

# early Intervention



## What are the Benefits of Early Intervention?

Early intervention services have been offered for more than thirty years now. Despite this long history, we know little about what changes for children and families as a result of their participation in the early intervention system. We have many anecdotal accounts and many parents who have provided testimony to the benefits of early intervention services, but we have little concrete information to show what changes for children and families.

This lack of knowledge is about to change. The federal government has started an effort to increase accountability for programs that receive their funding. Since early intervention is one of those programs, we must now find ways to show how these services benefit those who receive them. Early intervention is believed to have benefits for both children and families so we are charged with collecting information about both child and family outcomes.

### Child Outcomes

Child outcomes are the changes experienced as a result of the early intervention services and supports provided to a child. Each state must be able to report whether or not early intervention services have helped children achieve positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships), acquire and use their knowledge and skills, and learn how to take appropriate action to meet their needs. These three areas, having relationships with family and friends, being able to gain new information and skills, and being able to communicate and meet needs, are believed to be important for all young children. A child's status in the three child outcome areas is determined when the child enters the early intervention system, at his/her annual IFSP meeting, and again shortly before exiting the system. The child outcomes ratings compare a child's status to other children of the same age.

By comparing a child's rating at his/her initial IFSP meeting to his/her rating prior to transition, we can determine to what degree early intervention has impacted the child's development. Examining child outcomes is still a relatively new process in most states. We are just beginning to collect and report the information provided by the child outcomes ratings. Families and service providers are still working to increase their comfort with the process and trying to gain greater consistency with the information collected. It is too soon to say with confidence how early intervention is impacting children's skills. It is not, however, too early to begin to report how early intervention benefits families.

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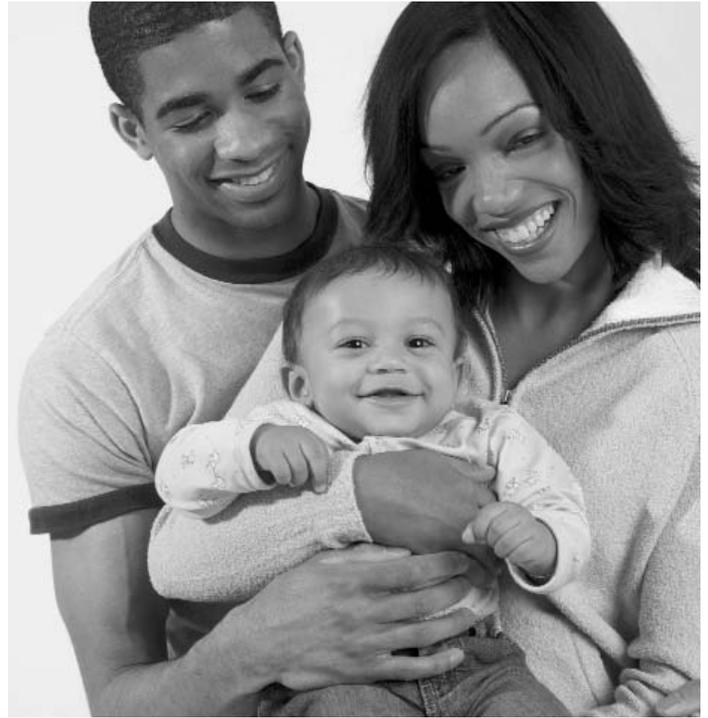
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## Family Outcomes

As mentioned earlier, both children and families are considered to receive benefits from early intervention services. Early intervention is a family-centered system so we need to report whether or not families are getting what is intended from early intervention services. For this reason, we examine family outcomes. Family Outcomes are the changes experienced by the family as a result of early intervention services and supports. Early intervention families in Illinois helped develop the survey and determine the process that is currently being used to measure family outcomes. The family outcomes examined include things like understanding your child's strengths, abilities, and special needs and helping your child develop and learn. The family outcomes surveys are sent to a portion of the families in the early intervention system each year.

Nearly 1700 early intervention families completed the family outcomes survey last year. Families rated their current status on a number of outcomes using a seven point scale. Generally, lower numbers represented less positive outcomes. Despite small variations by region and ethnicity, most families reported that they received substantial benefits from early intervention services. Most families reported that they felt that they were able to tell when their children were making progress, were comfortable participating in meetings about their children, and were frequently able to help their children learn and practice new skills. Other positive outcomes experienced included understanding their children's development and special needs, being able to help their children develop and learn, and looking optimistically toward their family's future. Based on survey responses, some families still struggle to understand their rights within the early intervention system and find it difficult to participate in community activities with their children. Although the returned surveys did not fully reflect the diversity of families in the early intervention system, the information has been useful. Future efforts will work to capture information that captures the diversity found in the early intervention system.



**Early intervention is believed to have benefits for both children and families.**

Families can help with the state's effort to collect this information in a couple of ways. First, if you receive a family outcomes survey in the mail or from your child's service coordinator, please return it in the enclosed return envelope. This will help ensure that the information received captures the full range of family experiences. Second, share your knowledge of your child's skills during the IFSP meeting. This will improve the accuracy of the information that the team uses to determine the child outcomes ratings. Since you know your child best and see your child in the greatest number of situations and settings, your input is critical. If we all work together to share information, we should soon be able to describe the benefits of early intervention for both children and their families.

## WEB SITES RELATED TO FAMILY AND CHILD OUTCOMES

### **National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study**

<http://www.sri.com/neils/>

### **NECTAC: The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center**

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

### **Early Intervention Family Alliance**

<http://www.eifmaillyalliance.org>

### **The National Center of Medical Home Initiatives for Children with Special Needs**

<http://www.medicalhomeinfo.org/health/EI.html>

### **The Early Childhood Outcomes Center**

<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~eco/>

# Books and Videos on Improving Child and Family Outcomes

## Videos

***Early Interactions: Parent-Professional Perspectives in Early Intervention.*** 45 minute DVD videodisc. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2007. (Call # WS 107.5 .R5 E12 2007) Viewers watch footage of two young children with disabilities as parents and professionals conduct observations during typical home activities.

***The First IEP: Parent Perspectives.*** 30 minute DVD videodisc. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2005. (Call # LB 1031 .C518 2005) This video facilitates collaboration between professionals and parents as they help young children make the transition from early intervention to pre-school.

## Books

***An Overview of Early Intervention.*** E.J. Brown with Jane Sorensen. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed, 2007. (Call # WS 368 .B877 2007) – This is an overview of home-based early intervention in occupational therapy for children 0-3 years old.

***The Early Intervention Dictionary: A Multi-disciplinary Guide to Terminology.*** 3rd ed. Jeanine G. Coleman. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House, 2006. (Call # HV 891 .C692 2006) – This handy dictionary defines more than 4,000 medical, therapeutic, and educational terms commonly used by the many different professionals involved in early intervention field. It retails at \$21.95 but you may be able to find it cheaper online.

***Young Children with Disabilities in Natural Environments: Methods & Procedures.*** Mary Jo Noonan and Linda McCormick. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2006. (Call # LC 4019.3 .N817y 2006) – While written with professionals in mind, it does focus on children with disabilities from birth to age 5 and offers practical knowledge on a range of procedures for working with children effectively.



## Ideas for Improving Child and Family Outcomes

1. Make sure your IFSP team knows your concern about your child's development.
2. Work with your team to describe your family's daily routines and activities so that they can provide strategies that will be meaningful to your family.
3. Participate in your child's early intervention appointments so that you can learn the strategies that will enhance your child's development.
4. Ask your providers questions if you do not understand the reasons behind suggested activities.
5. Contact your child's service coordinator if you feel that you need more information about your rights within the early intervention system.
6. Learn about the activities for young children in your community to see if there are things that your family would enjoy doing.
7. Call on others for support if you are feeling alone or overwhelmed.
8. Start planning for your child's transition from early intervention early. Visit potential programs and speak with other parents who have completed the process.



[www.eiclearinghouse.org](http://www.eiclearinghouse.org)

## Illinois Public Health Association

223 S. Third Street  
Springfield, Illinois 62701

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## Calendar Ahead

**July 17-18, 2008**

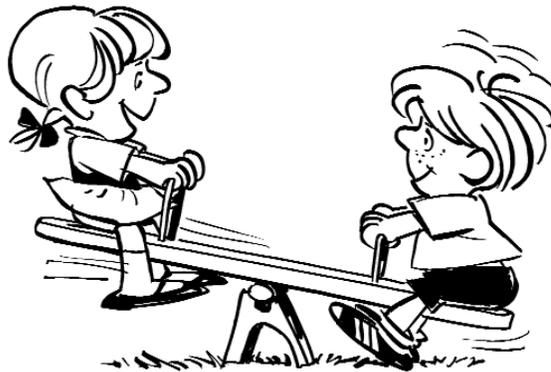
*Annual Mid-America Superconference on Autism and Asperger's Syndrome*  
Dixon, Illinois

CONTACT: Future Horizons, 1-800-489-0727 or [www.FHautism.com](http://www.FHautism.com)

**July 24-27, 2008**

*14th Annual Convention of The Magic Foundation* • Wheeling, Illinois  
CONTACT: The Magic Foundation, 1-800-3Magic3 or [www.magicfoundation.org](http://www.magicfoundation.org)

*Have a  
safe and happy  
summer!*



### How can I get materials from the library?

**There are several ways to check out materials from the library or learn more about what resources are available to you:**

**PHONE:** 1-800-852-4302 (toll free)  
**E-MAIL:** [clearinghouse@eiclearinghouse.org](mailto:clearinghouse@eiclearinghouse.org)  
**FAX:** 217-522-4670  
**WEBSITE:** [www.eiclearinghouse.org](http://www.eiclearinghouse.org)

- There is no charge to borrow materials from the library (except for postal costs to return materials).
- You can have library materials sent directly to your home.
- You can use your local library to receive and send materials back to the library at little or no charge.



### **Early Childhood Intervention Clearinghouse**

223 South Third Street  
Springfield, IL 62701  
(217) 522-4655  
(800) 852-4302 (in Illinois)

*Early Intervention* is edited by the Clearinghouse staff.

Project Director: Chet Brandt  
Project Associate: Patricia Traylor  
Editor: Krissy Roseberry

### **Editorial Policy**

*Early Intervention* accepts original articles, but reserves the right to edit or refuse publication at the discretion of the newsletter committee. Opinions expressed are the responsibility of the author and are not necessarily those of the Clearinghouse staff or the Illinois Public Health Association, unless so indicated.

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