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

First Connections 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/ddsd/Pages/FirstConnectionsProgram.aspx


Who is eligible for First Connections?

- Infants/toddlers (0-3) with a diagnosed physical or mental condition with a 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

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

IDEA / Part C Relevant Regs:

34 CFR §303.303(a)(2)(i)
“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.”

— American Academy of Pediatrics

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)(i)). 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)