

## Fact Sheet for Families: Early Intervention & Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS)



Many families, parents and caregivers who interact with DCFS learn about new services available to assist with their child's care and development, and Early Intervention is no different. Early Intervention is a supportive parent-child program **available to all Illinois families regardless of income.**

Most often recommended by a child's physician, early intervention services are intended to **help infants and toddlers overcome identified developmental delays** during the most critical period of a child's development.

Children engaged with DCFS may be eligible for services even if they aren't showing a delay. For many, early intervention becomes a key support service incorporated into a child's welfare plan. **Your caseworker will start the referral process** to connect you with someone who can answer your questions.

### What do Early Intervention services provide?

**1**

#### **ASSESSMENT**

You will partner with interventionists to find out if your child has delays in any area of development.

**2**

#### **VISITS**

Your interventionist will identify activities that can support your child's learning and to join you with problem solving.

**3**

#### **CONNECTIONS**

Some Child and Family Connections (CFC) programs have times to connect with other parents during parent-child activities.

**4**

#### **TRANSITION**

A service coordinator can help you connect to other resources in your community, like childcare or preschool, when your child gets close to their third birthday.

### Who supports my family?

Your family will be supported by a team of providers trained in child development. These developmental specialists may have backgrounds in speech pathology, occupational therapy, social emotional support, or developmental therapy. You will initially meet with a service coordinator so that they are able to understand what is important for you as a parent. This will be followed by an assessment and then regular visits based on your needs and schedule.



### What does a visit look like?

Visits may be conducted in person, via live video (telehealth), or in a hybrid format that combines both of these options. Visits will first focus on building a relationship with you to understand what you want for your child and family. Visits are scheduled based on your family's individual needs. Your provider will coach you on strategies that can be used to address outcomes and prepare your child for future success in school and other areas of life.

### How long does my family have to commit to early intervention?

The length of involvement varies for each child and family based on individual need. Participation can range from voluntary to recommended depending on the child's welfare plan. Services are available for children from birth to three years of age. You may learn about the program during your first visit with a service coordinator or you may gather more information before agreeing to this type of service. 'Early intervention is meant to be a support for your family during the early years of your child's life. As your child approaches their third birthday, your team will help you plan for this transition which may include finding a preschool.

## TELL ME MORE...

Your child will be assessed by developmental specialists to determine whether they need support to help them with learning, talking, moving, and interacting with other children. Additionally, sometimes the stressful events children have experienced impact their development. Early intervention is able to help you identify strategies to facilitate your child's development.



You may wonder: why does this support begin at infancy and continue to the third birthday?

The prenatal period and the first years of life are critical for brain development and lay the foundation for future success. Receiving extra support from the start can help your family feel less alone as you figure out how to support your child's development. Preschool readiness is more than the ABCs. It's also about feeling good about oneself, making friends, handling stress, and having confidence to try new things.

Getting all the support you need can help you parent in a way that feels good for you and helps your child develop and learn.