

Appendix 2: Washington’s System of Services for Individuals With Autism Spectrum Disorder Ages Birth to Three

Early intervention services during the first years can make a significant difference in a child’s life. Additionally, early intervention may also help parents understand their child’s developmental growth. In Washington State the early learning program is referred to as the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP) and is associated with a federal law called the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) (2004), Part C, Early Intervention Services.

IDEA encourages states to improve early intervention services. This directive provides guidelines for states in establishing and providing services for families with infants and toddlers with disabilities. Additionally, through annual maintenance of effort funding by the Washington State Legislature and Governor, the state is eligible to continue to apply for the federal dollars. This Part C funding amounts to approximately \$8 million federal dollars to enhance services for eligible infants and toddlers. The state/federal partnership is essential in providing these services.

ITEIP is located within the Division of Developmental Disabilities in the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and works in collaboration with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Early Learning (DEL), and the Department of Services for the Blind (DSB), to maintain a statewide system of early intervention services for children.

The ITEIP system in each county is directed by the Local Lead Agency under the authority of DSHS-ITEIP Contracts. The local early intervention system is a collaborative program of child and family serving agencies including schools, health and human services, families, and other community providers and organizations. Each geographic area through coordination by the ITEIP Local Lead Agency must maintain a County Interagency Coordinating Council to assure coordinated, collaborative, and comprehensive services.

The program helps families with infants and toddlers connect with resources they need. The program provides service coordination and ongoing specialized services to families of eligible children (age birth to three) with disabilities and developmental delays. When a child is identified with a developmental delay, the necessary early intervention services are identified through family resources coordination. Implementation and funding of services for each child and family are delivered as defined on an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

The IFSP is developed by the child's family and a team of professionals and includes outcomes, services, and methods to assist parents/primary care givers to support the development of the child. All children birth to three who meet the ITEIP eligibility are entitled to early intervention services.

Under direction of DSHS as outlined in the federally approved state definitions, policies, and procedures, the ITEIP program will:

- ◆ Enhance the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities, to minimize their potential for developmental delay, and to recognize the significant brain development that occurs during a child's first three (3) years of life.
- ◆ Reduce the educational cost to our society, including our nation's schools, by minimizing the need for special education and related services after infants and toddlers with disabilities reach school age.
- ◆ Enhance the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their infants and toddlers with disabilities;
- ◆ Enhance the capacity of state and local agencies and service providers to identify, evaluate, and meet the needs of all children, particularly minority, low-income, inner city, and rural children, and infants and toddlers in foster care;
- ◆ Maximize the potential for individuals with disabilities to live independently in society.

The ITEIP program has a comprehensive web site located at www.dshs.wa.gov/iteip.