



# Early Intervention



## EI Clearinghouse Revises *Family Guide*

The Illinois Early Intervention (EI) Clearinghouse has partnered with the Illinois Department of Human Services to update and revise its family guide, now titled *The Illinois Early Intervention Program: A Guide for Families*. When your child first enters the EI Program, you want to know what to expect. The Guide provides an overview of the Illinois EI Program and its services for you and your child. We hope that the Guide will help you make decisions related to your child's services. We also hope it will help you work closely with EI professionals.

The new Guide has six sections. The first section provides an overview of the EI Program. Section II describes the steps involved in entering the program. The third section discusses participating in services. Section IV discusses leaving the program. Section V discusses your legal rights. The final section covers frequently asked questions by families. At the end of the Guide is a glossary of terms, a list of developmental milestones, and worksheets to assist you in planning for services.

The new Guide will answer many of your questions as you make the journey through EI. Parents who are just entering the system will find out what they need to know to get started. Parents with children already receiving services may find new information that adds to the quality of their experience with the program.

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We hope that the new Guide will answer many of your questions as you make the journey through EI. Parents who are just entering the system will find out what they need to know to get started. Parents with children already receiving services may find new information that adds to the quality of their experience with the program. The Guide is now available in English and Spanish on our Web site at <http://eiclearinghouse.org/resources/pubs.html>. Copies will be available soon from your local Child and Family Connections Office.



## Resolving Your Family's Concerns

When families have concerns about their child's Early Intervention (EI) services or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), a good first stop is their EI service provider. One of the many roles of EI service providers is to update families with information about their child's services and progress. If the EI service provider is unable to address issues raised by the family, the family may contact its local Child and Family Connections (CFC) service coordinator for help. Nearly all concerns about services can be addressed by CFC staff and families working together.

The Illinois EI Program promotes a team approach. It focuses on an equal partnership between families and professionals as they work together during this challenging time in their child's life. Family members who have been unable to resolve their concerns by working with the CFC have several legal options. Pursuing these legal options does not guarantee that the family's concerns will be addressed. This is especially true if the family's concerns go beyond the legal requirements of the EI Program.

One legal option is to request a formal administrative resolution. This process involves the family submitting a form to the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). Your local CFC office can provide the form and information about this process. The form includes the family's concerns and how the family would like to see these concerns resolved. A family member must sign the form. This person is usually a parent or guardian. The form is called a "Request for Investigation of a State Complaint." This means that the family does not believe that its provider or CFC is following the laws and requirements of the Illinois EI Program.

IDHS investigates the complaint and prepares a decision. During this time, the family may send additional information to IDHS. Within 60 days, IDHS will issue a written decision. It will say if the provider or CFC is following the requirements of the EI Program. The decision will include findings from the investigation, conclusions, and reasons for the final decision. If IDHS agrees with the family's complaint, the decision will recommend what may be done to address the family's original concern or complaint. If IDHS does not agree with the family's complaint, the family may accept the decision or consider further action.

A second option may involve a process called mediation. In this process, a mediator will help the family and CFC discuss the problem and reach an agreement. All discussions held during mediation are confidential. The process is voluntary and can only be used by a family that freely agrees to participate in it. The state pays for the cost of mediation.

A third option for families to consider is an impartial administrative proceeding. This is similar to a court hearing. A hearing officer listens to both sides. At the hearing, the family may bring an advocate who has special knowledge or training about their child or about children with disabilities. The family also has the right to bring their child to the proceeding. The family may request that the proceeding be open to the public.

Rarely do families take their concerns to the levels described above. Most families are able to resolve disagreements informally with their provider or CFC service coordinator. However, families have the right to understand their options when they believe that their child's needs are not being met.

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# Separation Anxiety and Children with Special Needs

*A child who cries and clings when a parent leaves may be showing separation anxiety. A child with special needs may also show distress by regressing or becoming hyperactive. A little separation anxiety can be a positive sign. It shows that a child recognizes and has formed attachments with loved ones. But separation anxiety can make leaving her with child care providers or others stressful for everyone. Here are some things to remember about separation anxiety.*



## When might a child show separation anxiety?

- Fear of less familiar people and places often begins when a child is about 8 months old. It can begin as early as 5 months of age. It usually peaks between 10 and 18 months and fades by the age of 2 years.
- Both attachment and the ability to separate easily may develop at an older age in a child with developmental delays or special needs.
- Anxiety may become greater for any child when there are changes in the environment, such as the birth of a new baby.
- A parent's stress level can contribute to separation anxiety. Parents who feel secure about their child care arrangements will find it easier to leave. They are confident that the care provider understands and can work with their child's special needs. Remember, some time spent apart can be good for both children and parents.

## How can parents help make partings easier for a child?

- Stay with him until he becomes familiar with a new place or person.
- Follow a structured goodbye ritual. Children with special needs often find structure reassuring.
- Avoid sneaking away or teasing or scolding a child for being upset.
- Reassure the child that Mommy or Daddy will be back after naptime or at dinnertime, even if he can't tell time. Be sure to keep that promise.
- Let him have his favorite blanket or other "lovey" for comfort. Some children like to keep a family photo or a familiar possession from home.
- Avoid leaving a child when he is hungry, tired, or sick.

## Is it more than separation anxiety?

- Consider other possible sources of stress in a child's life.
- Think about changing child care for a child who remains inconsolable in a new child care setting for more than 2 weeks.
- Seek help for a child who stops eating or sleeping well, refuses to interact with others, or has an ongoing change in behavior.

 For more information on separation anxiety, see the Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse Web site at <http://eiclearinghouse.org>.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois Department of Human Services, Bureau of Early Intervention.



# Separation Anxiety and Attachment

The following books, articles, and videos are available from the Early Intervention Clearinghouse. Request them through your local public library, email us through the Clearinghouse Web site at <http://eiclearinghouse.org>, or call us at 877-275-3227. Visit our Web site to find more resources on transitions in EI.

## Books

*Everyday Goodbyes: Starting School and Early Care: A Guide to the Separation Process.* Nancy Balaban. New York: Teachers College Press, 2006. (Call # LB 1132 .B171e 2006).

In this book, Balaban helps parents and teachers understand why children can take time to adjust to separation and what they can do to ease transitions.

*The Birth to Five Book: Confident Childrearing Right from the Start.* Brenda Nixon. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2009. (Call # WS 105.5 .C3 .N736 2009).

This all-purpose book provides parents with advice on how to encourage healthy development in many areas, including attachment and separation.

*Touchpoints Birth to Three: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development.* T. Berry Brazelton. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 2006. (Call # WS 105 .B827bir 2006).

This text offers parents advice on topics related to emotional and behavioral development in infants and toddlers.



## Videos

*Attachment Relationships: Nurturing Healthy Bonds.* 29-minute DVD. Learning Seed, 2010. (Call # WS 105.5 .F2 .A883 2010)

This video follows the process of a child forming healthy attachments from birth to age 2.

*A Place of Our Own: Early Childhood Solutions—Behavior and Emotions.* 111-minute DVD. PBS, 2008. (Call # WS 113 .P697 2008)

This series explores how parents and caregivers can better support the social and emotional development of young children and addresses separation anxiety.

## Articles

*Easing the Separation Process for Infants, Toddlers, and Families.* Nancy Balaban. (2006). *Young Children*, 61(1), 14-20.

This article provides an overview of attachment theory and how it relates to separation anxiety, bonding, and development.

*Development: Ages & Stages—Helping Children Manage Fears.* Carla Poole, Susan A. Miller, & Ellen Booth Church. (2004). *Early Childhood Today*, 19(3), 33-35.

This article presents ways that parents can help children at different ages and stages to manage their fears, including separation.

*Peekaboo Power: To Ease Separation and Build Secure Relationships.* Joanne M. Szamreta. (2003). *Young Children*, 58(1), 88-94.

This article describes how peekaboo games can be used with toddlers and in play-group settings to support development and autonomy.

## Web Resources

*Separation Anxiety Article from the Mayo Clinic*

The Mayo Clinic Web site provides a summary of the causes of separation anxiety and what parents can do to ease this feeling in children.

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/separation-anxiety/DS01173>

*Separation Anxiety: When Your Child Doesn't Want You to Leave*

This pamphlet from the University of Pittsburgh provides tips on how parents can navigate their child's separation anxiety.

<http://www.ocd.pitt.edu/Files/PDF/Parenting/SeparationAnxiety.pdf>

## Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse

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## Illinois Calendar

**June 12-17, 2011**

Jacksonville

*Institute for Parents of Preschool Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*

Contact: University of Illinois, Division of Specialized Care for Children,  
800-322-3722

**June 22, 2011**

Oak Forest

*Understanding and Treating Children with Selective Mutism: Part I*

Contact: Mary Ann Bonello, STARNET Region VI,  
<http://www.swccase.org/starnet>, 708-342-5370

**June 28, 2011**

Oak Forest

*Understanding and Treating Children with Selective Mutism: Part II*

Contact: Mary Ann Bonello, STARNET Region VI,  
<http://www.swccase.org/starnet>, 708-342-5370

**July 18-19, 2011**

Naperville

*The Inclusive Classroom and Asperger Syndrome*

Contact: Spectrum Training Systems, Inc., 920-749-0332  
<http://www.spectrumtrainingsystemsinc.com/naperville.html>

**July 6-9, 2011**

Chicago

*National Alliance on Mental Illness Conference*

<http://www.nami.org/template.cfm?section=Convention>

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