

What is ECI?

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) is a statewide program for families with children, birth to three, with disabilities and developmental delays. ECI supports families to help their children reach their potential through developmental services. Services are provided by a variety of local agencies and organizations across Texas.

What are the benefits?

Research shows that growth and development are most rapid in the early years of life. The earlier problems are identified, the greater the chance of eliminating or minimizing them. Early intervention responds to the critical needs of children and families by:

- promoting development and learning
- providing support to families
- coordinating services
- decreasing the need for costly special program

Who is served?

Any child from birth to three living in the state of Texas with a delay in development may be eligible for services.

Is my child eligible?

The ECI team, together with the child's caregiver, will provide a comprehensive evaluation/assessment to determine eligibility. A child may qualify for services based on one of the following categories (updated September 2011):

Medical Diagnosis (Initial and Annual Eligibility Determination)

- a. Must be on the list of medically qualifying diagnoses provided by DARS
- b. Medical documentation must be reviewed to determine initial and continuing eligibility
- c. Team must determine and document a need for Early Intervention Services

Auditory or Visual Impairment (Initial and Annual Eligibility Determination)

- a. Must have written documentation

Developmental Delay (Initial Eligibility Determination only)

- a. At least a 25% in one or more of the following developmental areas: communication, cognition, gross motor, fine motor, social emotional, adaptive
- b. A documented delay of at least 33% for children whose only delay is in expressive language

Qualitative Determination of Delay (Initial Eligibility Determination only)

- Used when the team finds, after administration, that the standardized test is inadequate to accurately represent the child's development

- a. As indicated by responses or patterns that are disordered or qualitatively different from what is expected for the child's age
- b. Significantly interfere with the child's ability to function in the environment
- c. Qualitative Determination of Delay is only applicable for 6 months at a time. Re determination of eligibility is required after 6 months of services for every child who has this eligibility determination.

What is the cost?

The following services are provided at no cost to families regardless of income:

- Evaluation/assessment
- Development of the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)
- Service coordination
- Translation and interpretation services, if needed
- Services for children with auditory and visual impairments who are eligible for services from ECI and their local school district
- Services for children in foster care or in conservatorship of the state

Families with children enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP, or whose income is below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level, do not pay for any ECI services. ECI asks families who can afford to do so, to share in the cost of services. The amount a family pays for ECI services (cost-share) is determined using a sliding fee scale and is based on family size and income after allowable deductions. No child and family will be turned away because of an inability to pay.

What are ECI Services?

ECI services are provided in the child's "natural environment" where they live, learn, and play. This may be in the

home, daycare, or community setting where your child feels most comfortable. In this way, your child's intervention will help him participate in everyday activities.

ECI staff listens to a family's concerns and works with them to plan services. Each family will have a different plan, according to what is needed for their child. Infants and toddlers learn best from families and caregivers through activities in their daily lives such as feeding, bathing and playing. ECI services help families learn how to use these daily activities to help their children develop skills.

Services can include:

- Assistive Technology: Services & Devices
- Audiology
- Developmental Services
- Early Identification, Screening & Assessment
- Family Counseling
- Family Education
- Medical Services (diagnostic or evaluation services used to determine eligibility)
- Nursing Services
- Nutrition Services
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Psychological Services
- Service Coordination
- Social Work Services
- Speech-Language Therapy
- Vision Services

Who provides the services?

ECI contracts with a variety of local agencies and organizations to provide ECI services in their communities. These include private non-profit organizations like BACH ECI, school districts, education service centers and many more. ECI program staff include, but are not limited to, service coordinators, early intervention specialists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, social workers, registered nurses, and registered dietitians.

How to refer?

Anyone can refer a child to ECI including concerned parents, grandparents, or caregivers. A referral from a physician is not necessary; however all primary referral sources, by law, must refer a child under age three who may be in need of and/or qualify for comprehensive early intervention services. Referrals from a primary referral source must be made within two working days of identification or suspicion of delay, and must be made to an ECI-approved program for evaluation and assessment of the child. Primary referral sources include:

- hospitals, including prenatal and postnatal care facilities
- physicians
- parents
- child care programs
- local education agencies
- public health facilities
- other social service agencies
- other health care providers
- A primary referral source, if other than the parents, may make a referral directly to ECI or information may be given to the family so they may make the referral contact themselves.

What is PPCD?

Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities. PPCD is provided through your school district.

Who decides if your child is eligible for PPCD?

If your child is in an ECI program, your service provider will let the school district know that your preschooler may be eligible for public school services. This is the first step in the “referral process,” and it must begin 90 days prior to your child’s third birthday.

If your three- to five-year-old did not participate in ECI, but you suspect him or her of needing special education services, you – or any person involved in the care or education of your child – may make a referral. To begin the referral process, contact your child’s home school or your district’s special education office.

In either case, the school district must have your “written consent” (signature) before it can begin the evaluation process to ensure your child has a disability and needs special education. Be sure to sign and return paperwork in a timely manner to keep the process moving forward. Your child will be evaluated to determine if he or she is a “child with a disability” as defined by the IDEA.

An Admissions, Review and Dismissal (ARD) meeting will be held to determine if your child qualifies for special education services. The ARD committee – which includes school administrators and teachers *and* the child’s parents – considers the following:

- aptitude and achievements tests,
- parent input
- teacher recommendations
- health conditions (including vision and hearing)
- social or cultural background
- adaptive behavior.

If the ARD committee finds your child eligible, he or she will be assigned a “disability code”, and an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be developed.

What will my preschooler learn?

Once eligibility is determined, the ARD committee makes decisions about the appropriate special education and related services for the child. This information is documented in the child’s Individual Education Plan (IEP), which outlines what you expect your preschooler to learn over the next year, including measurable objectives and goals. An ARD committee will meet at least once a year to determine if the goals were met and to develop new goals for the upcoming year.

You are an important part of the decision-making process. Be sure to familiarize yourself with TEA’s Prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines. Knowing what is expected of typically developing preschoolers in Texas is a good starting point for developing your child’s IEP.

Don’t let your preschooler’s disability get in the way of high expectations. Within any preschool classroom, children exhibit a diversity of knowledge based on differences in development, cultural background, and previous learning experiences. The preschooler should begin at his or her own level with a plan that builds on his or her individual strengths and skills. Children with disabilities may need accommodations or modifications to the curriculum guidelines in order to benefit from them. Research proves that *all* preschoolers benefit from a language-rich environment that promotes speech and early literacy.

Also, an effective preschool program teaches developmental skills through active play. Play allows children to explore their surroundings, learn important social concepts such as turn-taking, appropriately express themselves, and develop confidence to try new things and solve problems in a safe, supported environment. Look for a teacher that interacts with preschoolers in child-initiated play that promotes appropriate social skills and language modeling.

Where will my child receive PPCD services?

Some people have the misconception that PPCD is a “place” – a self-contained classroom where preschoolers with disabilities are all grouped together. However, special education and related services can be provided in a variety of settings.

Under IDEA, preschool programs for children with disabilities should be delivered in the “least restrictive environment” (LRE). In other words, children with disabilities should be placed to the fullest extent possible in the same setting as students without disabilities. It is often appropriate for special education services to be delivered in a regular classroom, where children have the advantage of same-age language and behavior models and the opportunity to develop friendships. When considering placement for PPCD, be sure to explore options that would offer your child a more inclusive educational setting.

Home bound services are an option if medically necessary. If you feel that your child needs to remain at home, a letter from your doctor to the school will help. The doctor, school district and parent should all work together to determine what is safest and most effective for each child.

When does PPCD start?

If your child is eligible for public school and his or her third birthday falls during the school year, services will begin the day your preschooler turns three. If your child’s birthday falls during the summer, the ARD committee may decide to implement the IEP through Extended School Year (ESY) services (which is similar to “summer school”) or wait until the beginning of the next school year.

ESY is usually only offered if the child will regress without services, and the time to recover from regression is more than 6 weeks.

How will my child get there?

Transportation is a related service that should also be discussed in the ARD meeting. The district is obligated to provide transportation if the child’s parents cannot. This also applies to 3-5 year olds who may not be attending the school’s preschool program, but who need special transportation in order to get to speech or other therapies they receive through the school district.

References:

Texas First Project

<http://www.texasprojectfirst.org/PreschoolProg.html>

BACH

<http://www.bacheci.org/earlychildhoodintervention.htm>

Resources

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities - "Finding Help for Young Children with Disabilities (Birth-5) - A Parent's Guide" A publication of the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities. If you are concerned about your child's development or suspect that your child may have special needs, this Parent's Guide can help.

<http://nichcy.org/>

Early Identification - the National Early Childhood TA (Technical Assistance) Center's web site. This site includes information and resources about the early identification of young children with developmental delays and disabilities, and referral to infant and toddler early intervention services for Part C of IDEA and preschool special education services for preschoolers, special education preschool services (Section 619 of Part B, of IDEA).

<http://www.nectac.org/topics/earlyid/earlyid.asp>

OSEP - Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education - This is the official U.S. Department of Education's web site on special education from birth to 21 years of age. The website is very comprehensive and covers topics from staff and the organization to publications and products. This website will have information about both Part C early intervention services and Part B special education and related services, including preschool services. Child find for Part C of IDEA must be coordinated with Part B program's child find efforts to locate and identify young children.

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html>

Zero to Three: National center for Infants, Toddlers & Families - Zero To Three is a national non-profit charitable organization whose aim is to strengthen and support families, practitioners and communities to promote the healthy development of babies and toddlers. This site contains resources for parents and professionals.

<http://www.zerotothree.org>

Early Intervention Support - Website for families with resources and information to help support their child's development and growth. Descriptions of typical developmental milestones, information on specific diagnoses, and good explanations of your therapy options. Has "Ask a Therapist" feature.

<http://www.earlyinterventionsupport.com/default.aspx>

<u>ECI</u>	<u>PPCD</u>
<p>Ages: 0-3 Location: usually home or daycare All year Notes provided with each service Goals based on developmental milestones By DARS</p>	<p>Ages: 3 and up Location: usually school School year (limited summers) Notes provided as progress and report cards Goals based on education needs By TEA</p>

This material was collected and presented by Hand to Hold as part of September 7th, 2011's [Lunch and Learn](#)

