



A Vital Message about Alabama's Early Intervention System

Congress established the Early Intervention (EI) program in 1986, as part of The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C, in recognition of "an urgent and substantial need" to: enhance the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities; reduce educational costs by minimizing the need for special education through EI; minimize the likelihood of institutionalization, and maximize independent living; and, enhance the capacity of families to meet their child's needs.

Alabama's EI System is committed to providing quality services for eligible children, birth to three, and their families. The focus of EI is to train, equip and support parents/caregivers in being the first and best teachers for their child.

Eight Core Values of Alabama's Early Intervention System (AEIS)



- **Family Centered**

Services and supports are aimed at helping your family support and care for your child. Research indicates that a child's most effective teachers are those with whom they have a nurturing relationship and with whom they spend the most time, such as his or her mother, father, grandparent, childcare provider or primary caregiver. How these individuals interact with your child while feeding, diapering, playing, and cuddling will have the greatest impact on how your child develops and learns.

- **Developmentally Appropriate**

A team of professionals will assist you with understanding typical development and how your child is likely to develop based on factors which may include a medical diagnosis or delay. Services and home activities are designed to support your child's development. Your EI team will assist your family with the functional and developmental needs of your child and family "today".

- **Individualized**

If your child is eligible for services, your Service Coordinator will assist you and your family in developing an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), which will include individualized outcomes based on needs and your priorities. From this plan, you and your Service Coordinator will identify a team of professionals, other family members, caregivers, and/or friends to help in reaching the outcomes included in the IFSP. This plan can and should change as your child grows and develops and is based on your child's progress toward meeting these outcomes.

- **Provided in natural environment**

EI services are provided in a location where your child and family typically would be: home, childcare, playgrounds, etc. Natural environments also include the daily activities and routines of your family.

- **Trains/Equips the Parent/Caregiver**

AEIS is a program that supports and trains families and caregivers. EI will aid and support your family while teaching you skills to meet your child's developmental needs. With the support of your team of professionals, together we will work to carry out these activities on a daily basis so that your child and your family will meet your outcomes.

- **Collaborative**

Your EI team will work closely with each other as well as with you and your child to reach outcomes. The team can also work with other service providers which might include your child's physician(s), therapists from other agencies, childcare providers, community partners, and other specialists. If you or your physician feel more services are needed which are determined to be outside the scope of EI, your Service Coordinator will assist you in identifying resources that might supplement EI services, using either your public or private insurance.

- **Routines-Based**

Routines based intervention provides assistance with routines identified by a family that are considered a concern/priority. Routines (or times of the day) are activities that happen naturally. They are how families organize themselves to get things done, spend time together and have fun. Every family has its own unique routines or times of the day. They help family members know who should do what, when, in what order, and how often.

- **Evidence-Based Practices**

Evidence-based practice in the field of early childhood is the process that pulls together the best available research, knowledge from professional experts, and data and input from children and their caregivers, to identify and provide services, evaluated and proven to achieve positive outcomes for children and families.

Early Intervention is...	Early Intervention is not...
Provided from birth to three years of age	Provided to serve children after their third birthday
Eligibility is based on 25% or greater delay in one of the five developmental areas, or a qualifying diagnosis	Therapeutic intervention provided for medical conditions that do not lead to a delay
Parent/caregiver training	A clinical therapy program
Provided in natural environment (i.e. home, daycare)	Provided in a center-based segregated environment
Individualized based on the specific needs of each child and family	Based solely on diagnosis or delay
Outcomes are family driven and based on family routines	Goals are medically based and set by providers
Frequencies are determined by the IFSP team	Frequencies are set by a physician or therapist
No cost to the family, use of public/private insurance or public benefits is voluntary	Families are responsible for out-of-pocket expenses
Collaborative with the medical community	The only service a child may need

Many professional groups and organizations support the delivery of EI services and include EI in their standards. The links below demonstrate each organization’s support of EI.

www.aota.org – American Occupational Therapy Association

www.asha.org – American Speech, Language, Hearing Association

www.apta.org – American Physical Therapy Association

www.cec.sped.org – Council for Exceptional Children, particularly the Division of Early Childhood

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/104/1/124> - Article on the role of the pediatrician in EI

<http://www.medicalhomeinfo.org/health/EI.html> - American Academy of Pediatrics web page on EI

