What is Early Intervention?

Early intervention is a family-centered program for infants and toddlers with special needs.

Early intervention connects these families to a broad spectrum of service providers to help children reach their maximum potential.

Early intervention services help nurture the growth and development of children, birth to three years old, and provide support to their families.

North Carolina’s early intervention program is called the Infant-Toddler Program.

Why Does Early Intervention Matter?

Research on early development shows that the first three years are the most important time for learning in a child’s life. Beginning early intervention services improves a child’s lifelong ability to develop and learn. Early intervention reaps immediate and long-term benefits for children and their families.

The ABCs of Early Intervention

- **A** - Early Intervention enhances a child’s development.
  
  *Children enrolled in the Infant-Toddler Program demonstrate improved social, learning, language and behavioral skills.*

- **B** - Families benefit, too.
  
  *Families report that early intervention services have helped them to know their rights, effectively communicate their children’s needs, and help their children develop and learn.*

- **C** - Early intervention is cost effective.
  
  *The cost of helping a child develop is less when intervention happens early, thus potentially preventing developmental problems that would require special services later in life.*

Did You Know That in 2008-09…?

- Census data showed 398,879 infants and toddlers (0-3 years of age) living in NC
- Early intervention services were delivered to 4.6% of NC’s population who are younger than three years old
- 17,606 infants and toddlers were enrolled in the Infant-Toddler Program
- Of the children served, 51% were White, 27% were Black, 18% were Hispanic, 63% were boys, 37% were girls
- 19,662 infants and toddlers were referred to the Infant-Toddler Program
- The average age of the child at time of referral to the Infant-Toddler Program was 16 months

Top 5 Referral Sources to the Infant-Toddler Program

- Physicians - 37%
- Parents/Caregivers - 14%
- Hospitals - 7%
- Local Public Health - 6%
- NICUs - 6%

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How Does the NC Infant-Toddler Program (ITP) Work?

The Children’s Developmental Services Agency (CDSA) is the local lead agency that administers, supervises and monitors local activities for the ITP. There are 18 CDSAs in North Carolina serving all 100 of the state’s counties.

Parents/caregivers, physicians and others can refer a child to the ITP if there are concerns about the child’s development.

Focus & Challenge

The ITP has four monitoring priorities and 13 indicators by which the state measures the effectiveness of the program.

The indicators are the cornerstones that ensure state and federal regulations are being met, and that infants, toddlers and their families are receiving high quality early intervention services. Data on the program’s performance in each of the 13 indicators is collected annually, and the results are collected in the Annual Performance Report (APR), available from your CDSA or at www.ncei.org.

There is an ongoing commitment to identify, locate and evaluate all infants and toddlers in NC who are in need of early intervention services.

All data, unless otherwise noted, reflects SFY 08-09. Data sources include reports from the NC State Center for Health Statistics, Early Intervention Branch databases, the Comprehensive Exceptional Children’s Accountability System (CECAS) and Heath Services Information Systems (HSIS).