

Linking Infants and Toddlers

in Child Care to Early Intervention

Each year, the Early Intervention (EI) program provides services to approximately 30,000 New York City (NYC) children with developmental delays or disabilities from birth to age 3 – or approximately 10 percent of NYC infants and toddlers.

Federal and State laws require EI service providers to work with children in natural environments. These include the child's home and other places where the child usually spends time, carries out their daily routines and interacts with other children, such as their child care program. Providing EI services in child care settings helps many children meet their developmental goals and is practical for children whose families are unavailable during the day.



Who is eligible for the NYC EI program?

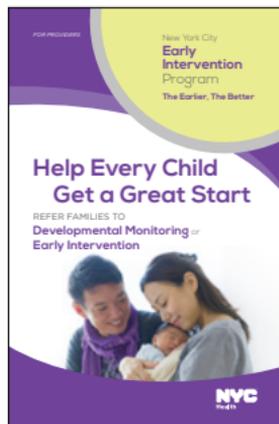
A child must live in NYC to be eligible for the NYC EI program.

Children living outside of NYC can enroll in their county's EI program by calling their county health department or visiting health.ny.gov/community/infants_children/early_intervention/county_eip.htm.

The New York State Department of Health's criteria for eligibility include:

- ⊗ Diagnosed conditions with a high probability of developmental delay, such as autism, Down syndrome or cerebral palsy
- ⊗ A significant level of delay in one or more developmental areas, as determined by a developmental evaluation

For more information about the eligibility criteria, see the "Help Every Child Get a Great Start" brochure in this toolkit.



What are the benefits of providing EI services in child care settings?

Research has shown that including children with disabilities in the same activities and educational settings as their peers who do not display delays benefits all children and providers.

Child care providers:

- ⊗ Partner with EI service providers to learn how to support children with special needs while in their center
- ⊗ Gain experience and skills that benefit all children at their center

All children:

- ⊗ Discover that children are more alike than different
- ⊗ Form friendships with children who have disabilities
- ⊗ Learn from one another
- ⊗ Build self-esteem

Children with disabilities:

- ⊗ Feel welcomed and valued by their peers and community
- ⊗ Receive EI services in a safe and familiar space, which may improve the program's effectiveness

Families:

- ⊗ Connect with others and access resources
- ⊗ Become more involved in the community
- ⊗ Feel that their children are valued and welcomed

EI service providers:

- ⊗ Observe children's strengths and needs in a natural environment
- ⊗ Help children use new skills in daily activities with their peers

When should you refer a child to EI?

Children grow and learn at different rates. Some children may take longer to learn new skills, while others may develop quickly in one area and more slowly in another. Because of this, it can be difficult to determine when a child needs extra support.



If you are concerned about a child's development, see the "Checklist for Growing Children" in the "Early Help Makes a Difference" brochure.

Fill out the checklist to determine if a child is meeting the developmental milestones for their age. After three weeks, fill out the checklist again and compare your notes to see if the child has improved. If they have not, talk to their family about EI.

Talking to families about their child's development

When sharing your concerns with a child's family, be sure to:

- ⊗ Schedule a meeting at a convenient time for you and the family.
- ⊗ Keep the conversation focused on their child and avoid talking about the behavior of other children in your child care program. Use the "Early Help Makes a Difference!" brochure to explain what is expected for children in their child's age group.

- ⊗ Give the family time to talk about their experiences, concerns and feelings. Families have special relationships with and knowledge of their children, so it is important to respect their perspective.
- ⊗ Ask families what they have observed about their child's behavior and if they have concerns about their child's learning, playing or behavior.
- ⊗ Be prepared for families to disagree with you.

If the family does not agree with your concerns, encourage them to:

- ⊗ Carefully observe their child's behavior and compare it to the developmental milestones for their child's age.
- ⊗ Practice a skill with their child by playing with them. This may help the family recognize that a skill is delayed.
- ⊗ Suggest that the family discuss their concerns with the child's health care provider.
- ⊗ Offer to meet with the family again to continue the discussion about their child's development.

Make sure the family knows that:

- ⊗ They can refer their child to EI without their health care provider's help.
- ⊗ If their child is eligible for EI, they can still attend the same child care program.
- ⊗ They can choose to receive EI services at home or at their child care program.

If the family decides to refer their child to EI:

- ⊗ Offer to help them call 311 to make the referral.
- ⊗ Or complete the referral form (with the family's permission) and fax it to the Regional Office in the borough where the child lives. See the referral form for full instructions.

To watch a video of a child care provider expressing their concerns to a family, visit nyc.gov/health and search for "Early Intervention."