

Eligibility Categories

Introduction

North Carolina's eligibility definition was developed to encourage entry of all children into the Infant-Toddler Program, for whom early intervention services are likely to have the greatest benefit, including Indian infants and toddlers residing on a reservation geographically located in the state, children who are homeless and children who are wards of the state. The provision of such services at a very early age will enhance development and may preclude or diminish the need for services in later years.

To qualify for the Infant-Toddler Program in any eligibility category, there must be an identified condition(s) associated with developmental concern and an identified need for developmental, therapeutic, or educational intervention. This determination may be based on informed clinical opinion and, not necessarily, on specific test scores.

Eligibility Definition

The NC Infant-Toddler Program ensures that children, birth to three, shall be eligible for early intervention services under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), if the multidisciplinary team finds any one of the following criteria exists;

- A. Developmental Delay; or
- B. Established Condition

A. Developmental Delay

1. A child is eligible if he or she demonstrates a delay in one or more of the following developmental areas, as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures, and administered by qualified personnel:

- a) Cognitive
- b) Physical, including gross and fine motor function
- c) Communication (receptive and expressive language)
- d) Social or Emotional
- e) Adaptive

2. The specific delay must be:

- a) documented by scores of 2.0 standard deviations below the mean of the composite score (total test score) on standardized tests in at least one of the above areas of development;
or
- b) documented by a 30 percent (30%) delay on instruments which determine scores in months in at least one of the above areas of development;
- c) documented by scores of 1.5 standard deviations below the mean of the composite score (total test score) on standardized tests in at least two of the above areas of development;
or
- d) documented by a 25 percent (25%) delay on instruments which determine scores in months in at least two of the above areas of development.

2. Vision and hearing impairments are referenced in the Established Conditions eligibility category.

3. Informed Clinical Opinion:

- a) Informed clinical opinion must be used when conducting evaluations and assessments for any child.
- b) The Infant-Toddler Program must ensure that informed clinical opinion given by qualified personnel may be used as an independent basis to establish a child's eligibility even when instruments do not establish eligibility.
- c) In no event, may informed clinical opinion be used to negate the results of evaluation instruments used to establish eligibility.

B. Established Conditions

A child shall be eligible if he or she has a diagnosed physical or mental condition, which has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay. Such conditions include:

1. Congenital Anomaly/Genetic Disorders/Inborn Errors of Metabolism

Children diagnosed with one or more congenital abnormalities or genetic disorders with developmental implications. Some examples are Down Syndrome, Fragile X Syndrome, familial retardation syndromes, and fetal alcohol syndrome.

2. Congenital Infections

Children diagnosed with congenital infections with developmental implications. Some examples are toxoplasmosis, rubella, cytomegalovirus, and HIV.

3. Autism

Children diagnosed with autism or autism spectrum disorders.

4. Attachment Disorder

Children with a diagnosed attachment disorder.

5. Hearing Loss

Children diagnosed with unilateral or bilateral permanent hearing loss.

6. Visual Impairment

Children diagnosed with a visual impairment that is not correctable with treatment, surgery, glasses, or contact lenses.

7. Neurologic Disease/Central Nervous System Disorders

Children diagnosed with a disease or disorder known to affect the nervous system with developmental implications, such as Cerebral Palsy, Spina Bifida, Epilepsy, and Microcephaly.

8. Neonatal Conditions and Associated Complications

These are children diagnosed with one or more of the following neonatal diseases or disorders known to have developmental implications:

- a. Gestational age less than 27 weeks or birth weight less than 1000 grams;

- b. Neonatal encephalopathy with neurological abnormality persisting at discharge from the neonatal intensive care unit.
- c. Moderate to Severe Ventricular Enlargement at discharge from the neonatal intensive care unit or a ventriculoperitoneal shunt;
- d. Neonatal seizures, stroke, meningitis, encephalitis, porencephaly, or holoprosencephaly;
- e. Broncho Pulmonary Dysplasia requiring supplemental oxygen at discharge from the neonatal intensive care unit;
- f. Intrauterine Growth Retardation;
- g. Necrotizing enterocolitis requiring surgery;
- h. Abnormal neurological exam at discharge;
- i. Intraventricular hemorrhage III or IV; or
- j. Periventricular leukomalacia.