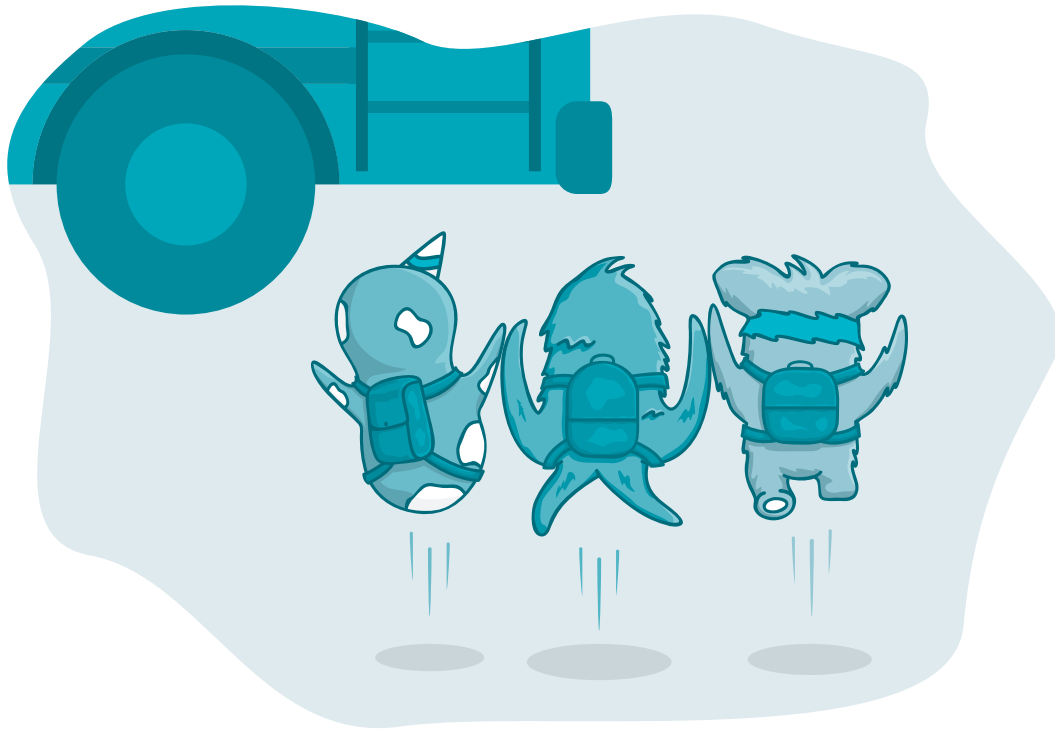
**A13:** Probably not, unless your child needs to attend the new childcare provider in order to receive an appropriate EI program. If your child has been moved by your family to the new childcare provider for convenience or cost reasons, it is likely that the EI system will not have to provide transportation to the new childcare setting.



## CONCLUSION – READY FOR SCHOOL

---

7



A strong early learning experience with the supports and services your child needs to grow and learn with attention to transitions will give your child what she needs to transition to school-age programs and ultimately to become successful in school and life.



## 8.1 Resources

### Programs

#### **Federal Programs**

1. Early Head Start National Resource Center – <http://www.ehsnrc.org/>
2. Early Intervention (EI) – <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/home>
3. Office of Head Start (OHS) – <http://transition.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs>
4. Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) – <http://www.parent-child.org/>

#### **State Programs**

5. Child Care Works – <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/forchildren/childcareearlylearning/childcareworkssubsidizedchildcareprogram/>
6. Early Intervention (EI) – [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/early\\_intervention/8710](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/early_intervention/8710)
7. Nurse-Family Partnership of Pennsylvania – <http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/locations/Pennsylvania>
8. Pennsylvania Head Start Association (includes Early Head Start) – <http://paheadstart.org/>
9. Pre-K Counts – [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pre\\_k\\_counts/8742](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pre_k_counts/8742)
10. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) – <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/foradults/cashassistance/tanfandmovingtoindependence/index.htm>

### Standards and Quality

11. Keystone STARS (Standards, Training Assistance, Resources and Support) – [http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Programs\\_STARS](http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Programs_STARS)
12. Keystone STARS – [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/keystone\\_stars/20985](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/keystone_stars/20985)
13. Keystone STARS Levels – [http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Programs\\_STARS\\_Families](http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Programs_STARS_Families)
14. Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood – [http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=career\\_standards](http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=career_standards)
15. Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood: Infant-Toddler – <http://www.pakeys.org/uploadedContent/Docs/PD/Standards/Infant%20Toddler%202010%20No%20Color.pdf>

16. Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood: Pre-Kindergarten – <http://www.pakeys.org/uploadedContent/Docs/PD/Standards/PreK%202010%20No%20Color.pdf>

## **State of Pennsylvania Offices and Agencies**

17. Bureau of Certification Services – <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/dpworganization/officeofchilddevelopmentandearlylearning/bureauofcertificationservices/index.htm>
18. Bureau of Early Intervention Services (BEIS) – <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/dpworganization/officeofchilddevelopmentandearlylearning/bureauofearlyinterventionservices/index.htm>
19. Bureau of Early Learning – <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/dpworganization/officeofchilddevelopmentandearlylearning/bureauofearlylearningservices/index.htm>
20. Bureau of Subsidized Child Care – <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/dpworganization/officeofchilddevelopmentandearlylearning/bureauofsubsidizedchildcareservices/index.htm>
21. Child Care Information Services (CCIS) – <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/findfacilsandlocs/childcareinformationservices/index.htm>
22. Department of Education (PDE) – [http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pennsylvania\\_department\\_of\\_education/7237](http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pennsylvania_department_of_education/7237)
23. Department of Public Welfare (DPW) – <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/>
24. Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) – <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/dpworganization/officeofchilddevelopmentandearlylearning/>
25. Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR) (find Due Process Complaint Notice here) – <http://odr-pa.org/>
26. Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) – [http://www.phrc.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/phrc\\_home/18970](http://www.phrc.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/phrc_home/18970)
27. State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) – <http://www.pattan.net/category/About/Partners/Single/?id=13>

## **Law and Legal Resources**

### **Federal Law**

28. Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) – <http://www.ada.gov/pubs/ada.htm>
29. Head Start Authorization Law – <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/chapter-105/subchapter-II>
30. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – <http://idea.ed.gov/>
31. IDEA Part B (Ages 3-21) – <http://idea.ed.gov/download/statute.html>
32. IDEA Part C (Ages 0-2) – <http://idea.ed.gov/download/statute.html>



33. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento) –  
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg116.html>

### **State Law**

34. Child Care Works Authorization Law –  
<http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/055/chapter3041/chap3041toc.html>
35. PA Pre-K Counts Law – <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/Legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=PDF&sessYr=2007&sessInd=0&billBody=H&billTyp=B&billNbr=0842&pn=2347>

### **National Resources**

36. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “Infant & Toddlers (Ages 0-3) – Milestones & Schedules” (Development) – <http://www.cdc.gov/parents/infants/milestones.html>
37. Child Care Aware – <http://www.childcareaware.org>
38. Child Care Law Center – <http://www.childcarelaw.org>
39. Circle of Inclusion – <http://www.circleofinclusion.org>
40. Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA) – <http://www.copaa.net>
41. Free Education Publications (Federal DoE) – <http://www.edpubs.gov>
42. Institute on Disabilities (includes PIAT, HEAT, and TDDP) –  
<http://disabilities.temple.edu/programs>
43. Limited English Proficiency Website – <http://www.lep.gov>
44. National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) – <http://www.naeyc.org>
45. National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHY) – <http://www.nichy.org>
46. National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) – <http://www.nectac.org>
47. National Early Childhood Transition Center – <http://hdi.uky.edu>
48. National Institutes of Health (NIH) Developmental Milestones –  
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/infantandnewborndevelopment.html>
49. Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the United States Department of Education (ED) –  
<http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/cor/complaint.php>
50. Office for Civil Rights in the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) –  
<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights/complaints/index.html>
51. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) –  
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html?src=mr>
52. OSEP, Letter on Least Restrictive Environment for Preschool Early Intervention –  
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/preschoollre22912.pdf>

53. United States Department of Education (ED), 34 CFR Parts 300 and 301, “Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities: Final Rule” – <http://idea.ed.gov/download/finalregulations.pdf>
54. United States Department of Justice (DOJ), “Commonly Asked Questions About Child Care Centers and the Americans with Disabilities Act” – <http://www.ada.gov/childq%26a.htm>
55. Zero to Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families – <http://www.zerotothree.org>

### **State Resources**

56. COMPASS Portal – <https://www.humanservices.state.pa.us/compass.web>
57. COMPASS Provider Search – <https://www.humanservices.state.pa.us/Compass.Web/ProviderSearch/pgm/PSWEL.aspx>
58. Competence and Confidence Partners in Policymaking Early Intervention (C2P2EI) – <http://disabilities.temple.edu/programs/leadership/c2p2ei.shtml>
59. Early Intervention Technical Assistance (LICC Coordinator) – <http://www.eita-pa.org/index.html>
60. Education Law Center (ELC), The Right to Early Intervention for Infants and Toddlers and Their Families in Pennsylvania: A Handbook for Parents – <http://www.elc-pa.org/pubs/downloads/english/dis-Early%20Intervention%20Handbook%202008.pdf>
61. ELC, The Right to Special Education in Pennsylvania: A Guide for Parents and Advocates – <http://www.elc-pa.org/pubs/downloads2010/2009A-TheRighttoSpecialEducationinPennsylvaniaGuideforParents.pdf>
62. Hands and Voices Resource Guide By Your Side – <http://www.paearlyhearing.org/gbys.php>
63. List of Intermediate Units (IUs) – <https://www.paiu.org/ius.php>
64. Local Education and Resource Network (LEARN) Teams Contact List – [http://paprom.convio.net/site/PageServer?pagename=EEin\\_ceg](http://paprom.convio.net/site/PageServer?pagename=EEin_ceg)
65. Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC) Contact List – [http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Community\\_LICC](http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Community_LICC)
66. OCDEL, A Family’s Introduction to the Early Intervention System in Pennsylvania (includes glossary; in Spanish below) – <http://pattan.net-website.s3.amazonaws.com/files/materials/publications/docs/EI-Family-Guide.pdf>
67. OCDEL, Una introduccion para las familias a la Intervencion Temprana en Pensilvania (incluye glosario) – [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_148494\\_1235732\\_0\\_0\\_18/A%20Famyls%20Introduction%20to%20Early%20Intervention%20in%20Pennsylvania%20-%20Spanish.pdf](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_148494_1235732_0_0_18/A%20Famyls%20Introduction%20to%20Early%20Intervention%20in%20Pennsylvania%20-%20Spanish.pdf)
68. OCDEL, “Five Steps to Selecting a Child Care Provider” – <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/forchildren/childcareearlylearning/fivestepstoselectingachildcareprovider/index.htm>

69. OCDEL Glossary – <http://www.pakeys.org/uploadedcontent/docs/OCDEL%20Glossary%20of%20Terms.pdf>
70. OCDEL, Guidelines to Support the Early Intervention Process: Inclusion – [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_251851\\_1235741\\_0\\_0\\_18/Inclusion%20EI%20Booklet.pdf](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_251851_1235741_0_0_18/Inclusion%20EI%20Booklet.pdf)
71. OCDEL Program List – <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/programs/7240>
72. Online Childcare Search – <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/searchforprovider/childcareprovidersearch/index.htm>
73. PaTTAN, “Supplementary Aids and Services (SaS) Consideration Toolkit” – [http://www.pattan.net/category/Educational%20Initiatives/Inclusive%20Practices/page/Supplementary\\_Aids\\_and\\_Services\\_SaS\\_Consideration\\_Toolkit\\_.html](http://www.pattan.net/category/Educational%20Initiatives/Inclusive%20Practices/page/Supplementary_Aids_and_Services_SaS_Consideration_Toolkit_.html)
74. PHRC, “Filing a Complaint” – [http://www.phrc.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/file\\_a\\_complaint/18976](http://www.phrc.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/file_a_complaint/18976)
75. Pennsylvania’s Promise for Children – <http://www.papromiseforchildren.com/>
76. “Watch Me Grow” – [http://paprom.convio.net/site/DocServer/Watch\\_Me\\_Grow-trifold.pdf?docID=11701](http://paprom.convio.net/site/DocServer/Watch_Me_Grow-trifold.pdf?docID=11701)

### **Organizations**

77. The ARC of Pennsylvania – <http://www.thearca.org>
78. Disability Rights Network (DRN) of Pennsylvania – <http://www.drnpa.org>
79. Education Law Center (ELC) of Pennsylvania – <http://www.elc-pa.org>
80. Hispanos Unidos para Niños Exceptionales (HUNE) – <http://huneinc.org>
81. Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership Center (PEAL) – <http://www.pealcenter.org>
82. Parent Education Network (PEN) – <http://parentednet.org>
83. Parents Involved Network (PIN) – <http://www.pinofpa.org>
84. Parent to Parent (P2P) of Pennsylvania – <http://www.parenttoparent.org>
85. Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) – <http://www.pattan.net/>
86. Special Kids Network (SKN) – [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/special\\_kids\\_network/14205](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/special_kids_network/14205)

## **State Policies**

87. Annotated IFSP/IEP – <http://pattan.net-website.s3.amazonaws.com/files/materials/forms/IFSP-IEP-Ann070108.pdf>
88. Basic Education Circular (BEC), “Early Intervention Transition: Preschool Programs to School-Aged Programs” – [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/purdon’s\\_statutes/7503/early\\_intervention\\_transition\\_\\_preschool\\_programs\\_to\\_school-aged\\_programs/507334](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/purdon’s_statutes/7503/early_intervention_transition__preschool_programs_to_school-aged_programs/507334)
89. OCDEL Announcements – [http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/early\\_intervention/8710/announcements/1133294](http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/early_intervention/8710/announcements/1133294)
90. OCDEL Announcement EI #09-19, “Transition of Preschool Children to School-Age Programs” – [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_148494\\_1235837\\_0\\_0\\_18/EI%2009-19%20Transition%20of%20Preschool%20Children%20to%20School%20Age%20Programs.pdf](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_148494_1235837_0_0_18/EI%2009-19%20Transition%20of%20Preschool%20Children%20to%20School%20Age%20Programs.pdf)
91. OCDEL Announcement EI #10-06, “Funding Responsibilities for Early Intervention Services for Children at Kindergarten Age” – [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_148494\\_1235847\\_0\\_0\\_18/EI%2010-06%20Funding%20Responsibilities%20for%20Early%20Intervention.pdf](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_148494_1235847_0_0_18/EI%2010-06%20Funding%20Responsibilities%20for%20Early%20Intervention.pdf)
92. OCDEL Announcement EI #12-04, “Transition of Toddlers to Preschool or Other Community Services” – [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_148494\\_1235754\\_0\\_0\\_18/EI%2012-04%20Transition%20of%20Toddlers%20to%20Preschool%20or%20Other%20Community%20Services.pdf](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_148494_1235754_0_0_18/EI%2012-04%20Transition%20of%20Toddlers%20to%20Preschool%20or%20Other%20Community%20Services.pdf)



