Early Start Program
in Santa Cruz County

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Outcomes

Provide an overview of the Early Start Program, so that participants will be able to:

- Cite the eligibility requirements for the Early Start Program (IDEA Part C—Early Intervention for Infants and Toddlers—Birth to Three)
- Refer eligible children for the Early Start Program appropriately and timely
- Communicate effectively with parents and families regarding the Early Start Program
- Ask questions about referral, intake, eligibility and services provided by the Early Start Program
Intent of This Overview

To assist providers in understanding the Early Start early intervention system:

- when a child in their care, birth to age three years of age, has an identified disability
- when they have concerns that a child in their care, birth to age three years of age, might have a developmental delay or established risk condition with a high probability of causing a delay or disability
Early Start = Part C

- Early Start is California’s early intervention service system under Part C of IDEA
- Often get confused with Early Head Start—which is community-based program serving low-income families and young children
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

- Federal legislation mandates special education for all eligible children
- IDEA Part B: services for children with disabilities ages three through twenty-one
- IDEA Part C: services for children birth to 36 months (three years of age)
• Early Start seeks to promote and enhance a coordinated, family-focused service system for infants and toddlers from birth to age three years who have a
  • significant developmental delay, or
  • an established risk condition with a high probability of causing a delay or disability.
Established Risk

- Is a “diagnosed physical or mental condition which has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay

- Include, but are not limited to “chromosomal abnormalities; genetic or congenital disorders; severe sensory impairments (including vision & hearing); inborn errors of metabolism; disturbances of the nervous system; congenital infections; disorders secondary to exposure to toxic substances (FAS); and severe attachment disorders

- Eligible regardless of whether a measureable delay is present

- “High-risk” due to biologic/medical conditions (ie: prematurity) or environmental factors are NOT currently eligible
Early Start Administration

- The California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is the lead agency for overall administration of Early Start.

- DDS collaborates with the California Department of Education, Special Education Division, in the provision of services for some children.
California’s History of Serving Infants and Toddlers

- California law since 1980
- Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act in 1982
- 2009 Budget Crisis produced “cut-backs” including the types of services and eligibility
- High-risk category was no longer eligible, and instead is served by PRRs, under the Family Resource Centers
Eligibility Criteria

- The age at the time of the initial referral will be the age for consideration of eligibility.

- A 33% developmental delay in one developmental area before 24 months of age, or

- At 24 months of age or older, either a delay of 50 percent in one developmental area or a 33 percent delay in two or more developmental areas.

- An established risk condition with a high probability of causing a delay or disability
Prevention Program

- A child who is not eligible for Early Start services is eligible under a new PRRS Prevention Resources and Referral Services program for at-risk babies if their genetic, medical, developmental, or environmental history is predicative of a substantially greater risk for developmental disability than that for the general population.

- This program run through the FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER will provide information, resources and referral to generic agencies
Early Start Services

- Are designed to meet needs of each infant or toddler and needs of the family
- Are provided in “natural environments”
- Are provided at no cost to families by qualified personnel—although private insurance must be used for medical services)
- Include transition to appropriate services at three years of age
Early Start Services can Include:

- Assistive technology devices/services
- Audiology services
- Family training, counseling, home visits
- Some health services
- Medical services for diagnosis and evaluation
- Nursing services
- Nutrition services
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Psychological services
- Service coordination
- Special instruction
- Social work services
- Speech and language services
- Vision services
Early Start
Family Resource Centers (FRCs)

- Over 50 FRCs in California receive funding to provide parent-to-parent support to families.
- FRCs are primarily staffed by parents who have children with special needs.
- Services are provided in a nonclinical, family-centered atmosphere.
- Child care providers can also access libraries at FRCs.
- In Santa Cruz the FRC is called SPECIAL CONNECTIONS FRC.
Family Resource Centers

• Support the emotional and informational needs of families

• Provide referral information and outreach to underserved populations

• Support child find activities and family/professional collaborative activities

• Assist families with transition

• Are culturally responsive to the needs of families
Parents’ Rights

Parents have rights and protections to ensure that early intervention services are provided to their children:

- in a manner appropriate to their needs
- in consideration of family concerns
- in compliance with state and federal statutes
Mediation and Due Process

Parents have the right to request a mediation and due process hearing or file a complaint in Early Start if they have a disagreement with a regional center or LEA about:

- identification
- evaluation
- assessment
- placement of their child
- provision of appropriate early intervention services
Early Start Looks Different in Each Community. Why?

- History
  - Regional Center
    - Vendor
  - LEA—Local Education Area
    - Santa Cruz COE
    - Pajaro USD

- Local decision-making
  - SELPA- Special Education Local Planning Area
    - Community Advisory Committee

- Locally available resources

- Family Resource Centers
Family Involvement

- Families are an integral part of evaluation and assessment
- Families participate in Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) development
- Early Start services support families and help them meet the special needs of their infants or toddlers
Transition at Three Years of Age

- Because Early Start (Part C) applies only to a child under three years of age, the law requires the family to be informed about the transition that will occur when the child turns three years of age.

- Transition services are intended to support and prepare parents and their child to exit Early Start at three years of age.
Transition Options

• Special education preschool under Part B
  and/or

• Ongoing regional center services
  and/or

• Community options
  • Child care
  • Private preschool or Head Start
  • Remaining at home with the family
  • Other unique options in a community
Referring a Child

- When you suspect a child may be eligible for the Early Start Program
- Fill out the Intake and Referral Form
- Time permitting have the family fill out the yellow Intake and Consent forms —this will help expedite and help the Intake team assign the appropriate disciplines to assess the child
Early Start is Designed to:

- Provide a system of referral and assessment that
  - results in individualized services
  - supports infants and toddlers and their families within their community

- Be family-focused by
  - keeping families informed about services for their child
  - supporting families and including them as collaborative decision makers
Natural Environment

- Any setting where typically developing children of a similar chronological age are found
- Includes home, neighborhood, child care, preschool, parks, birthday parties, informal gatherings of family and friends, etc.
- A “Natural Environment” is more than a location. It is a way of approaching service.
# A Natural Environment

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<td>- a location where this child would go if he did not have a disability</td>
<td>- a location where people usually go because they have disabilities or medical issues</td>
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<td>- where other children go who do not have disabilities</td>
<td>- a location that was chosen because it had specialized equipment</td>
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<td>- in a part of the community where children and families without disabilities spend time when they are not being treated or tested for illness or health issues</td>
<td>- a location that was chosen because it was convenient for specialists who work with the child</td>
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Speech & Language

- Speech and language delays are the most common referral

- Remember to be eligible a child must be demonstrating a **33% delay** if they are < 2 years, and a **50% delay** if they are > 2 years

- Ruling out hearing issues—concurrent referral to audiology

- Screening for young children at risk for ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorders)
Screening for ASD

- Revised MCHAT—Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers
- Early Indicators of ASD in Young Children—Infant Toddler Checklist
- CDC Screening & Diagnosis
The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is a process of looking at the strengths of the Part C eligible child and family, and developing a written plan to identify individualized outcomes, supports and services that will enhance the child's development.
IFSP

- The IFSP differs from the IEP in several ways:
- It revolves around the family, as it is the family that is the constant in a child's life.
- It includes outcomes targeted for the family, as opposed to focusing only on the eligible child.
- Must take place within 45 days of referral
Best Practices in Early Intervention

- Differences between a “medical” model and early intervention models of service delivery

- AAP Early Intervention, IDEA Part C Services, and the Medical Home: Collaboration for Best Practice and Best Outcomes
  - Transdisciplinary and Primary Service Delivery Models
  - Routine’s based early intervention
  - Infant’s learn within the context of primary relationships and everyday learning opportunities
  - Early intervention is really about what occurs between home-visits
Access to this presentation can be found at

- http://ecezero2three.com/2014/03/30/early-start-in-santa-cruz-county/