

"The . . . Individual Family Service Plan [is a] legally mandated document developed by a multidisciplinary team assessment that specifies goals and services for each child eligible for . . . early intervention services. Pediatricians need to be knowledgeable of federal, state, and local requirements; establish linkages with early intervention . . . and collaborate with the team working with individual children."²

--American Academy of Pediatrics

First **C**onnections maintains a Toll Free family help and information line at **1-800-643-8258** which any family or citizen may access.

First **C**onnections staff is ready to assist callers requesting information and contacts recently referred families to offer assistance and an overview of the program.

Or -- visit our Web site at: <http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/ddds/Pages/FirstConnectionsProgram.aspx>

1. American Academy of Pediatrics. *Identifying Infants and Young Children with Developmental Disorders in the Medical Home: An Algorithm for Developmental Surveillance and Screening*. *Pediatrics*. vol 118, 1. 1 July 2006. <<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/118/1/405.full.html>>.
2. Committee on Children with Disabilities. *The Pediatrician's Role in Development and Implementation of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and/or an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)*. *Pediatrics*. vol 104, 1. 1 July 1999. <<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/104/1/124.full>>.

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Referral Guide for Pediatric Professionals

Referring an infant or toddler to early intervention in Arkansas

A positive beginning is critical for a child to reach his/her future potential. For infants/toddlers experiencing a developmental delay or who have a medically diagnosed



condition likely to result in a delay, receiving timely early intervention can improve the prospects and quality of life for both the child and the family. Well implemented programs can improve a child's future development and lessen the impact a developmental disorder has on the family, leading to greater independence, active participation in the community, and a more productive and fulfilling life.

First **C**onnections is the statewide system of early intervention in Arkansas as outlined under Part C of IDEA. The Division of Developmental Disabilities Services is designated by the state as the lead agency for this family-focused, community-based program that works with families on an individualized basis to assist in locating and coordinating services and assistance to enhance not only the child's abilities but those of the family to assist in their development.

Who is eligible for First Connections?

- Infants/toddlers (0-3) with a diagnosed physical or mental condition with high probability of developmental delay.
- Infants/toddlers whose multidisciplinary evaluations identify a significant delay (25% or more of chronological age) in one or more areas of development:

-  Adaptive
-  Cognitive
-  Communicative
-  Physical
-  Social and Emotional

*"Early identification of developmental disorders is critical to the well-being of children and . . . is an integral function of the primary care medical home and an appropriate responsibility of all pediatric health care professionals."*¹

— American Academy of Pediatrics

What services are provided?

For eligible infants/toddlers, a team of *professionals* works with the family to develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) based on assessment and evaluation results and identified needs. The IFSP is a plan of care outlining goals and the supports and services required to promote functional skills, development, and learning. Primary care physicians are urged to collaborate in the development of the IFSP and are sent a copy for review and the required physician signature.

Services are designed to enhance the capacity of families to meet their children's developmental needs. *The seventeen early intervention services outlined under Part C are:*

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| Speech Therapy | Assistive Technology |
| Physical Therapy | Occupational Therapy |
| Health /Nursing Services | Service Coordination |
| Medical Diagnostic Services | Special Instruction |
| Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation | Transportation |
| Vision Services | Audiological Services |
| Sign/Cued Language | Psychological Services |
| Social Work Services | Nutritional Services |
| Family Training/Home Visits/Counseling | |

Once eligibility has been established, a prescription is required for therapy.

IDEA / Part C Relevant Regs:

34 CFR §303.303(a)(2)(i)
 "Once a primary referral source, has identified that a child should be referred for EI, referral must be made as soon as possible, but in no case more than 7 days after identification."

34 CFR §303.310
 "within 45 days after the . . . referral of a child, the screening (if applicable), initial evaluation, initial assessments (of the child and family), and the initial IFSP meeting for that child must be completed (45-day timeline).

34 CFR §303.167(c)
 "(1) . . . services are provided in natural environments; and (2) . . . services for any infant/toddler occurs in a setting other than a natural environment only if early intervention cannot be achieved satisfactorily for the infant or toddler in a natural environment."

34 CFR §303.344(d)(ii)
 Each IFSP must include a statement of "the natural environments. . . in which early intervention services will be provided, and a justification of the extent, if any, to which the services will not be provided in a natural environment;" as well as a timeframe and plan for transitioning back into a community setting.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IDEA / Part C

Early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities from birth to age 3, and for their families.

Is an established diagnosis required for referral?

No. IDEA guidelines require states to provide services to children having "physical or mental conditions [with] a high probability of resulting in developmental delay" (§632(5)(A)(ii)). Granting automatic eligibility to children with established risk conditions allows for initiation of EI services *before* a delay can be diagnosed. This may prevent or ameliorate the delay and/or its effects on long-term mental and physical health.

How do I refer?

The First Connections Central Intake Unit (CIU) accepts all referrals to ensure they are processed quickly and efficiently. CIU staff contacts the family to explain the program and to determine needs, then routes the referral to the appropriate regional/area service coordinator as warranted.

1-800-643-8258
501-682-8890 (fax)

Should be accompanied by a prescription for evaluation/s.