What is Infant and Toddler Early Intervention (EI)?

Infant and Toddler EI is a program that provides services to children from birth to 3 years who have developmental delays or a high probability of having a developmental delay. Also referred to as Part C EI, these services aim to improve outcomes that are critical to a family’s ability to support their child’s health, optimal development, educational success, and lifelong well-being.

Infant and Toddler EI services are structured to identify and meet the needs of young children in five developmental areas: physical development; cognitive development; communication development (language); social or emotional development; and adaptive skills.

These services are delivered through an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) developed in collaboration between an EI team of professionals and the family. Families are trained and encouraged to carry out recommended activities at home.

Infant and Toddler EI services include, but are not limited to:

- Service Coordination
- Speech-Language Services
- Occupational and Physical Therapies
- Audiology
- Vision Services
- Psychological and Social Work Services
- Nutrition Services
- Assessment and Evaluation Services
- Nursing Support
- Health Services

The federal Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers was authorized in 1986 under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)—which is where the Part C of the term derives. States administer the program, and in Pennsylvania, it is jointly overseen by the Department of Education (Part B) and the Department of Human Services (Part C), with direct administration by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning.
What is the difference between Part C and Part B Early Intervention?

**Infant and Toddler EI (Part C)**
- Age of children served: Birth through 2
- Location of service delivery: Through coaching and collaboration in the child’s home or other natural environments
- Administration of program: County government, with contracted professionals
- State government oversight: Pennsylvania Department of Human Services

**Preschool EI (Part B)**
- Age of children served: 3 through 5
- Location of service delivery: Outside of the home—often in early care and education environments like child care centers, pre-k programs, and Head Start programs
- Administration of program: Predominantly through Pennsylvania’s Intermediate Units, except in Philadelphia County, where Elwyn administers it
- State government oversight: Pennsylvania Department of Education
Who is Eligible for Infant and Toddler EI Services?

EI services are available for all infants and toddlers with delays in development and their families. No diagnosis is needed. Unlike some other early childhood programs, there is no income eligibility or cost to the family regardless of income.

Under federal EI rules, each state defines eligibility. In Pennsylvania, an infant or toddler with a disability is defined as a child experiencing a 25% developmental delay in one or more of the five areas of development (listed above) or has a diagnosed physical or mental condition with a high probability of resulting in developmental delay.

Families may self-refer to Infant and Toddler EI. Children are also referred from birth hospitals/neonatal intensive care units (NICUs), pediatric primary care providers, early care and education providers, other health or social service agencies, including home visiting services, and those who serve vulnerable families in homeless shelters and domestic violence agencies.

Benefits from children receiving EI services:

- Reduced educational costs by minimizing the need for special education.
- Enhanced capacity of families to meet their child’s needs.
- Improved child health and education outcomes.
- Enhanced development of infants and toddlers with disabilities.

In a recent Pennsylvania survey, families reported EI services helped them to communicate with their child (97% of respondents), help their child learn (99.5% of respondents), and know their rights in the process (96.4% of respondents).
How Can Policymakers Support Infant and Toddler EI?

Infant and Toddler EI is funded through a patchwork of sources in most states, including Pennsylvania. Funding streams include federal Part C funds, state Part C funds, county matching dollars (10% of federal allocation to the county), and Medicaid fee-for-service payments to EI providers. By law, federal funds must be the last funding source used (i.e., payer of last resort). Federal funds are also limited and fall short of covering the program’s total cost in every state. Infant and Toddler EI depends on state funding support to ensure that every child needing services is referred to and receiving them.

As part of the final 2023-24 state budget package, please support the proposed increase of $20.2 million, which will serve an additional 3,000 children and their families. The investment will also sustain a rate increase for providers initially achieved with federal stimulus funding.

We are hopeful this budget and OCDEL’s proposed rate methodology study are the first steps on a longer path to creating a viable and sustained Early Intervention service delivery platform.

In 2020-21, there were 42,360 children in Pennsylvania served in Infant and Toddler EI. This national data shows that likely only a small fraction of infants and toddlers who may be eligible participate in EI.