



Brief Explanation of Early Intervention Program Service Delivery Model for Families and Other Community Partners

Our program was developed based on a federal law called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C. This law provides regulations for how early intervention services are to be provided by states. The law requires that services be provided in families' natural environments, which are those places where families would be if the child did not have a delay or disability that qualified him or her for our program. These places might be a family's home, a child care program, or other places in the community where the family typically goes. The law also requires that families have access to a team of professionals representing multiple disciplines, such as education, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech-language pathology, and service coordination. The federal regulations and other guidance documents are also fairly specific about how we provide early intervention services and require us to work with children and families in ways that are proven to be effective by the latest research on child learning and child development. This means that early intervention teachers and therapists work closely with parents to help them and other important people in the child's life to support child learning and development as part of the family's everyday life activities, which is how all young children learn. This means that we use our skills and expertise as well as parents' knowledge to support children's abilities to be part of everyday life all throughout the day, not just when someone from early intervention is present.

We talk with families about how to use everyday activities like playing, dressing, eating, and going to the store for child learning and development because they give a lot of opportunities for the child to practice what he or she already knows and does and gives the child time to learn new skills. We also talk a lot about and figure out together what the child likes because children will focus on a person or activity longer if they are motivated, and then this gives the child more practice and learning opportunities.

Parents and other family members are always part of our visits. Since parents spend more time with their children than early intervention teachers or therapists can, we talk with parents and other care providers to find out what they are already doing that works to support child learning and development and then build on what is working currently and come up with new ideas if needed. Rather than just telling parents what early intervention providers think they should do, or doing something only to/or with the child, in our program, we want to find out what parents already know and are doing in order to develop better plans to help parents meet their priorities for their child and family. This does not mean that early intervention teachers and therapists do not share their ideas with parents. Our teachers and therapists usually have a lot of ideas and experience, but in our program we want to know your thoughts and ideas first because they may work better for the parents than anything we could suggest. So the way to we will work together involves asking questions; jointly thinking about what works or does not work and why; trying ideas with the child; teacher or therapists modeling with the child for the parent; sharing information; and jointly planning next steps.

All families in our program receive a team of professionals to support them. This team includes teachers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, and someone responsible for service coordination. Based on family priorities, family activities, and family interests, one member of the team is selected to be the primary service provider or primary coach. This is the person the family will see on a regular basis. Research on working with families of young children has shown that the more people that are involved in the family's life, the less helpful it is to the family and the child. Our program uses this type of an approach for working with families to make sure that parents receive consistent, unduplicated, timely, research-based, individualized, and comprehensive information and support. The primary service provider is the team member who supports the parent in helping the child to be part of everyday life routines and activities, which naturally helps children learn and develop across many developmental areas. If the primary service provider needs the expertise of another team member, then that team member and the primary service provider will visit the family together. Team members stay in close contact with one another and one way this happens is through regular team meetings in which all team members participate.

