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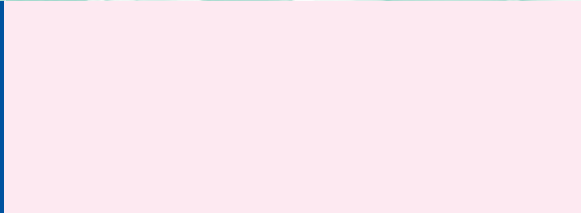
FAMILY'S



INTRODUCTION
TO



EARLY INTERVENTION
IN
PENNSYLVANIA



Families

“Families are big, small, extended, nuclear, multigenerational, with one parent, two parents, and grandparents. We live under one roof, or many. A family can be as temporary as a few weeks, or as permanent as forever. We become a part of a family by birth, adoption, marriage, or from a desire for mutual support... A family is a culture unto itself, with different values and unique ways of realizing its dreams; together our families become the source of our rich cultural heritage and spiritual diversity... Our families create neighborhoods, communities, states, and nations.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME	3
WHAT IS EARLY INTERVENTION?	4
WHAT ARE EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES AND SUPPORTS?	5
WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES?	6
WHERE DO I START?	7
IFSP (INDIVIDUALIZED FAMILY SERVICE PLAN)— BIRTH TO THREE	8
TRANSITIONS	11
IEP (INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM)— THREE TO AGE OF BEGINNERS	12
OPPORTUNITIES	13
WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION	15
INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT OF 2004 (IDEA)	16
GLOSSARY—WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?	17

Welcome

When you think of your child and how he or she is growing, you notice things like how soon he or she smiles, sits up, rolls over, or how well he or she walks, talks, holds a spoon, and feeds himself or herself. Children learn naturally during this time, by doing, by watching you and/or other children, and by being taught how to do different things. Because you know your child so well, you might notice that he or she is growing or developing differently than a cousin, brother or sister at that age. What you are noticing are changes in different developmental areas. The five primary developmental areas are:

- ability to move, see, and hear—physical development
- ability to talk, express needs—language and speech development
- ability to relate to others—social and emotional development
- ability to eat, dress, and take care of themselves—self help (or adaptive development)
- ability to think and learn—cognitive development

While all children grow and change at their own rate, some children can experience delays in their development. Sometimes this can be cause for concern.

“I didn’t know what to do, where to go, or even what to ask. When our service coordinator came to the house, I felt as if I had help. She helped us work our way through our feelings and helped us to prioritize our concerns.”



“I hated what the future might look like. I was so scared. Early Intervention helped me become more positive about the good things that Kimmy does now and what she will be able to do.”



What Is Early Intervention?

Early intervention in Pennsylvania is services and supports designed to help families with children with developmental delays. Early intervention builds upon the natural learning occurring in those first few years. It is a process that promotes collaboration among parents, service providers, and others significantly involved with your child. With your help, early intervention services and supports can enhance your child’s development by...

- answering your questions about your child’s development;
- enhancing your capacity to meet the developmental needs of your child throughout daily routines at home and in the community;
- enhancing your child's developmental and educational growth;
- supporting your child with developmental delays to become more independent;
- preventing the need for more and costly intervention in the future; and
- supporting communities to become more aware of the gifts and abilities of all its children.

What Are Early Intervention Services and Supports?

Early intervention services can include, among other things, information on how children develop, early childhood education and interventions which can help your child to move his or her body, ideas for how your family can help your child at home and in the community, and plans designed to help you enhance your child's growing and learning.

You are the expert about your child. The dreams, visions and hopes, recommendations or suggestions that you have for your child and family are uniquely yours. Only you know how these dreams and hopes can make a difference for your family, now and in the future. No one can guarantee that they will come true, but sharing them with other members on your early intervention team allows others to know what is important to your family. This information will help your early intervention team to create meaningful individualized services and supports. With your input, early intervention services will be provided in a family centered way.

What does the term **Family Centered** mean? This means that your child's services and/or supports are based upon the strengths and needs of your child. It is also based on the strengths and needs of the family to enhance the development of your child. Services and supports are designed to respect your family's concerns, interests, values, and priorities.

Family Centered

- **supports families' involvement in program planning, decision-making, and service delivery;**
- **supports families in their natural care-giving and decision-making roles;**
- **provides services in accordance with family values and priorities;**
- **supports diverse and changing family needs; and**
- **supports parent-professional partnerships.**

(adapted from Caro and Derevensky, 1991)

Who Is Eligible for Early Intervention Services?

Infants and Toddlers (birth to three years of age) who have:

- a significant delay in one or more areas of development;
- a specialist's determination that there is a delay even though it doesn't show up on the assessments (called informed clinical opinion);
- known physical or mental conditions which have a high probability for developmental delays.

If your son or daughter is not eligible for early intervention, they may still be eligible for tracking services. Children eligible for that service are:

- under three and one half (3 1/2) pounds (birth weight);
- cared for in neonatal intensive care units;
- born to chemically dependent mothers;
- seriously abused or neglected;
- confirmed to have dangerous levels of lead poisoning.

The Department of Public Welfare (DPW), Office of Child Development is responsible for the Commonwealth's Early Intervention Program for eligible infants and toddlers. The County Mental Health/Mental Retardation Programs administer the early intervention programs locally.

Preschoolers (three years of age to age of beginners) who have:

- a significant delay in one or more areas of development compared to other children his or her age;
- any of the following physical or mental disabilities: autism/pervasive developmental disorder, serious emotional disturbance, neurological impairment, deafness/hard of hearing, specific learning disability, mental retardation, multiple handicaps, other mental impairment, physical disability, speech impairment or blindness/visual impairment, and
- is in need of special education and related services.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) is responsible for programs and services for eligible children from age three to the age of beginners. The Bureau of Special Education contracts services through Mutually Agreed Upon Written Arrangements (MAWAs) with Intermediate Units (IUs), School Districts and other providers.



"My son was always a little slower than his cousins. He was born so little and too early. ... I called a number for early intervention and was able to get him looked at by some specialist. ... he doesn't need early intervention but now he will be checked on every few months ..."

Where Do I Start?

Infants and Toddlers (Birth to three years of age).

The first step in the process is to work with your service coordinator to gather preliminary information for the evaluation. This information will help determine who the team members should be and the appropriate focus for the evaluation. **The evaluation will occur only with your permission.**

Preschoolers (three years of age to age of beginners).

The first step in the process is to contact the local preschool early intervention staff (MAWA). An evaluation will be completed to determine if your child is eligible for special education. If your child was already in an infant/toddler early intervention program, that information is important to share with the preschool MAWA staff. **The evaluation will only occur with your written permission.**

Multidisciplinary Evaluation (MDE)

This evaluation will look at all areas of concern as well as any others that were indicated by the preliminary information gathered. Your participation is very important as a member of the team for the evaluation.

Planning for a family friendly team evaluation begins with you and your service coordinator or representative from the intermediate unit or school district. It will be helpful if you plan ahead:

- Be ready to share information that you think is important: current health appraisal, medical records, a baby book, growth chart, or other evaluations or reports.
- Think about your child and any questions or concerns you might have related to his or her development.
- How would you like to participate in the process of evaluation?
- What times or locations would be convenient to you and your family?
- Think about which members of the family should be included.
- How should anyone, other than a family member, that knows your child well, such as a baby-sitter or child-care provider, be included?
- Inform the service coordinator or your contact person if you need any interpreters or other assistance.

The team will consist of you, the parent, and an agency representative; however, the make up of the other team members may vary as appropriate to your child and family's needs.

During the evaluation, you and the other members of the team will talk about the good things your child is doing during the day as well as identify any concerns. **If there are areas of delay, your child may be eligible for early intervention services or supports.**

You are the expert on your child and your input is very important. Of course, you will need to give your permission before any planning begins. You will be given a consent form to indicate that you understand and agree with the evaluation process.

IFSP—Individualized Family Service Plan (Birth to Three Years of Age)

Early intervention services and/or supports are provided if your child is eligible. The service coordinator and other early intervention team members will help you to the next step which is the development of a written plan detailing the early intervention services or supports your child will receive.

The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is the foundation of family centered early intervention services. The IFSP lets you help decide how early intervention services will help your child and family during their regular routines. During the IFSP meeting, it is your opportunity to share your hopes and dreams for your child and family with other members of the team.

The plan is based on your child's strengths and your family's concerns and priorities for your child. The plan can also assist you to identify what you and your family already have to enhance your child's development, as well as identify what services you might need.

Early intervention services must be delivered in settings that are consistent with the needs of your child and family. Considerations must be made to reflect your child's naturally occurring learning opportunities which are a part of your home routines, family and community activities. To the maximum extent appropriate services and supports are provided in natural environments, including the home and community settings in which children without disabilities participate. "Natural environments means settings that are natural or normal for the child's age peers who have no disabilities." The provision of early intervention services for any infant or toddler occurs in a setting other than a natural environment only when early intervention outcomes cannot be achieved satisfactorily for the infant or toddler in a natural environment. Plans will include steps to work toward providing services back in the natural environment. The setting that is most appropriate is determined by the parent and the IFSP team.

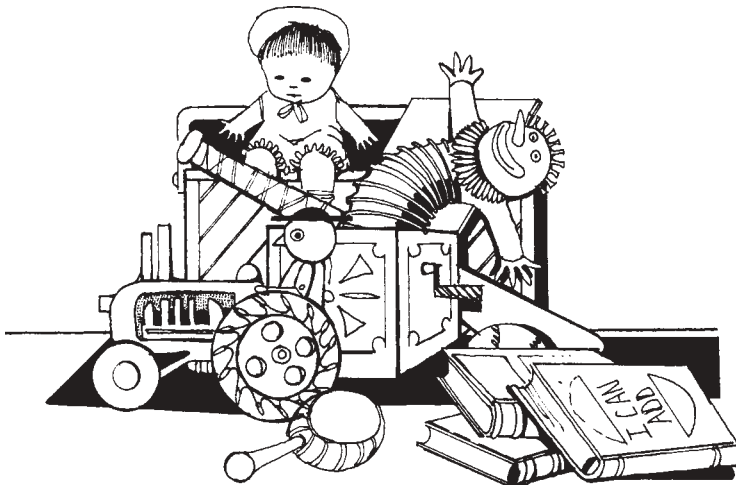
Whatever the setting, early intervention services and supports must be based upon the strengths and needs of your child.

Who develops the IFSP?

Along with your service coordinator and other team members, you help decide which family members, friends, teachers, therapists, physicians, and other professionals you want as team members and which members will help write the IFSP. This is your opportunity to talk about what you would like to achieve with your child now and in the future. **You may request a blank copy of the IFSP prior to the meeting. Ask your service coordinator or contact person.**

You are an equal partner on the team. As the parent and the expert on your child, you need to let other team members know the strengths and needs of your child and family. Knowing strengths and needs will help the team reach the IFSP outcomes.

The initial IFSP should be developed within 45 days of your referral to the local Early Intervention System. The IFSP focuses on the strengths, concerns, and priorities of your family, rather than just your child alone. This focus ensures that your family will be given every opportunity to participate in your child's evaluation and assessment and the development of the IFSP outcomes. You are at the heart of the planning—not just in the identification of your own family strengths and concerns, but in the development of the intervention plan that will become a real working plan for your family. Early intervention services must start no later than 14 calendar days from the date of completion of the IFSP unless the team recommends a later date. If an early intervention service is projected to start later than 14 days after the IFSP is completed, the date and reasons for the later date should be on the IFSP. **You may request an IFSP meeting to discuss the potential need for changes at any time by getting in touch with your service coordinator.**



Help plan for the IFSP

- By identifying your child’s unique qualities and strengths, you begin to build a framework on which you can provide him or her with the best opportunities for learning.
- Think about what you and your family want for your child now, and in one, two, or five years from now or even as an adult. Don’t be afraid to dream!
- If you are parents of a newborn, what questions do you have regarding your child. All questions are important. Why is she so fussy? Or why is he so quiet? Is that ok? Or is that a concern?
- What do you and your child really enjoy doing? Playing with water or sand? Watching TV? Going for walks? How can you use these routines to help your child develop and grow?
- What special needs does your child have? Think about what your child might need to reach his or her full potential. Adaptive equipment? Feeding or self help skills? Sitting up or walking? How does your child talk to you?
- **The IFSP should include only those parts of your family’s life that you want to share as related to your child’s development.** But if there are issues for which you would like help to find the solution, now is the time to share those. What about you and your family? For example, do you as a family like to go to the beach, but you’re concerned about how to take your child? Or how do your parents feel about their grandchild? Do they need more information? (Your service coordinator can assist/connect you to other resources).

These are some of the many questions that only you can answer. You decide what information you want to share and when.

The IFSP should be:

- responsive to your individual family’s concerns, strengths, and priorities;
- supportive of your individual family’s routine and community;
- discussed and written in your family’s language or mode of communication; and
- supportive of your individual family’s values.

An IFSP should include:

- a statement of your child’s level of development;
- a statement of the family’s strengths and priorities and concerns as they relate to your child’s development (only with your permission);
- a statement of the measurable results or outcomes expected for your child and family, as well as how and when it is hoped they will be achieved;
- a statement of which early intervention services are to be provided, as well as in what setting they will occur;
- a statement of when services are expected to begin and how long they will continue;
- the name of your service coordinator;
- a written plan for transitions as your child’s needs change—a must as he or she approaches age three, explained further on the following page; and
- date of review, which is every 180 days.

Transitions for You and Your Child

Transitions occur in our lives all the time in many different ways. Changes in our jobs or homes are examples. While receiving early intervention services, you and your child may experience transitions as well.

Planning for a transition allows for a smooth transfer from one service to another.

Transition in early intervention services means movement from one program to another, such as:

- from the hospital to your home;
- from an infant or toddler at home early intervention service to a preschool program;
- from a toddler playgroup to a preschool program; or
- from preschool program to kindergarten or first grade.

Because you know your child best, you can be his or her best advocate. Decisions regarding your child's services and family supports should not be made without you. Planning meetings will take place in the year prior to your child's third birthday to discuss options and the transition process. No change should be made in the IFSP without your consent and involvement of the sending and receiving agencies. These decisions are part of the team process.

Planning a successful transition

As a very important part of the team, you need to know all the options—ask questions.

- What is needed for my child?
- What is available?
- Who is involved?
- Where are they?
- When is this transition going to occur?
- Will a program change be necessary?
- How will the transition occur? A written plan is included in the IFSP.

When your child turns three years of age, responsibility for funding early intervention services changes from the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. This transition on the third birthday may involve only a change in who pays for your child's services and not necessarily a change in program, services, or placement.

During the year before your child is eligible for kindergarten or 1st grade, the early intervention program will invite you to a transition meeting to discuss options for your child. This transition meeting must occur before the end of February. Kindergarten age and school age children are the responsibility of the local school district of residence.

IEP—Individualized Education Program (Three to Age of Beginners*)

As with the IFSP process, you continue to be an important member of the IEP process. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) should state your child's strengths and needs as well as your family's strengths and needs as they relate to the development of your child, including the strengths and needs identified in recent evaluations. The best IEP will reflect your active involvement and planning.

The IEP should:

- list the appropriate program and services for your child;
- be based upon the identified needs of your child and must provide services in the least restrictive setting that meets his or her needs;
- with your permission, address services that you and your family may need to enhance your child's development. **This is voluntary and you need only share what you think is necessary.**
- include measurable annual academic and functional goals; and
- be reviewed at least annually.

The IEP Team (of which you are a vital member) will:

- design a plan for the delivery of the program and services (IEP);
- review your child's progress at agreed upon intervals;
- review the IEP and develop a new IEP, or revise the existing IEP;
- with parental consent, add, change, or delete services; and
- identify a range of placement options.

Help plan for the IEP

- Identify your child's strengths and needs for services based on the evaluation.
- What goals are needed to address your child's needs?
- What does your child really enjoy doing? Building with blocks or listening to music? How can you build upon those skills to help other areas of development?
- What special needs your child might have to reach his or her full potential.
- What you and your family might need to help support your child's development.
- What strengths and skills does your family have to enhance your child's development?

* See glossary



Opportunities

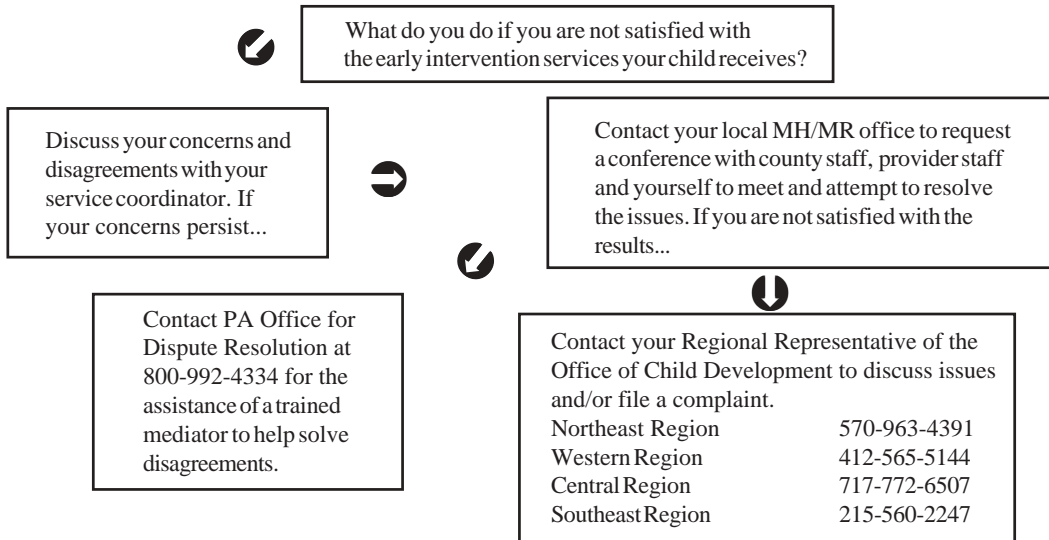
The IFSP and IEP will be implemented in accordance with the following:

- Options must be carefully considered.
- Services should meet the needs of you and your child.
- Services to children birth to three, should be provided in the types of settings in which infants and toddlers without disabilities would participate (**Natural Environments**).
- Children three through five years of age must be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with children who are not disabled (**Least Restrictive Environment**).
- The frequency and duration of early intervention services are based on individual needs as identified by your IFSP or IEP Team, including the need for services throughout the year for children 3 through 5.

What if I disagree with the services offered my child?

Families have the right to disagree with their child's evaluation, services, or program. Both the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare and the Pennsylvania Department of Education have procedures in place to work out differences. Upon initial contact with the early intervention agency, and periodically thereafter, families will be informed of their rights and the procedural safeguards. If a family disagrees with any early intervention or preschool services their child is receiving, they have a variety of options. The intent is to resolve issues and concerns at the local level. **While a disagreement is taking place, services should continue without interruption.** The following diagrams outline those options available to families. Don't hesitate to ask questions and check with the resources listed on pages 14 and 15.

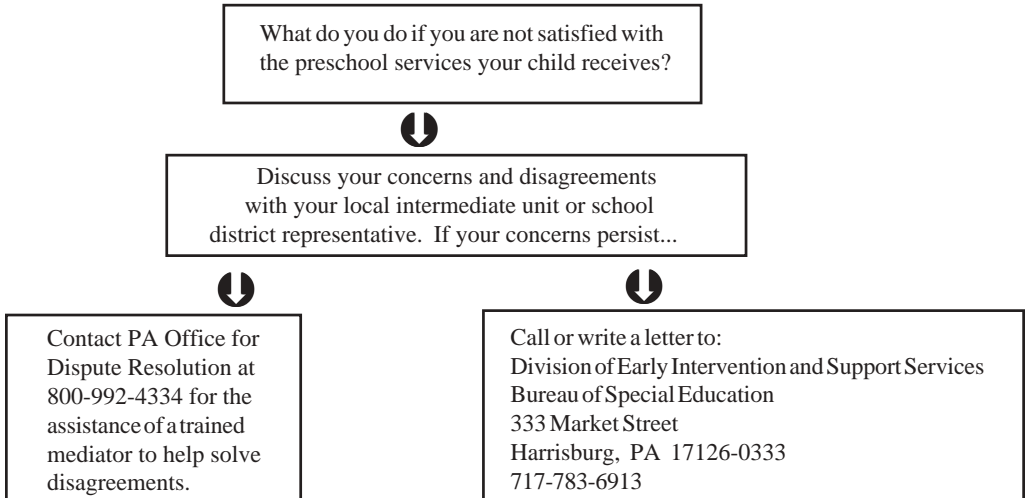
If your child is birth to three years old:



You may request a due process hearing at any time by contacting your service coordinator at the MH/MR county office or by contacting the Office for Dispute Resolution at 800-222-3353.

If you have any questions regarding the above process contact your service coordinator or the Regional Representative of the Office of Child Development listed above. Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may access all numbers through the PA Relay Service at 800-654-5984.

If your child is three to the age of beginners:



You may request a due process hearing at any time by putting a request in writing to your MAWA Preschool Supervisor or by calling the Office for Dispute Resolution at 800-222-3353. If you have any questions about which process to follow, contact one of the phone numbers listed above. Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may access all numbers through the PA Relay Service at 800-654-5984.

Where To Go For More Information

CONNECT INFORMATION SERVICE

150 S. Progress Avenue

Harrisburg, PA 17109

800-692-7288 V/TTY

Will assist in locating local, state, and national associations for children ages birth to three, local services, and information.

SPECIAL EDUCATION CONSULTLINE

800-879-2301

Voice TTY/(PTD)

Help for families and advocates of children with special needs about school related concerns, special education regulations and the complaint system.

PENNSYLVANIA OFFICE FOR DISPUTE RESOLUTION

6340 Flank Drive, Suite 600

Harrisburg, PA 17112-2793

800-992-4334 or 800-654-5984 (TTY)

Providing a trained mediator to help reach a solution regarding Early Intervention services.

PARENT EDUCATION NETWORK (PEN)

2107 Industrial Highway

York, PA 17402

717-845-9722(V/TTY)

800-522-5827(V/TTY)

A federally funded project providing information and support to parents of children with disabilities throughout Pennsylvania.

PARENT TO PARENT OF PENNSYLVANIA

Gateway Corporate Center

6340 Flank Drive, Suite 600

Harrisburg, PA 17112-2793

717-540-4722 or 800-986-4550

877-986-5432 V/TTY

717-540-7603 (FAX)

Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania is a network created by families for families of children and adults with special needs.

PENNSYLVANIA TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NETWORK (PaTTAN)

PaTTAN works collaboratively with intermediate units in the area of professional development, technical assistance and information dissemination to support school districts throughout the Commonwealth. The Early Intervention Technical Assistance (EITA) works collaboratively with MAWA preschool programs for children with developmental delays/disabilities and county EI programs for infants and toddlers with developmental delays/disabilities.

Harrisburg Office

Gateway Corporate Center

6340 Flank Drive, Suite 600

Harrisburg, PA 17112-2793

717-541-4960 or 800-360-7282

Pittsburgh Office

3190 William Pitt Way

Pittsburgh, PA 15238

800-446-5607 or 412-826-2336

King of Prussia Office

200 Anderson Road

King of Prussia, PA 19406

610-265-7321 or 800-441-3215

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA)

Part C:

- gives rights to eligible children and their families at birth until the child's third birthday;
- administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare;
- eligibility for early intervention services determined by the evaluation process;
- services for eligible infants and toddlers are developed and written into an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) by a team of which the parents are important team members; and
- services are delivered in a natural environment for the child and family.

Part B: Section 619

- gives rights to eligible young children and their families from the child's third birthday to age of beginner;
- administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education;
- eligibility determined by the IEP team of which parents are equal partners following an evaluation;
- supports and services for eligible young children are written into an Individualized Education Program (IEP); and
- the setting in which services are delivered must be the least restrictive.

Act 212: The Early Intervention Services System Act of 1990

- assures eligible young children (birth until the age of beginners) and their families early intervention services and programs;
- assures appropriate services under public supervision and is designed to meet the developmental needs of eligible children; and
- assures services specifically designed to address the needs of the family to enhance their child's development.

Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICC)

Established by Act 212, these local councils provide for local representation from families, county administration, intermediate units, school districts, early intervention providers, Head Start, service coordinators, health agencies, and other community members. While each LICC is different, their overall goal is to enhance local early intervention services and supports through collaboration. There's an LICC that represents your county. Your LICC may be accessed through your local MH/MR office or MAWA agency. Families are very important to LICC—please consider getting to know more about them.

Glossary

You may hear or see these words as you become involved in early intervention services.

Act 212: the Early Intervention Services System Act of 1990 that provided for Early Intervention services for eligible children in Pennsylvania.

Adaptive skills (functional skills): those skills used in daily living such as eating, dressing, and toileting.

Advocacy: Advocacy is assuring that the services which are appropriate for you and your child are received. You are the best advocate for your child. You know your child best.

Age of beginners: the minimum age that a child can attend first grade in his or her own school district.

Assessment: a process that helps find your child's unique strengths and needs.

Assistive Technology Service: services that directly assist a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.

Cognitive: the ability to learn, understand, and to solve problems.

Developmental delay: Development behind other children of the same age in achieving cognitive, adaptive, physical, communication and social or emotional skills.

Due process: the procedure which guarantees a person's right to disagree, refuse, change, or permit recommended educational services. (*See page 14.*)

DPW: Department of Public Welfare, responsible for provision of early intervention services birth to three years of age.

Early Intervention: a collection of services and/or supports for eligible children from birth to age of beginners to provide stimulation and education.

ER: Evaluation Report

FAPE: free appropriate public education guaranteed by law, at no expense to the parents and family.

Goals/Outcomes: broad, general target areas of development written by the IFSP or IEP team.

ICC: the Interagency Coordinating Council is an advisory group made up of parents and professionals to advise the Governor and the Departments about early intervention issues in Pennsylvania.

IDEA: Federal early intervention legislation signed in 2004 called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

IEP: Individualized Education Program developed by parents and staff for eligible children from their 3rd birthday to 21 years of age.

Glossary

IFSP: Individualized Family Service Plan developed by parents and staff for eligible children birth to 3rd birthday.

Inclusion: to have the opportunity to participate in activities with non-disabled peers.

Language and speech development: the ability to talk, express one's needs, and/or communicate.

LICC: Local Interagency Coordinating Council made up of parents and professionals to coordinate and plan for early intervention services in the local community.

LRE: Least Restrictive Environment that allows children with disabilities to be educated with their peers without disabilities to the extent possible.

MDE: the Multidisciplinary Evaluation performed by the Multidisciplinary Team.

MDT: the Multidisciplinary Team is comprised of the child's parents and professionals from various disciplines responsible for evaluating and reevaluating children thought to be eligible for early intervention services.

MH/MR: Mental Health/Mental Retardation county programs responsible for the provision of early intervention services for eligible children from birth to their third birthday.

MAWA: Mutually Agreed Upon Written Arrangement with the education agency providing Early Intervention services on behalf of the Department of Education in your local area for children three through five years of age.

OCD: Office of Child Development - responsible for funding services for children birth to three years of age.

PDE: Pennsylvania Department of Education responsible for funding services for children three to age of beginners.

Physical skills: the ability to move, see, and hear.

Social and emotional development: the ability to interact with others.

Screening: a process to determine if a more extensive assessment needs to be completed.

Service Coordinator (case manager): the individual assigned to coordinate the planning and delivery of early intervention services to children from birth to their third birthday and from three to age of beginners in the MAWA Agency.

Special Education: specially designed instruction.

Transition: the process of moving from one early intervention service to another as the unique needs of the child changes.

Transition year: the year from July 1st to June 30th of the year that an eligible toddler turns three and when a preschool child is ready to move to a school age program. This is the time when responsibility for services change from PA Department of Public Welfare to PA Department of Education.

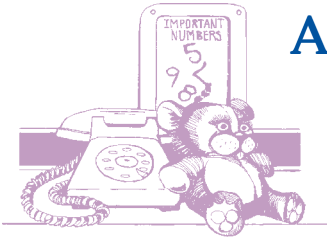
NOTES

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Credits:

Thanks to the artist Douglas Roysdon, Director of The Mock Turtle Marionette Theater for sharing his illustrations for this publication.

Early Intervention Technical Assistance (EITA) is a cooperative training and technical assistance effort between the Pennsylvania Departments of Health, Education, and Public Welfare. EITA is a project of the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network and is administered by the Tuscarora Intermediate Unit 11. The Tuscarora Intermediate Unit 11 is an equal opportunity educational service agency and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, disability, age, or religion in its activities, educational and vocational/programs, or employment practices as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act of 1955 as amended. For information regarding civil rights or grievance procedures, contact Richard Daubert, Equal Rights and Opportunity Coordinator, at Tuscarora Intermediate Unit 11, 2527 US HWY 522 SOUTH, McVeytown, PA 17051-9717, 814-542-2501 or 717-899-7143; TDD 814-542-2905.



At A Glance: Phone Numbers to Contact

My child is between the ages of 0 & 3 and receives supports and services through the Early Intervention Infant, Toddler and Family Program

Provider(s) Name: _____
Phone: _____

Provider(s) Name: _____
Phone: _____

Provider(s) Name: _____
Phone: _____

Service Coordinator: _____
Phone: _____

County Coordinator: _____
Phone: _____



My child is between the ages of 3 & 'Age of Beginners' and receives services through the Early Intervention Preschool Program.

Teacher Name: _____
Phone: _____

Therapist Name: _____
Phone: _____

Therapist Name: _____
Phone: _____

Preschool Supervisor Name: _____
Phone: _____