



First Steps

#6

Why Early Intervention?

Our children do not come with instructions. Parents Reaching Out provides resources that help families make informed decisions about the care and education of their children. We thank the families who have asked questions and found successful ways to advocate for their child for providing the inspiration for these fact sheets.

With each new birth, families begin to hope and dream for their child's future. You may be receiving new and/or different information concerning your baby. As a family you may want to get more information about your child's individual developmental path since the birth to three years are a very important time during your child's development!



Why Early Intervention?

Early Intervention is designed to help families that have infants and toddlers that may have a delay or are at risk of a delay to get off to a good start. Research has shown that when children are at risk of developmental delay the earlier we begin to help, the better the outcomes for the child.

What does *At Risk* mean?

At Risk means a family may fall into one of the following categories:

- Homeless
- Domestic Violence
- Exposure to Drugs
- Homes in Transition
- Parents in prison
- Divorce
- Others

**It is never too early to begin
Early Intervention Services!**

Early Intervention is not a medical program and a doctor's order is not necessary to participate in services.

How do I know if my child could benefit from early intervention?

If you contact or are referred to an Early Intervention provider your child will be evaluated by a team that includes you, your family and professionals in the field of early childhood development to see if he or she is eligible for Early Intervention services. In New Mexico, these services are part of the statewide Family Infant Toddler (FIT) system administered by the Department of Health. You can accept some services and decline others. It is up to your family to decide if and when you want to begin early intervention services.

Early Intervention supports a child's learning and development during the important time **from birth to three years** of age. (The brain grows the most during the first 3 years of life)

Early intervention can help with the development of children who have delays or assist in preventing delays or even some disabilities in children who may be at risk due to medical or environmental concerns.

Ask this question *"Is my child developing the same as the other children his or her age?"*

Who pays the costs for Early Intervention Services?

Some Early Intervention services are provided at no cost to families by law. Some services are paid for by Medicaid or Insurance. Families are never denied services due to inability to pay and most fees (if any) are based on a sliding fee scale.

Why is Early Intervention important to my family?

- You will learn ways to address the developmental concerns of your child within your daily routine.
- You will learn from specialists how to support and promote your child's development.
- You will get additional information about your child's development through evaluations and assessments.
- You will connect with other parents through various support groups.
- You will learn about other services, such as child care, health services, family support.

All of the information you learn will help you become your child's first and best advocate!



What services are available?

The Early Intervention program offers many types of services. Some examples of these services include:

- Assistive Technology
- Developmental Consultation
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Psychological Services
- Respite
- Social Work Services
- Speech/Language
- Service Coordination (to help link you with other needed services)

The majority of early intervention services provided through FIT take place in family homes, child care settings and other natural environments where children live and play as part of their day to day lives. Services are designed to fit into a family's everyday routines, activities and places. When services are provided in this way, the child in essence receives services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If you decide to accept early intervention services, you and the early intervention program staff will work as a team to develop a plan called the **Individual Family Service Plan or IFSP**. This plan is unique to your family and child. As a parent, you will work with the members of your team to develop the plan.

For more information call Parents Reaching Out. We offer phone consultations and provide workshops in English or Spanish to communities throughout New Mexico. This publication was developed under a grant from the New Mexico Department of Health Family Infant Toddler program. However, the views here expressed do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Health and should not be assumed to be an endorsement by the New Mexico Department of Health.