

Tip Sheets

IDEA Part C Primary Referral Source: Child Care

Infant or Toddler with a Disability

Infant or toddler with a disability is defined as an individual under 3 years of age who needs early intervention services because the child is experiencing a developmental delay in one or more areas, or the child has a diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay (such as Down syndrome).

IDEA is the federal law for special education. Part C is the part of the law describing early intervention services for infants and toddlers. Within Part C,

- Child Find identifies infants and toddlers who may need early intervention services.
- Primary referral sources are named. These can include early care and education programs.

How Does the Referral Process Work?

Once an early care and education program makes a referral to the local early intervention program:

- The family is contacted to arrange for a screening or evaluation to determine if the child is eligible for infant/toddler intervention or preschool special education services.
- Prior to screening, evaluation, or provision of services, parental consent is required.
- Parents will receive a call to walk them through the services/systems and gather information.
- After parent consent is given, the child will go through the screening and evaluation process to determine qualification for services.

Parents may ask questions about services and whether their child has to leave the early care and education program in order to receive these services. Part C services for infants and toddlers are provided in natural environments which may include services provided in an early care and education setting.

Communicating to Parents about Your Role as a Primary Referral Source

Communicate to parents upfront that you are required to make a referral for a screening if a developmental concern arises. Inform them with a statement in your parent handbook, such as:

As an early care and education professional(s), we continually monitor the development of all children in the program through ongoing observation and documentation. The best outcomes are desired for all children.

Early care and education professionals are considered a primary referral source for early intervention under the federal IDEA special education law. As a result, we are required to refer a child who has been identified as having developmental concerns or a risk factor that warrants a referral as soon as possible, but in no case more than seven days after the identification.

While this is a mandate, we want to keep open communication with parents and caregivers about the child and any concerns we have before a referral is made. We can assist the parent with the referral process or partner with them in the referral process.

How to Make a Referral

- Make an online referral at:
<http://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/Refer/index.html>
- Call your local early intervention/early childhood special education office.

“One of the ways in which professional caregivers can be most helpful to parents of newborn or newly identified children is to encourage and support parents as parents. Such reinforcement does as much as anything else to build a parent’s self-confidence as a parent, as a decision maker and as a partner in the care and nurturing of the child.”

~ J. Gallagher

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