

# Early Intervention and Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities

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This presentation provides an overview of early intervention for infants and toddlers with disabilities.

## Preschool Special Education

- Section 619 of the IDEA
- Serves children ages 3-5
- IEP



Section 619 of the IDEA is the provision of services for children with disabilities ages three through five and is referred to as preschool special education. The fourteen eligibility categories of disability apply to children in this age group. However, it is more common for children to be eligible as a child with a developmental delay rather than other disability categories. Developmental delay refers to a delay in any developmental domain. Children can only receive services as a student with a developmental delay through age 9. There are several reasons the IDEA allows for this broad category of disability. First, it is very difficult to diagnose young children. DD allows professionals time to make more accurate diagnoses without denying services for children who need them. It prevents unnecessary labeling of children. There were a few instances in my early childhood career where I was certain a young child had autism as they displayed many of the characteristics associated with the disability. However, these young children made excellent progress and were later dismissed from service. I would like to think this was the result of my hard work, but the characteristics may have been developmental in nature and the child outgrew them. I will never know! Regardless of the diagnosis, we provide intervention based on the child's needs so it did not matter what the 'label' was. In addition, children develop at different rates. Sometimes children are just delayed in one or more areas of development but not due to disability. These children can be dismissed from special

education services. This is one of the reasons the law requires children to be reevaluated at least every three year. However, because young children change and develop rapidly, it is best practice to reevaluate more frequently.

## Part C of the IDEA

- Infants and toddlers (birth – 2)
- Developmental Delay
- Physical or mental condition with high probability resulting in developmental delay



We have discussed Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Act extensively throughout this course. Part B provides special education and related services for eligible children ages three through 21. Part C of the IDEA service eligible children and families from birth through age two. Some states and districts offer family choice to remain with Part C up to age 6 or when the child becomes school aged or to transition to Part B when the child turns three. Children are eligible for Part C services if they have a developmental delay in one or more developmental domains such as cognitive, language, gross motor, fine motor, social emotional, or adaptive/self-help skills. Children can also be eligible if they are diagnosed with a physical or mental condition with a high probability resulting in developmental delay. High probability conditions can include but are not limited metabolic disorders, syndromes associated with delays, prematurity, or fetal alcohol syndrome.

## Part C cont.

- Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)
- Family priorities vs. Educational Impact
- Natural Environment vs. LRE

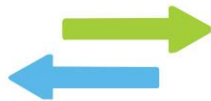


Children who are eligible for Part C receive services through an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Your textbook provides a brief description of the IFSP including what it must include. An IFSP is similar to an IEP but it emphasizes family needs and priorities. The child's needs are identified based on assessments, clinical expertise, and family reporting and are included in the present levels of development. Outcome are written based on the needs of the family. The IFSP team identifies activities that will take place to achieve the outcomes listed. Some examples of IFSP outcomes are: The child will request 3-5 wants and needs using a combination of words, gestures, or simple signs; The child will follow 3 simple, one-step directions; the child will pull to stand for five seconds or longer; OR, the family will access parenting education; Mom will secure childcare for older sibling; The family will locate housing. Activities to achieve the outcomes can include: Service providers will provide the family with strategies to facilitate language in the home for the child; The physical therapist will demonstrate activities through play to promote motor milestones; The social worker will provide the family with a list and contact information of local childcare facilities; Parents will be provided with information about local parenting classes. These are but a few examples but you can see that Part C services should empower families for the overall well-being of the child and family. While Part B services must be provided in the LRE and a continuum of placement options are considered, Part C services must

be provided in the child's natural environment. The natural environment can be anywhere that the family or child spends their time. Services are often provided in the child's home or daycare setting or can take place at a community-based location such as the library or community center.

## Transition from Part C to B

- Seamless transition
- Notify School System
- Discuss process and options with families
- IEP in place by third birthday



The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has set forth guidelines to ensure that there is a seamless transition from Part C to Section 619 of Part B. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must develop a process to notify school systems prior to the child's third birthday, informing families of the transition process and their options in advance of the child's third birthday. Children must also be determined eligible for Part B services under the IDEA. Families are now offered a choice to remain with Part C (family-based services) or transition to Part B (preschool special education services). If the family chooses to transition to Part B, the IEP must be in place by the child's third birthday. So, you can see that transition planning must occur well in advance.

## Recommended Practices

- Take the child's lead
- Young children learn through play
- Coaching family members



The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) provides recommended practices based on research in the field for early intervention. A few of the recommended strategies that apply regardless of the delay or disability are taking the child's lead, coaching family members to facilitate their child's development, and helping young children learn through developmentally appropriate play. Taking the child's lead refers to using the child's interests to expand their development. This goes along with the child learning through play. If they are interested in playing with cars, the provider or parent should engage in play with cars to model language or motivate the child for what ever area of development that needs to be addressed. If it is fine motor, the child can work on opening and closing the doors of the cars, coloring pictures of cars, or picking up cars of different sizes. For children who display characteristics of autism, their play may look differently. They may engage in repetitive play and require encouragement to expand their play in order to learn. It is important to respect their play and join in before trying to change it or they may become frustrated. Coaching of family members involves recognizing the strengths of the family member, encouraging those strengths and modeling ways in which the child's development can be facilitated through out child's day. The child will not progress based on the 30 minutes once per week with the speech therapist, but rather the day to day language facilitation that can be provided by the caregiver. Now you will see and early example of the potential



of early intervention involving families has on child outcomes.