FACT SHEET

SECTION ON

PEDIATRICS

AMERICAN PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

Early Intervention Physical Therapy: IDEA Part C

Physical Therapy and IDEA

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 (Public Law 108-446) is a federal law that supports the provision of public education for all children regardless of the nature or severity of their disability. Part C of IDEA is an optional federal program that supports early intervention for infants and toddlers (birth up to 3 years). All states currently are participating in Part C.

IDEA interacts with other legislative mandates, such as the Americans With Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals With Disabilities Act.

IDEA Implementation

- Implementation of IDEA Part C is the responsibility of each state through a lead agency appointed from education, health, human services, public health, or another related state agency.
- Part C requires that multiple agencies work together and collaborate on meeting the needs of infants and toddlers and their families in their states and communities.
- Eligible children have a developmental delay or a medical diagnosis that has a high probability of a developmental delay.
- States define the eligibility criteria for developmental delay by addressing the child's development in cognition, physical, communication, social/emotional, and adaptive (self-help) domains or areas.
- Eligible infants and toddlers are entitled to early intervention services in natural environments where children live, learn, and play.
- Early intervention services are provided, as necessary, to meet the developmental needs of the child and needs of the child's family related to the family's ability to enhance the child's development.

Physical Therapy: An Early Intervention Service

- Physical therapy is one of the early intervention services under Part C of IDEA.
- Physical therapy may be the only early intervention service a child needs, or it may be part of a coordinated, multidisciplinary program.
- Physical therapy is provided as part of the child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) through a family-centered care philosophy.
- Physical therapy can support families in promoting their children's development, learning, and participation in family and community life.
- Physical therapists use their knowledge and skills specifically related to motor and self-care function, assistive technology, and medical/health care science to provide a unique contribution to the IFSP team.
- Physical therapists provide service by collaborating with the team, exchanging information with the family, and integrating interventions into everyday routines, activities, and locations.

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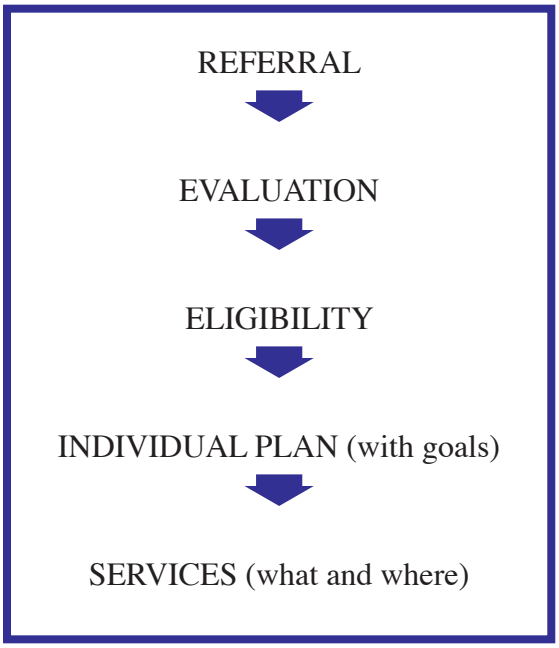
IDEA Process and the IFSP

- Parents are an integral part of the IDEA process, including the development of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), and must be notified of their rights, including the right to due process.
- The IFSP is a process of planning, decision-making, and implementation of early intervention services for children and their families.
- The team develops outcomes, objectives, and strategies that will guide the provision of early intervention services in natural environments.
- The team determines the amount (frequency and duration) and location of early intervention services, including physical therapy, to support the child's and family's outcomes and objectives.
- Service coordination is provided to families through the IFSP process (see Figure below).

Figure. The IFSP Process



Funding for Physical Therapy

- Under IDEA, early intervention Child Find, evaluation and assessment, service coordination and development of the IFSP must be provided free of charge. Early intervention services are free except when federal or state law provides for a system of payments by families, including a schedule of sliding fees.
- Local agencies may access other funding sources, such as the state's Medicaid program, with parental consent.
- The inability of parents to pay or utilize personal insurance must never prevent the delivery of Part C services.
- Evaluation, assessment, and service coordination must always be provided free of charge.
- Additional rules and requirements pertaining to funding may be determined by the state.

Licensure and Practice

- Physical therapists are graduates of CAPTE-accredited physical therapy degree programs.
- Each state has laws governing the licensure and practice of physical therapy.
- State agencies also may require additional certification or expertise for employees working with young children.
- Physical therapists can be employed by a Part C lead agency or be hired by a contract with an outside agency or private practice.
- In states that do not have direct access laws, physical therapists will be required to obtain a prescription from the child's physician prior to the evaluation and/or intervention.

IDEA Resources

PTs working in early intervention must be aware of many legislative and regulatory provisions related to IDEA and have a strong knowledge base in early childhood development. There are multiple resources for additional information on IDEA. The Section on Pediatrics recommends the following resources and Web sites:

- McEwen I. *Providing Physical Therapy Services Under Parts B and C of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. Alexandria, VA: Section on Pediatrics, American Physical Therapy Association; 2000.
- Natural Environments Fact Sheet. Section on Pediatrics, APTA: **http://www.pediatricapta.org/consumer-patient-information/resources.cfm**.

- Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services:
  http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/index.html
- The Division for Early Childhood:
  http://www.dec-sped.org/
- National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center:
  http://www.nectac.org/

For More Information:

If you have additional questions, would like to order additional copies of this fact sheet, or would like to join the Section on Pediatrics, please contact the Executive Office of the Section on Pediatrics of the American Physical Therapy Association at: APTA Section on Pediatrics, 1111 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314, **pediatrics@apta.org**, **www.pediatricapta.org**.

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