



Information for families about Child Development Watch Delaware's Early Intervention program

Each child is special, growing and learning at his or her own pace.

You are your child's first and most important teacher. You know your child. You guide and nurture your child throughout each day as your child grows. Child Development Watch is here to support your family's strengths, and to assist you in helping your child increase his or her capacities to enjoy a meaningful life.

My child seems to be developing differently than other children. Would he/she be eligible for early intervention services?

It is possible that your child may be eligible for early intervention services, and an evaluation is necessary to determine that. Some children develop more slowly than others or develop in ways that seem different from other children. This can cause parents to worry. If you think that your child is not developing at the same pace or in the same way as most children his or her age, it is often a good idea to talk first to your child's pediatrician. Your doctor may recommend that you have your child evaluated to find out if he or she has delays and may be eligible for early intervention services. This evaluation is provided at no cost to you.

My child has been found eligible for early intervention services. What's next?

If your child is found eligible, you and your early intervention team will meet to develop a written plan called the *Individualized Family Service Plan*, or IFSP. The IFSP puts in writing your child's strengths and needs, family priorities, and goals you would like to achieve.

What are early intervention services?

Early intervention services are designed to identify and address children's needs in five developmental areas. Early Intervention services can help you and your family:

- Learn the best ways to care for your child
- Support and promote your child's development
- Include your child in your family and community life

Where will early intervention services be provided?

As much as possible, early intervention services are provided in settings where infants and toddlers without delays or disabilities are found. For example, early intervention services are provided in your home, child care center, or other community programs where other children are present.

What are the costs?

Child Development Watch provides screening, evaluation, assessments, service coordination and IFSP development at no cost to you.

There are some additional services that may result in a charge. Medicaid may pay for some of the Child Development Watch services if your child is Medicaid-eligible; however, if your child is covered by other health insurance, that coverage is typically billed first. Also, your family may be responsible for a co-pay or you may be billed based on a sliding fee scale, depending on your family size and income. Your service

coordinator will work with you closely if you have questions about payment for early intervention services. No family is denied service based on inability to pay.

How do we decide how often my child will need services?

It is very important to involve your child's pediatrician in the development of an IFSP. Through open communication and efforts to collaborate on service delivery and coordination of care, the child and family have a plan that all providers are working on together to support the child and family. How often your child receives services depends on a number of things:

- Your child's individual needs
- How long your child can practice new skills before getting tired
- How quickly your child learns new things, since some children need more practice than others before fully learning a new skill
- The visit schedule may change over time. You and your IFSP team will measure your child's progress, hold IFSP meetings, and make changes to your IFSP when needed

Would my child improve faster if he got services five times a week instead of once a week?

Imagine that you are learning to play a musical instrument. You would quickly learn the importance of practicing between your lessons. Taking three or even five lessons each week would not speed up your learning process without practice.

Children also develop by using new skills over and over during their daily lives. Time between visits is the most important time for learning. During visits, you and your early intervention provider choose the skills you will work on and figure out how you can practice them during mealtimes, bath times, and other daily activities. This helps your child work on new skills many times each day. It is this practice with daily caregivers that counts!

If my child doesn't seem to be making progress, does that mean that he needs more services?

Sometimes children seem to pause in their development in one area while they focus on growth in another. When your child's progress appears to have slowed, it is time for your team to talk about what is happening, and:

- Look at the activities and strategies that are being used
- Consider what is working and what is not
- Talk with your service coordinator and IFSP team about progress toward goals
- This is often more effective than increasing the frequency of services

Who Me? How can I be expected to practice physical therapy (for example) if I am not trained as a physical therapist?

Everyone who works in early intervention, including a physical therapist, has expertise in their specialty, but **you** are the expert on your child and his life. The early interventionist's role is to teach you ways to help your child grow and develop. The practicing you do with your child during your time together daily is more important than the brief therapist's visit for helping your child learn new skills.

For more information, call Child Development Watch (CDW) based on your county of residence:

New Castle County

CDW Intake for referrals: (302) 283-7140

CDW main office: (302) 283-7240

NCC toll free: (800) 671-0050

Kent and Sussex Counties

CDW Intake for referrals, and main office: (302) 424-7300

Kent and Sussex toll free: (800) 752-9393