



## Parent's Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is Early Intervention?

- Early Intervention provides supports and services to families with infants and toddlers from birth to three years who have medical conditions that are likely to result in a developmental delay or who have developmental delays. The name of the Louisiana early intervention system is *EarlySteps*. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the US Department of Education program for children with disabilities. Part C of IDEA provides the requirements to states to operate early intervention services for infants and toddlers birth through age 2 years and their families. EarlySteps is managed by the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) in the Department of Health and Hospitals.
- The intent of early intervention is to build upon the natural routines and supports of families and children within their communities and to support families to meet the health and developmental needs of their child. Integrating services into the naturally occurring activities and routines of the family promotes the generalization of skills for the child. The purpose of Early Intervention is to:
  - Enhance the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities
  - Minimize a child's potential for developmental delay
  - Minimize a child's need for special education after they reach school age
  - Enhance the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their infants and toddlers with disabilities.

### 2. What kind of early intervention services and supports are available?

The EarlySteps system is designed to support families regarding their child's development through:

- Assisting families in helping their child develop and learn
- Assisting families in understanding their rights in EarlySteps
- Assisting families in communicating their child's specific needs
- Determining a family's concerns, priorities and resources regarding their child's special needs.

The following services are provided by EarlySteps: Audiology, Speech-Language (including sign language and cues language services), Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Special Instruction, Assistive Technology, Support Coordination, Medical Services, Health Services, Nursing Services, Vision Services, Social Work Services, Psychological Services, Family Training, Nutrition Services, and Transportation.

### 3. What is the process for determining if my child is eligible for Early Intervention services?

The process simply starts with a referral to EarlySteps. Once your child is referred, we will conduct developmental screening with you to see if further evaluation is necessary. If so, then

health and developmental information will be collected about your child and an evaluation will be conducted with you and your child. The results of all the information collected and the evaluation are reviewed by the EarlySteps team, including you. Eligibility determination is a team decision based on all the information collected and the assessment(s) reviewed by the team.

**4. What happens next, if my child is eligible for Early Intervention Services?**

If your child is eligible for services, the intake coordinator will complete the Concerns, Priorities and Resources (CPR) assessment and you will select a Family Service Coordinator (FSC) from the service matrix. Then, an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) will be developed by the IFSP team, including you, based on the multidisciplinary evaluation and the assessment of your child and your CPR. Outcomes will be developed to meet identified needs. Based on the outcomes, you will select providers from the service matrix. The IFSP will be developed within 45 days of the referral to EarlySteps and services will start within 30 days of the development of the IFSP. The FSC working with you is responsible for working with you to guarantee the implementation of the IFSP. She is your first contact for questions and issues once the plan is developed.

**5. Why is it important for parents to complete the assessment of your Concerns, Priorities and Resources (CPR) interview?**

The family assessment is your opportunity to identify your strengths and needs regarding your child so that EarlySteps can assist you regarding your child's development. Using this process, your team can assist you in identifying outcomes that will best meet your needs within the routines important for your child and family.

**6. What is an IFSP?**

The IFSP is the plan that outlines the supports and services necessary to meet the identified needs of your child and family.

**7. What are my rights?**

Through IDEA, families are given guarantees and rights to protect their interests and those of your child. These rights include: written, prior notice in your native language or preferred mode of communication, consent for evaluation and services, confidentiality of information, examination of records, and a process to resolve disputes. A child also has the right to have a surrogate parent assigned in the event he is not able to be represented by a parent or guardian. There are also additional safeguards in place for your child and family that can be found in Chapter 2 of the EarlySteps practice manual located by clicking on the link on the website and scrolling down to the Practice Manual section. EarlySteps has a process for complaints which begins with a call to your regional OCCD or Human Services office.

**8. What are the responsibilities of families in the EarlySteps system?**

In order for you to receive the maximum benefits from early intervention, it is important for you to fully participate. You are the key decision maker and know the needs of your child and family best. You are your child's best advocate throughout his/her life. We ask that you

communicate with Early Intervention staff about your concerns and priorities and let them know honestly what is working for you and what is not. By participating as a team member, you can maximize your child's development and meet your family's needs regarding your child. We ask that you please notify your FSC and providers when there is a change in address or phone number; accept phone calls from your FSC and return calls to providers as soon as possible; work as a team member and follow through with activities, strategies and techniques; notify providers if unable to keep scheduled appointments and allow for time to reschedule appointments.

**9. What is the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC)?**

The Louisiana SICC is an independent agency that operates within the Governor's Office of Community Programs and is staffed by an Executive Director. The SICC works in collaboration with the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH), Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) in an advisory capacity to design and oversee the implementation of the early intervention system in Louisiana.

**10. What is the Regional Interagency Coordinating Council (RICC)**

The RICC is essential component of the Part C early intervention at the local level; The RICC is supported by the SICC and DHH as a way to bring collaboration, coordination, leadership, and stakeholder input to the local level; it includes family members of children with disabilities, as well as service providers, community leaders, and agency representatives.

**11. How can I be more involved?**

Parents can be more involved by participating in their Regional Interagency Coordinating Council Meetings (RICC) and the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC). Please contact your Community Outreach Specialist for additional information at:

<http://www.earlysteps.dhh.louisiana.gov>

**12. What is a Community Outreach Specialist (COS)?**

The Community Outreach Specialist is responsible for coordinating parent activities in her region and getting parents involved and participating in all levels of the system. Their roles are to identify and mentor parents for participation in the system as a parent representative, identify barriers to participation for parents in the system, collaborate on a regional level, inform the public about EarlySteps and the services available, identify any regional barriers which may prevent parents from participating, establish and maintaining ongoing relationships with various community agencies, participate at the RICC, and conduct focus groups or assist families with completing the Family surveys.

You can find the Community Outreach Specialist for your region at:

<http://www.earlysteps.dhh.louisiana.gov> and click on the link on the left side of the page

**13. What is Families Helping Families?**

Families Helping Families is a nonprofit agency that provides resources and support for individuals with disabilities and their families including education, information, referrals and

Family to Family Support. There are ten Families Helping Families Agencies in the state. To find the agency in your region, please go to: <http://www.fhfla.org>.

**14. If I have a question, whom can I contact?**

The Intake Service Coordinator or the Family Service Coordinator is the single point of contact responsible for helping you obtain the services and supports that you need.

**15. What is an EarlySteps Explanation of Benefits (EOB)?**

An EOB is a detailed description of the services that were billed by and paid to your EarlySteps providers; EarlySteps providers have up to 60 days to bill from the date a services is rendered. Therefore, the date of service and the actual day the provider billed for the service could reflect a difference of up to 60 days. The EOB will show the eligibility evaluation that was billed for your child, even if he was not found eligible for EarlySteps.

**16. Why is the EOB important to you?**

The EOB list key information such as the name of the provider, the actual date you received the service and the amount paid to your provider. This information is important because you can verify whether or not these services are occurring for your child.

**17. Why is my child who is receiving early intervention services screened for autism at 18 months and older?**

In early intervention, we know that children often times develop at their own pace, but we also know that there are certain developmental milestones that most children reach which is a measure of their social and emotional progress. Screening is used to help to identify children who are at risk for autism. Screening does not provide a diagnosis, but rather determines if there is a need for further diagnostic evaluation of the child. If a child is diagnosed as having autism, the Family Service Coordinator will assist you in finding the necessary supports and services.

**18. Why should I complete the Family Survey when my child is exiting EarlySteps?**

The Family Survey will ask each family about their perspective on their participation in the early intervention system. The survey will capture information in areas such as the system's efforts to create meaningful partnerships with them, the services which were provided to children and families, and the ways in which parents and families were involved in the early intervention process. The ultimate goal of the survey is to improve services to families regarding their child's development, to assist you in understanding your rights in the system, and to communicate your child's needs.