

An Early Education Provider's Guide to Early Intervention Services in Pennsylvania



Office of Child Development and Early Learning



Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare



Partnerships with Families

Caring for and educating young children is exciting and challenging at the same time. As an early education provider you work in partnership with families to offer consistent, loving care for young children. You are one of a child's earliest and most important teachers. You are one of his or her earliest playmates and friends. The way a child views his or her world is influenced by your voice, touch, eyes, and smile.

Some children may need the extra help and support that can be offered through early intervention services. This brochure will describe how the early intervention system works and how you can help young children and their families get the help they need.



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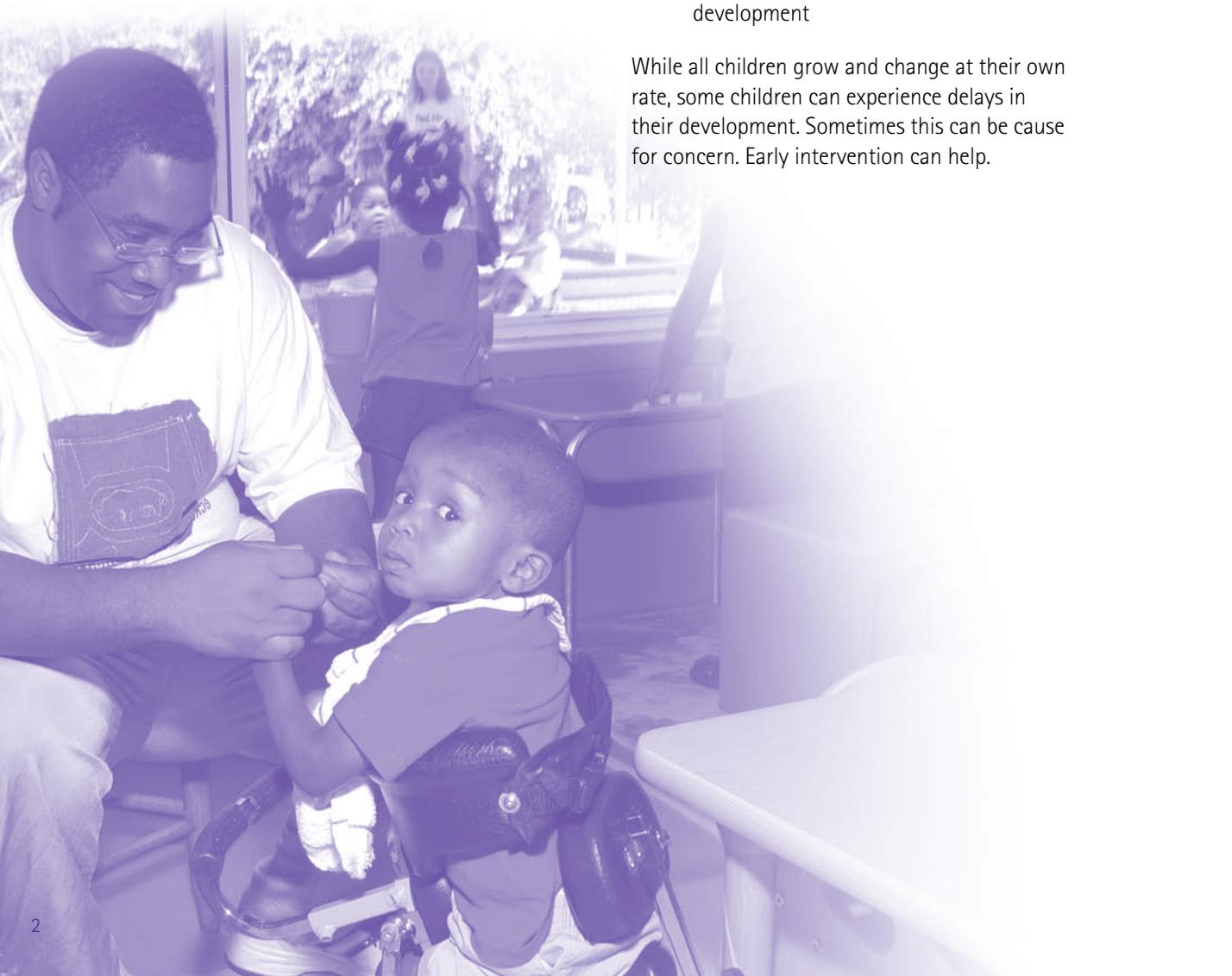
Welcome

When you think of a child and how he or she is growing, you notice things like how soon he or she smiles, sits up, rolls over, or how well he or she walks, talks, holds a spoon, and feeds himself or herself. Children learn naturally during this time, by doing, by watching you and other children, and by being taught how to do different things. Because you know the children in your care so well, you might notice that one of them is growing or developing differently than other children of the same age. What you are

noticing are changes in different developmental areas. The five primary developmental areas are:

- Ability to move, see, and hear—physical development
- Ability to talk, understand, and express needs—language and speech development
- Ability to relate to others—social and emotional development
- Ability to eat, dress, and take care of themselves—self help (or adaptive development)
- Ability to think and learn—cognitive development

While all children grow and change at their own rate, some children can experience delays in their development. Sometimes this can be cause for concern. Early intervention can help.



What if I have questions about a child's development?

Talking about a child's growth and development should be a common occurrence between an early education provider and the family. You should be meeting periodically with parents to share information about their child's progress and participation in your program. If you have questions about a child's growth and development, it is best to discuss your concerns with the child's family. This may be a difficult conference. Some ideas to make the conference more comfortable for both you and the family are:

- Set a special meeting time with the family. Don't try to fit it into a hectic pickup or drop-off time. Hold the meeting in an area that is private and comfortable.
- Recognize that this may be a difficult and emotional conference for the family. Be prepared for a range of emotional responses. Take an active listening role and respect the family's feelings.
- Ask the parents to describe their perceptions of their child's development. Often families will have seen some of the same issues and have some of the same concerns.
- Document your concerns by collecting samples of the child's recent work, showing samples of observations that have occurred over a period of time, and by listing the modifications that you have made to your program to meet the child's needs.
- Do NOT try to diagnose the problem or label the child. This is not your role and should only occur after a comprehensive assessment.
- Be prepared with referral information. Provide the family with information about early intervention services and how to access them. Help to make the referral call if needed.



What is Early Intervention?

Being an early education provider can be especially challenging when you are providing care to a child with, or at risk for, developmental delays. Early intervention in Pennsylvania is services and supports designed to help families enhance their child's development. Early intervention builds upon the natural learning occurring in those first few years. It is a process that promotes collaboration among parents, early education providers, early intervention providers, and others who are involved with the child.

With your help, early intervention supports and services can enhance the development of the child in your care by...

- Answering the family's and your questions about the child's development;
- Providing you with ideas about the ways you can support and accommodate the child;

- Assisting you to interact with the child through daily routines and activities in the child care program;
- Improving the child's developmental and educational growth;
- Helping children become more independent;
- Preventing the need for more intervention in the future; and
- Helping communities become more aware of the gifts and abilities of all its children.

Early intervention services can include, among others, information on how children develop, early childhood education, therapies which help a child to move his or her body or communicate, information designed to help a family enhance their child's growing and learning, and ideas for how an early education provider can help the child at the program.

Early intervention services and supports are provided in a family centered way. **Family centered** means that the child's services and/ or supports are based upon the strengths, concerns, priorities, and resources as identified by the child's family. Services and supports are designed to respect the family's concerns, interests, and values.



Core Principles of Pennsylvania's Model of Early Intervention

Early intervention:

- provides supports and services to infants/toddlers and young children with disabilities and their caregivers so that they may help children grow and develop;
- provides individualized supports and services to infants/toddlers and young children with disabilities and their families;
- embeds supports and services within learning opportunities that exist in the child's typical routines and within the home and community activities and/or early education programs;
- builds on existing supports and services in the family, community, and early education resources;
- provides coordinated, flexible, early intervention supports and services through personnel working collaboratively with the family and each other;
- provides supports and services focused on the family and child's transition between and among early education programs.

For a copy of *Pennsylvania's Approach to the Delivery of Early Intervention Services*, go to www.pattan.net

How can families access Early Intervention Services?

Families should contact their local early intervention program by calling the CONNECT Helpline at 800-692-7288. Families should request a copy of the Early Intervention

brochure, which includes useful information for families about early intervention. The brochure is also available in Spanish.

The first step in accessing early intervention services is to determine if the child is eligible.

Infants and Toddlers

(Birth to three years of age)

The first step in the process is to gather preliminary information for the evaluation. This information will help determine who the team members should be and the appropriate focus for the evaluation. The evaluation will only occur with the permission of the family.

Preschoolers

(Three years to age of beginners)*

The first step in the process is screening to determine if a more extensive assessment needs to be completed. If the family continues to have concerns regarding the child's development after this initial screening, the family has the right to request a full evaluation. Both the screening and evaluation will occur only with the permission of the family.

* Age of entrance into first grade

What can parents expect at the MDE?

The Multidisciplinary Evaluation (MDE) is a process for looking at all of the child's areas of development as well as any concerns that were indicated by the preliminary information gathered. Your participation is very important as a member of the team for the evaluation.

Ask the family if you can be included as a member of the assessment team. Plan ahead for the assessment by being ready to share information about the child's daily activities, likes and dislikes, abilities, skills, and needs.

Who is eligible for Early Intervention Services (Infants and Toddlers)?

Following the assessment process, the team determines if the child is eligible for early intervention services. Eligibility is determined by the following definitions.

Infants and Toddlers (birth to three years of age) who have:

- A significant delay in one or more areas of development;
OR
- A specialist's determination that there is a delay even though it doesn't show up on the assessments (called informed clinical opinion);
OR
- Known physical or mental conditions, which have a high probability for developmental delays.

Infants and toddlers who are not eligible for early intervention services may still be eligible for tracking services. **Infants and toddlers eligible for tracking are:**

- Under three and one half (3 1/2) pounds birth weight;
OR
- Cared for in neonatal intensive care units;
OR
- Born to chemically dependent mothers;
OR
- Seriously abused or neglected;
OR
- Confirmed to have dangerous levels of lead poisoning.

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) is responsible for administering the Commonwealth's Early Intervention Program for eligible infants, toddlers, and preschoolers and their families. At a local level, the

County Mental Health/Mental Retardation (MH/MR) Programs administer the early intervention programs for eligible infants and toddlers up to three years of age and their families.

Who is eligible for Early Intervention Services (Preschoolers)?

Following the assessment process, the team determines if the child is eligible for early intervention services. Eligibility is determined by the following definitions.

Preschoolers (three years of age to age of beginners*) who have:

- A significant delay in one or more areas of development compared to other children of his/her age;
OR
- Any of the following physical or mental disabilities: autism/pervasive developmental disorder, serious emotional disturbance, neurological impairment, deafness/hard of hearing, specific learning disability, mental retardation, multiple handicaps, other mental impairment, physical disability, speech impairment or blindness/visual impairment,
AND
- Are in need of special education and related services.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), through the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, contracts with local entities (intermediate units, school districts and others) for programs and services for eligible children from age three to the age of beginners*. These

local entities are referred to as MAWAs, because they have Mutually Agreed Upon Written Arrangements with the state. At the local level, responsibility for early intervention programs and services moves to the MAWA when the child turns three years of age.

How is the Plan for Early Intervention Services developed?

A plan is developed for each child who is eligible for early intervention services. The parent, the early education provider (at the parent's request) and other team members develop a written plan detailing the early intervention services or supports that the child and family receive.

The plan for children between birth to three years of age is called the **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)**. In developing the IFSP, the family helps the team determine how early intervention services will assist their child. It is the family's opportunity to share with others how much help they want and in what form they would like it to occur. The IFSP describes how early intervention services will help the child during typical routines, including early education activities.

The **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** is the name of the plan used to determine the

early intervention supports and services that are needed for children from three to the start of school. The IEP is based upon the identified needs of the child and must provide services in the setting(s) that meets his or her needs.

The IFSP/IEP include information on the child's strengths and needs related to his or her development, the family's concerns, and the child's strengths and needs identified in recent evaluations. Among other information, the IFSP/IEP must include a statement of the services to be provided and the setting(s) where the services will occur.

Ask the family for a copy of the IFSP/IEP so that you can support the child's development and learning within the early education program.

* Age of entrance into first grade

Who develops the IFSP/IEP?

The family, along with other team members, decides who should be on the team and who should help write the IFSP/IEP. The best IFSP/IEP will reflect the active involvement and planning of all team members. Encourage the family to include you as a member of the team. Help the family to see all the valuable information you can bring to the IFSP/IEP process. As the child's caregiver and educator, you have valuable insight into the child's strengths and have important information on the environment in which the child spends a great deal of time.

You can help develop the IFSP/IEP:

- By identifying the child's unique qualities and strengths. Using this information you can begin to build a framework on which you can provide him or her with the best opportunities for learning.
- By reviewing the activities that occur in a typical day. Identify the activities in which the child has difficulties participating and those activities that work well.
- By identifying what the child really enjoys doing. Playing with water or sand? Sitting for long periods of time? Building blocks? Listening to music? How can you build on those skills to help other areas of development?
- By identifying the special needs the child has within the early education setting. Think about what the child might need to reach his or her full potential. Adaptive equipment? Special techniques for feeding or self help skills?
- By working with the family and early intervention staff in developing the IFSP/IEP and in determining the types of services that might be offered at your early education program.

Where are the services delivered?

Services must be delivered in settings that are consistent with the needs of the child and family. Considerations must be made to reflect the child's best place for learning. This may include services within the early education or other community settings. Whatever the setting, the IFSP/IEP must be based upon the strengths and needs of the child.

When deciding how the IFSP/IEP are to be implemented:

- Options must be carefully considered.
- Services should be delivered in settings that meet the needs of the child and family.
- For children birth to three, services should be provided to the extent appropriate in the types of settings in which infants and toddlers without disabilities would participate (**Natural Environments**).
- Children age three and older must be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with children who are not disabled (**Least Restrictive Environment**).
- The length and frequency of early intervention services are based on individual needs as identified by the IFSP/IEP team.

How does the child move from the Infant/Toddler to the Preschool Program?

Transitions occur in the lives of families all the time and in many different ways. Families may change jobs or move to a new home. Children may join or leave your early education program. While receiving early intervention services, the child in your care and his/her family may experience transitions too.

Planning for a transition allows for a smooth transfer from one service to another.

Transition in early intervention services means movement from one program to another, such as:

- From the home to an early education program;
- From an infant or toddler at-home early intervention service to a preschool program;
- From a toddler playgroup to a preschool program; or
- From a preschool program to kindergarten or 1st grade.

Decisions regarding the child's services and family supports are made with the family's permission. You may be able to assist the family and other team members because you know the child well. Ask the parent if you can be involved. Planning meetings will take place in the year prior to the child's third birthday to discuss options and the transition process. No change should be made in the IFSP without the family's consent and the involvement of the sending and receiving agencies. These decisions are part of the team process.

When children turn three years of age, responsibility for funding early intervention services changes from the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. However, the Office of Child Development and Early Learning has responsibility for early intervention birth to age five. This transition on the third birthday may involve only a change in who pays for the child's early intervention services and not necessarily a change in program, services, or placement. A plan for transition is included in the IFSP.

During the year before the child is eligible for kindergarten or 1st grade, the early intervention program will hold a transition meeting to discuss options for the child. This transition meeting must occur before the end of February. Kindergarten age and school age children are the responsibility of the local school district of residence. Ask the family if you might be part of the team discussing the transition to kindergarten or 1st grade. Your knowledge of the child's progress and development is important.



Where to go for more information

CONNECT (Information Service for Early Intervention)

Center for Schools and Communities
275 Grandview Avenue, Suite 200
Camp Hill, PA 17011
800-692-7288 (for TTY,
dial 711 for Relay Service)

CONNECT assists families and professionals in locating state, local, and national resources and information for children birth through age five; provides referrals to Early Intervention Services.

Early Childhood Education Linkage System (ECELS)

Rose Tree Corporate Center II
1400 North Providence Road, Suite 3004
Media, PA 19603

www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org

The Early Childhood Education Linkage System (ECELS)/Healthy Child Care PA is a statewide program of the PA Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics. ECELS provides health and safety professional development and technical assistance to early learning practitioners in Pennsylvania. ECELS links early learning practitioners with health professionals that provide Child Care Health Consultation. ECELS offers a wide selection of self-learning modules that address children with special health care needs.

Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania (DRN)

www.drnpa.org

DRN is a statewide, nonprofit corporation designated as the federally-mandated organization to advance and protect the civil rights of adults and children with disabilities. DRN works with people with disabilities and their families to ensure their rights to live in their communities with the services they need, to receive a full and inclusive education, to live free of discrimination, abuse and neglect, and to have control and self-determination over their services.

Harrisburg Office

1414 N. Cameron St., Suite C
Harrisburg, PA 17103
800-692-7443 (Voice)
877-375-7139 (TDD)
717-236-8110 (Voice)

Philadelphia Office

The Philadelphia Building
1315 Walnut Street, Suite 400
Philadelphia, PA 19107-4798
215-238-8070 (Voice)
215-789-2498 (TDD)
215-772-3126 (Fax)

Pittsburgh Office

429 4th Avenue, Suite 1901
Pittsburgh, PA 15219-1505
412-391-5225 (Voice)
412-467-8940 (TDD)
412-391-4496 (Fax)

Wexford Office

8500 Brooktree Road, Suite 100
Wexford, PA 15090
800-276-0928 (Voice)
724-934-1344 (Fax)

Hispanos Unidos para Niños Excepcionales (HUNE) (Hispanics United for Exceptional Children)

202 West Cecil B. Moore Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19122
215-425-6203 (Voice)
215-425-6204 (Fax)
www.huneine.org

HUNE is a not for profit organization established in 1998 to provide free bilingual English and Spanish training, technical assistance and individual assistance to parents of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and to professionals who work with children. This assistance helps parents to participate more effectively with professionals in meeting the educational needs of children and youth with disabilities. HUNE works to improve educational outcomes for children and youth with all disabilities (emotional, learning, mental, and physical) from 0-21 years of age.

Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership (PEAL) Center

1119 Penn Avenue, Suite 400
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
412-281-4404 (Voice)
412-281-4409 (TTY)
412-281-4408 (Fax)
886-950-1040 (Toll Free)
www.pealcenter.org

The PEAL Center serves Western and Central Pennsylvania. The PEAL Center provides training and information for parents and friends of children with disabilities, educators, health care and community service providers, and advocates. They offer information on helpful resources, other helpful organizations, as well as upcoming workshops, trainings, and other events.

Parent Education Network (PEN)

2107 Industrial Highway
York, PA 17402
717-600-0100 (V/TTY)
800-522-5827 (V/TTY)
www.parentednet.org

PEN is a federally funded project providing information and support to parents of children with disabilities throughout Pennsylvania.

Parent To Parent Of Pennsylvania

6340 Flank Drive, Suite 600
Harrisburg, PA 17112-2793
717-540-4722 or 800-986-4550
877-232-7640 (V/TTY)
717-657-5983 (FAX)
www.parenttoparent.org

Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania's mission is linking families of children and adults with disabilities or special needs.

Pennsylvania Keys To Professional Development

301 Market Street, 8th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101
717-213-2061
800-284-6031
717-213-0585 (Fax)
www.pakeys.org

The Pennsylvania Keys to Professional Development support individual early childhood and school-age practitioners in many ways, such as connecting you with professional development experiences, helping to fund college credit coursework, and providing you with a web-based system to track your progress.

Early Intervention: The Law in Pennsylvania

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA)

In Pennsylvania, the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) administers Part C and Part B, Section 619 Preschool of the

federal law IDEA. **Part C** of that law deals with eligible infants and toddlers from birth to their third birthdays; **Part B** deals with eligible young children from the child's third birthday to the age of beginners*.

Part C

Gives rights to eligible infants and toddlers and their families from birth until the child's third birthday;

Services are developed by a team and written into an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP);

Services are delivered in a **natural environment** for the child and family;

Part B, Section 619 Preschool

Gives rights to eligible young children and their families from age three to the age of beginners*;

Services are developed by a team and written into an Individualized Education Program (IEP);

Services must be delivered in the **least restrictive environment**.

In both Parts C and B,

- Eligibility is determined by an evaluation process;
- Parents are an important part of the child's evaluations as well as the design of individualized services. As an early education provider who knows the child, you can participate in the evaluation processes with the parents' permission. Talk to the child's parents about it.

Act 212: The Early Intervention Services System Act of 1990

- Assures eligible young children (birth until the age of beginners*) and their families early intervention services and programs;
- Assures appropriate services under public supervision and is designed to meet the developmental needs of eligible children; and
- Assures services specifically designed to address the needs of the family to enhance their child's development.

Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICC)

Established by Act 212, these local councils provide for representation from families, early education providers, county administration, MAWAs, intermediate units, school districts, early intervention providers, Head Start, service coordinators, health agencies, and other community members. While each LICC is different, their overall goal is to enhance local early education opportunities for all children through collaboration with local and regional inter-agency community partners. There is an LICC that represents your county. Your LICC may be accessed by contacting your local early intervention program. Early education providers are very important to the LICCs—please consider getting to know your local ICC.

* Age of entrance into first grade

Glossary

Act 212: The Early Intervention Services System Act of 1990 that provided for Early Intervention services for eligible children in Pennsylvania.

Adaptive skills (functional skills): Those skills used in daily living such as eating, dressing, and toileting.

Advocacy: Assuring that the services which are appropriate for the child are received. Because of your knowledge of the child, you may be one of the child's best advocates.

Age of beginners: The minimum age that a child can attend first grade in his or her own school district.

Assessment: A process that helps find the child's unique strengths and needs.

Assistive Technology Services: Services that directly assist a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.

Cognitive: The ability to learn, understand, and to solve problems.

Developmental delay: Development later than other children of the same age in achieving cognitive, adaptive, physical, and/or social skills.

Due process: The procedure which guarantees a person's right to disagree, refuse, change, or permit recommended educational services.

DPW: Department of Public Welfare, which is responsible for the fiscal provision of early intervention services birth to three years of age.

Early Intervention: A collection of services and supports for eligible children from birth to age of beginners to provide stimulation and education.

ER: Evaluation Report

FAPE: Free appropriate public education guaranteed by Public Law 94-142, at no expense to the parents and family.

IDEA: Federal early intervention legislation reauthorized in 2004 called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

IEP: Individualized Education Program developed by parents and staff for eligible children from their 3rd birthday to 21 years of age.

IFSP: Individualized Family Service Plan developed by parents and staff for eligible children birth to 3rd birthday.

Inclusion: To have the opportunity to participate in activities with nondisabled peers.

Language and speech development: The ability to understand, talk, express needs, and or communicate.

LICC: Local Interagency Coordinating Council made up of parents and professionals to coordinate and plan for early intervention services in the local community.

LRE: Least Restrictive Environment required by IDEA providing that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are nondisabled.

MDE: The Multidisciplinary Evaluation performed by the Multidisciplinary Team.

MH/MR: Mental Health/Mental Retardation County programs responsible for the local provision of early intervention services for eligible infants and toddlers from birth to the child's third birthday.

MAWA: Mutually Agreed Upon Written Arrangement, designate who has the contract with the state to provide early intervention services in your local area for children three through five years of age.

OCDEL: Office of Child Development and Early Learning – responsible for statewide administration of early intervention programs and services for eligible infants and children from birth to the age of beginners.

PDE: Pennsylvania Department of Education, which is responsible for the provision of services for children three to age of beginners.

Physical skills: The ability to move, see, and hear.

Screening: A process to determine if a more extensive assessment needs to be completed.

Service Coordinator (case manager): The individual assigned to coordinate the planning and delivery of early intervention services to children.

SICC: The State Interagency Coordinating Council is an advisory group made up of parents and professionals to advise the Governor and the Departments about early intervention issues in Pennsylvania. There are both state and local-level ICCs.

Social and emotional development: The ability to interact with others.

Transition: The process of moving from one early intervention service to another as the unique needs of the child change.

Phone numbers to call for help or information

To find the phone number for your local early intervention services, **contact CONNECT EARLY INTERVENTION HELPLINE by phone at 1-800-692-7288.**

Persons who are deaf and hard of hearing, or who have speech impairments may access all voice numbers through the PA Relay Service at 800-654-5984. Persons without TDD needing to access TDD numbers can also access the PA Relay Service at 800-654-5988.

Other phone numbers that are helpful:

For additional copies, call EITA at (800) 360-7282
Or to access online, go to www.pattan.net

Office of Child Development and Early Learning



Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare



Pennsylvania
Department of
Education