



COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT NEW JERSEY EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEM EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT

DO ALL CHILDREN DEVELOP AT THE SAME RATE?

It is important to keep in mind that children develop at different rates. Each new stage of development brings challenges for your infant/toddler. Some variations in child development are typical and to be expected. ***As your child grows and develops, there may be periods of rapid change, peaks and valleys, and also periods of little change.*** Some of the concerns you have about your child may reflect the normal differences in child development that children will independently resolve with time.

However, if your child's development is not progressing or if your child appears to be losing previously acquired skills, an early intervention evaluation/assessment may be the first step for you to know more about your child's developmental needs and areas of strength.

We know it may be stressful to think that your child may be having any difficulties in their development. However, children sometimes need help to develop their abilities. Early intervention leads to a greater appreciation of your child's strengths and a better understanding of your child's abilities and special needs. Through early intervention evaluation/assessment and services, families learn about their child's development and receive support to help their child develop to his/her fullest potential.

PREPARING FOR YOUR CHILD'S EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT APPOINTMENT

- Since you know your child best, please share any information that you feel could be helpful to the members of the early intervention evaluation/assessment team. If you have any medical reports, please make them available for review and discussion with you.
- You are welcome to invite additional supportive people to join you for the evaluation/assessment, such as grandparents, other relatives, child care providers, friends, etc. If possible, please let us know ahead of time if someone will be joining us.
- We recommend that everyone wear comfortable clothing, since part of the evaluation/assessment may be spent interacting with your child in play activities, most likely on the floor.
- You may want to have things available to make your child comfortable during the evaluation/assessment such as a favorite toy, bottle or snack.
- The evaluation/assessment will take approximately one and half to two hours. It would be most helpful for you to prepare for the visit by having the child awake, fed and diapered.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING MY CHILD'S EARLY INTERVENTION EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT?

The service coordinator who you talked with will share the information you provided with the **early intervention evaluation team**. Generally, two practitioners will complete the evaluation/assessment for your child including speech therapists, physical therapists, social workers,

occupational therapists, child development specialists, special educators, nurses and other practitioners—who have the expertise to best evaluate/assess your child.

The evaluation team members will come to your home, childcare center, or other places where your child typically spends the day, to evaluate/assess your child. Since you are a valuable source of information about your child and an important participant in the evaluation/assessment process you must be present during the evaluation/assessment.

The evaluators will talk with you about the information that you have already provided to the service coordinator and evaluate your child in each of the major areas of infant/toddler development. At the end of the evaluation/assessment, the evaluators will discuss your child's eligibility and current functioning with you including skills that your child has achieved or has emerging. The evaluators may also give you suggestions on things you can be doing with your child.

WHAT WILL AN EARLY INTERVENTION EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT TELL ME ABOUT MY CHILD?

During an evaluation/assessment, the early intervention evaluators will **gather information** about your child to answer specific questions about your child's development. An early intervention evaluation/assessment will tell us a lot of information about your child's development.

An early intervention evaluation/assessment will look at many areas of a child's development including:

- ◆ **Physical**
 - Gross Motor Skills** - Large body movements such as crawling, walking and jumping.
 - Fine Motor Skills** – Small body movements such as using one's hands to hold a rattle or spoon, or doing a puzzle.
 - Sensory** – Receiving and using information through touch, hearing, and sight.
- ◆ **Communication, Speech, and Language** - Understanding what is said; following directions; making needs known and using sounds, words and phrases.
- ◆ **Social and Emotional Development** -Interaction with other children, adults, and the environment.
- ◆ **Cognitive** – Thinking and learning.
- ◆ **Adaptive, self-help skills** – Ability to perform daily living skills appropriate to the child's age such as feeding themselves.

The early intervention evaluation/assessment gives a picture of your child's developmental functioning at a **point in time**. It is important to remember that the evaluation/assessment should be viewed as a **snapshot** of your child's **current** areas of strength and possible developmental needs. At the end of the evaluation/assessment, the evaluators will write a report and discuss with you your child's eligibility and current areas of strength and possible developmental needs.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES?

In New Jersey, infants and toddlers are eligible for early intervention services if they are under 3 years of age and meet the following criteria:

- ◆ Developmental delay of at least 25% in two or more areas of development



- ◆ Developmental delay of at least 33% in only one area of development
- ◆ Medically diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay (for example, Down syndrome, Autism, Cerebral Palsy, etc.)

IF MY CHILD IS FOUND ELIGIBLE FOR EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES, WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?

If you choose to continue with the NJEIS, an initial meeting to develop an **Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)** will be held with you and anyone else you choose to discuss your child's areas of strength, potential needs and specific recommendations. The service coordinator and evaluators will work with you to develop the IFSP. The IFSP is a written plan describing your child's current level of development and your family's concerns, priorities and resources.

The IFSP will also identify the supports and services that will help your family meet the needs of your child. The specific early intervention services that are needed to help your child; including how and when your child will receive the services. Information will also be given to you about other community, medical and support services that may be available for your child and family.

In preparation for the IFSP meeting you may want to:

- ◆ Prepare your questions and ideas about your child's and family's needs.
- ◆ Review any material the service coordinator has sent you.
- ◆ Familiarize yourself with the written evaluation/assessment summary of your child's development.
- ◆ Think about both short and long term goals that you have for your child and family.
- ◆ Review the family cost participation information provided by your service coordinator.

