

## Information for Families When a Child is Referred for Early Intervention (EI)



First Connections is Arkansas' early intervention program under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C. First Connections is here to support you in helping your child increase his or her skills and capacity to be actively involved in the activities that matter to you and your family.

### What IS early intervention?

Early intervention is supports and services that help parents and other important adults in a child's life learn how to help a young child (birth to the third birthday) learn and develop new skills. Early intervention (EI) is designed to help you and the important adults in your child's life:

- Support your child's learning and skill development
- Support your child's active participation in family and community life because children learn by doing
- Understand and communicate how your child learns and develops and how to use your child's strengths to overcome an area or areas of need



### What happens after my child has been referred?

First Connections will attempt to contact the parent(s) by phone to answer the family's questions about early intervention, to learn about the family's concerns and their priorities for their child, and to explain next steps. If First Connections cannot reach a parent by phone, a letter is mailed. Inside the letter is a response enclosure that a parent can complete and send back.

For families interested participating in early intervention, a meeting will be scheduled at a time and place convenient to the family to get the process started. This meeting is called an "intake" meeting. Your early intervention program coordinator will meet with you and give you a copy of your rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). You will also be given a list of agencies that can conduct a developmental evaluation of your child. Your service coordinator will get your permission in writing (consent) for the program you selected to conduct the evaluation. The provider agency you choose will contact you to set up a time/place for the evaluation. You may be present for the evaluation and participate.

### What is the "developmental evaluation?"

The developmental evaluation measures your child's skills and needs in multiple areas: movement, social-emotional development, communication, self-help skills, and thinking/learning. The results of the evaluation will be discussed with you at another meeting, and you will be given a copy of the evaluation report. At this meeting your team (you and anyone you invite, the person or persons who conducted the evaluation, your First Connections program coordinator) will determine if your child meets program eligibility criteria. If your child is eligible for early intervention, your early intervention team will guide you through the next steps – making your child and family plan!

## **My child has been found eligible for early intervention. What's next?**

When your child is determined eligible for early intervention, you and your EI team will develop a written plan called the Individualized Family Service Plan (or, IFSP). The IFSP must be developed within forty-five (45) days from the date of your child's referral to early intervention.

The IFSP puts in writing your child's strengths and needs and your priorities and goals for your child's learning and skill development. The early intervention professionals on your team are experts in early learning and development, and you are the expert on your child and family. You know your child better than anyone else does, and you are your child's first and most important teacher. Your early intervention team is there to help you develop a plan (the IFSP) that meets your goals for your child's early learning and skill development.

You can prepare for the first IFSP meeting by thinking of what you would like for your child to be able to do and bring those ideas to the meeting. Remember that you can invite anyone you would like to participate to this meeting, so your child's classroom teacher may be a good person to have on your team because the classroom teacher knows what your child can do well in class as well as the things your child needs help with in class!

## **How are early intervention services selected?**

The IFSP team (that's you, your program coordinator, the evaluator, and anyone else you choose to invite) determines what services are needed to meet the functional goals on your child's plan (IFSP). As your child makes progress and as your goals for your child change, the services needed to reach those goals may change, too. That is why your IFSP will be reviewed with you quarterly (every 3 months).

## **Where will early intervention be provided?**

All young children learn by doing – by interacting with familiar adults and peers and by participating in life at home and in the community. As much as possible, early intervention is provided in the places and activities where infants and toddlers without delays or disabilities are found. For example, early intervention can take place in your home, at child care or Early Head Start, parks, libraries -- any place you and your child typically go.



## **What are the costs?**

First Connections provides screening, evaluation and assessment, service coordination and IFSP development at no cost to families. All eligible children receive early intervention supports and services needed to reach the functional goals on their plan (the IFSP) regardless of a family's ability to pay. Early intervention supports and services may be funded through the family's health insurance and/or Medicaid or, when no other pay source exists, through federal funds. Families are not charged for early intervention.

For more information about early intervention through First Connections, visit our Web site at:

<https://dhs.arkansas.gov/dds/firstconnectionsweb/#fc-home>

or contact a regional program coordinator at:

(phone)

(email)