

TAUNTON AREA
EARLY INTERVENTION

**PARENT
HANDBOOK**

TAUNTON AREA EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM

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A program of Associates for Human Services

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Introduction

Welcome

Welcome to Early Intervention (EI). Our program provides developmental and therapeutic services to families and their children, birth to three years of age, who experience, or are at risk for delays in development. These services are provided in the child's natural environment (i.e.: home, childcare, etc.). As you and your child are about to begin working with us, we'd like you to understand a little more about our program.

What does "Natural Environments" mean?

34CFR 303.26 The Federal Law states:

- Natural Environment means settings that are natural or typical for a same-aged infant or toddler without a disability, may include the home or community settings and must be consistent with 303.126.

34CFR 303.126

Each system must include policies and procedures to ensure that early intervention services for infants and toddler with disabilities are provided:

- to the maximum extent appropriated, in natural environments and in settings other than the natural environment and in settings other than the natural environment that are most appropriate as determined by the parent and the Individualized Family Service Plan team, only when early intervention services cannot be achieved satisfactorily in a natural environment.

THE BENEFITS OF NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

Service delivery in natural environments facilitates the participation of children enrolled in Early Intervention and their families into their communities. The Early Intervention system is family centered and family driven. Building on the strengths, values, needs and desires of families, early interventionists work to place services in the context of family life. Services delivered in natural environments help children and families adapt to their environment and expand their participation in everyday activities.

Philosophy and Model

The philosophy of our Early Intervention program is that, as parents you are your child's best teachers, and the home/natural environment is where optimal learning occurs. As part of your child's team, we work with you to help with your child's growth and development. You will develop a plan, along with the rest of your EI team that focuses on your family's concerns and priorities for your child. You will have one staff member assigned as your child's service coordinator, but all of us on your team are aware of your child's development and continually evaluate progress in order to keep family needs updated. All Early Intervention team members are trained to transfer skills to one another so that together we can assist you in identifying and working on your priorities. This is called a Transdisciplinary Model.

The Staff

The transdisciplinary team that will be working with your family may include a/an:

Developmental Specialists with bachelor's degree or master's degrees in social work, psychology, early childhood education, communication disorders, etc.

Registered Nurse

Occupational Therapist

Occupational Therapist Assistant

Social Worker

Physical Therapist

Physical Therapy Assistant

Mental Health Counselor

Music Therapist

Speech and Language Pathologist

Teacher Assistant

Parent Liaison

Nutritionists

Consultants are also contracted, as needed, in the following areas:

Hearing

Vision

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Language Interpreter

Department of Public Health Certification

Our Early Intervention program is an approved and certified service provider for the DPH. We meet or exceed the rigorous standards set forth by DPH. Every year, the Department of Public Health distributes procedures for programs to evaluate and review our client records, services, staff credentials, and MA Early Intervention Operational Standards. Data if transitioning out of our Early Intervention into your local Public School System is also collected and submitted to the Department of Public Health.

Getting Started

Open Referral Process

Anyone can make a referral to Early Intervention by calling or stopping by our office. Most often, referrals come from parents, physicians, hospitals, local schools, Department of Children and Families, WIC and other local agencies.

Intake

The first face to face contact takes place at the home. Background information is gathered, and the program is explained to the family. All necessary consents are reviewed and signed at this time.

Initial Assessment

After the intake, your child will have a developmental evaluation. This is done through standardized testing. One staff person gives the assessment and other staff members observe and record information. They note how the child reacts to the activities and plays with the toys that are presented. Parents/Primary caregivers are always present, and it is helpful if you interact and speak naturally to your child. The test can last about 1 ½ hours and involves snack, physical activities, and a family interview. A re-assessment is done every 6 months to note the progress that has been made. Re-eligibility is usually determined yearly depending on the reason the child became eligible for Early Intervention services. The information about your child's development is added to your family's information to complete a full assessment. These results are reviewed with you.

Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)

If after the eligibility evaluation, your child is determined to be eligible for Early Intervention services, you, and the staff, as a team, will review your child's and family's strengths and needs. Together we will write a plan to work on your child's development and help meet family needs. This plan that we design together is called the IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan). The IFSP includes goals/outcomes, and services that you have chosen.

You can invite anyone to the meetings for support or input, such as a relative, friend, neighbor, etc. If you request that we coordinate outcomes/services with anyone else that you are working with, (i.e., a therapist at a local hospital, childcare provider, medical provider, etc.) and they were not present at the Individualized Family Service Plan meeting, we will call them or send them a copy of the Individualized Family Service Plan with your signed consent.

On-Going Services

Home Visit

Each family that enters the program is assigned one staff person who is their service coordinator. Your service coordinator will make regular visits. You, as the parent, decide the frequency. Your service coordinator partners with you to support your child's development. During home visits, they will join in on whatever routine is happening and use your child's toys. The plan, or IFSP, will be used on every home visit and outcomes will be added or changed when you are ready. Since you are your child's best teacher, it is important that you use the strategies between visits to help your child make the most progress. Visits need to be with a consistent person and may include extended family, childcare, etc. Your service coordinator is there as a support for you as well as your child. You may also request visits with other team members. You are welcome to ask questions about your plan and to make any changes.

Consultant Therapy

Consultants with other team members are available as necessary, to offer additional strategies to achieve the outcomes of your IFSP. Options are also discussed regarding additional services, if needed.

The program also contracts with specialty providers who consult with our staff regarding children who are diagnosed with hearing impairments, visual impairments, or autism. The Regional Consultation Program (RCP) is also a resource and referral program that is used.

Pets on Home Visits

Although we all realize that most of us consider our pets to be a part of the family, pets do not always welcome outsiders. Therefore, we ask that you keep your pets contained during home visits. Even if your dog, cat, or other pet has always been friendly towards strangers, we don't want to put our service coordinators at risk.

Thank you for your cooperation and consideration!

Secondhand Smoke During Home Visits

Because secondhand smoke can cause serious health problems, we ask that you not smoke an hour before and then during any home visit by the Early Intervention Staff. Early Intervention can offer information on the health risks of secondhand smoke and/or information regarding quitting smoking.

Community/Parent Child Groups

When your child comes to EI, your family may choose a play group which will work on your child's outcomes. Your service coordinator will serve as a consultant to the teacher or childcare provider who will then follow through on the outcomes.

Community play groups meet one time per week either at the center or in the community. All groups include children from the community and children participating in EI. These are all integrated groups. The purpose of these groups is to monitor developmental progress and achieve your family/child outcomes.

In addition to all classrooms being peanut free, we note any other allergy restrictions and make necessary accommodations.

Parent to parent support options include either participating in group with your child or meeting with other parents to discuss issues related to parenting. For families who do not have access to babysitting, other options will be explored.

Play Group Schedules

A consistent schedule gives your child the security of knowing what is going to happen next. The groups in the center start with free exploration and developmental play activities, followed by a circle that will stimulate one or more areas of your child's development. There is a snack time which provides the children with an opportunity for socialization as well as for your child to experience different foods. Staff also assess your child's fine and oral motor and feeding abilities during this time. Activities are provided to give your child experiences in using their senses (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting) in many different, enjoyable ways, helping them to learn more about their world. There is also an opportunity to play on the playground.

The staff plan a specific activity for circle, snack, and art to provide your child with various learning experiences, i.e., sharing, exploring different mediums – paints, whipped cream, playdoh, water; learning new songs, concepts (color, size, number); tasting different foods, practicing motor, and communication skills. Remember to have your child in play clothes. During outside play, parents are reunited with their child. During this time, parents are responsible for their child's safety at all times.

Community group options may include a focus in any area of development, (i.e.: gross motor, literacy, music) (Although rare, on occasion, a parent may be asked to fill in for a teacher aide due to an unscheduled absence.)

Parent Workshops

Educational/Supportive

Parents/caregivers attend educational and supportive groups during the day. They are held once a week for 1 ½ hours. Topics may include behavior management, various areas of development, etc. Please offer any suggestions for topics to be presented.

Parent Advisory Council

A Parent Advisory Council may be started if there are enough families interested.

A Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is a group consisting of parents, alumni parents and staff who meet to discuss issues which effect the children within the program and to give input. They may fundraise to purchase toys, books, and equipment for the program. They keep families informed of current legislative issues and advocate as needed.

Open communication between parents, caregivers and staff promotes the best programming for the children and allows parents to network. Getting involved provides a pool of information and a sharing of resources for your family.

Parent Contact

A parent contact is a currently enrolled family member who is willing to receive information from the Parent Leadership Project to share with other families in the program. This can be shared through e-mail or the agency newsletter.

Parent Liaison

This is a former enrolled family member who is now employed by the program who schedules intakes and assessments as well as being available to answer questions from a parent's perspective.

Communication

The agency has a family e-mail list. Early Intervention Advocacy Alerts, Resources, Trainings are distributed to all families on this list in a blind list (meaning no e-mail addresses can be seen).

Transportation

It is very important for children enrolled in the program to attend scheduled sessions regularly. If you are unable to provide transportation for your child; for groups, assessments, IFSP meetings, etc.; it can be arranged for you through the Department of Public Health. Please speak to your home teacher if you need transportation.

Program Schedule and Attendance Policy

Canceling Appointments

We ask for a 24-hour notice of cancellation of a scheduled assessment, home visit, group, or any other appointment that you may have with the Early Intervention staff. We realize that emergencies or illnesses may make this difficult, but early notification can help staff reschedule their time.

Absenteeism

Your involvement in your child's program includes direct participation in all the areas you include in the IFSP. Due to the importance of consistency in your family's program, missed appointments must be avoided whenever possible. Therefore, to ensure your child's progress, you must understand that cancellation of any three (3) meetings in a row, without notification to the staff, will result in a discussion by the Early Intervention staff. Early Intervention will make every effort to contact you to discuss continued interest in the program.

Holidays

Early Intervention will be closed on the following holidays:

Martin Luther King Day	Indigenous People Day
Presidents' Day	Thanksgiving Day
Patriot's Day	Day after Thanksgiving
Memorial Day	Christmas Day
Independence Day	New Year's Day
Labor Day	

Staff Training

The program may also be closed for a couple of days a year due to staff training. Families will be notified by their home teacher.

Severe Weather Policy

In case of severe weather (i.e.: snow, hurricane, etc.) program options such as group, home visits, etc. may or may not be canceled. Please call the agency at 508-880-0202, visit the agency website at www.ahsinc.org, or like us on www.facebook.com/AHSInc to get updated notifications. Please remember to clear the driveway and walkway for staff to provide services.

Family Rights

Parents/Legal Guardians participation in the Early Intervention Program have a right to:

1. An evaluation of a child, aged birth through 34 months of age, including a family evaluation, within 45 days of referral.
2. An appropriate assessment, evaluation, and development of an Individual Family Service Plan if child is deemed eligible.
3. Receive information on which to base your consent or refusal.
4. Grant, or refuse to grant your consent.
5. Questions and/or appeal any point we don't agree on concerning an evaluation, identification, placement, assessment, or the process of developing a service delivery plan (IFSP).
6. Receive copies of your child's assessment reports and IFSP's.
7. Confidentiality. Information regarding your child and family will be discussed with, or forwarded to, only those people you sign a release for. You will be the one to decide who we will send information on your child to.
8. Review and correct mistakes documented in your child's record.
9. Use a lawyer, or anyone else in matters pertaining to Early Intervention. You may bring anyone to participate in assessments or observe assessments and/or therapeutic groups.
10. To receive information on the use of your insurance, and how it will be affected. Explanation of Benefits (EOB) will be mailed to you. It is good practice to check these EOBs with your notes.
11. Participate in Early Intervention meetings where decisions are made about services for your child or family.
12. Discuss any portion of your child's program, or program procedures, with the Director. This includes having access to the program's policy and procedure manual.
13. Be assisted by the Early Intervention staff in the formation/continuation of a Parent Advisory Council.
14. File a complaint without fear of reprisal. You are given a staff list with every staff's supervisor on the top of the teams list. If you have any concerns, first speak to your service coordinator. Staff want to know how to help and improve services. If you feel the issue is not resolved, then speak to the service coordinator's supervisor. If the problem continues not to be resolved, please call the Program Director. At any time during this process, you may contact the Department of Public Health's Director of Procedural Rights and Due Process. 978-851-7261 x-4016
15. Change any of your child's services or ask the team to reconsider them. If the program wants to change a part of your child's service plan, you must receive an explanation for the reasons why. No changes can occur without your written consent on the IFSP.

16. Information provided in native language and free interpreter services.

Health and Safety

Illness

Please call to cancel child group and/or home visits if you child is ill. Children, parents, and staff need to avoid exposure to illnesses either in groups or at home. If you have any questions, please discuss them with your home teacher. If your child or anyone in your home has any of the following illnesses, please cancel your appointment:

1. **Fever:** Temperature 99.0 degrees or higher over the past 24-hour period.
2. **Behavior:** If a child looks or acts differently. (Awake all night crying, unusually tired, pale, lack of appetite, irritable or restless.)
3. **Respiratory:** Breathing difficulties (wheezing). Initial onset of colds with watery eyes and nasal drainage along with sneezing. Colds with yellow-green nasal discharge and/or prolonged cough.
4. **Vomiting:** More than usual infant “spitting up”.
5. **Diarrhea:** Is characterized by frequent watery or green-colored bowel movements which are not related to medications or food reactions.
6. **Rash:** Undiagnosed rash other than mild diaper or heat rash.
7. **Sore Throat:** Sore throat that needs culturing because other signs are present.
8. **Other:** New loss of taste or smell.

Exposure to Communicable Diseases

For most communicable diseases (chickenpox, strep-throat, flu, etc.) a child who has been exposed to the disease, but has not symptoms yet, should continue to participate in the program. Should symptoms occur, then the child should be excluded until no longer contagious.

There are a few communicable diseases that require treatment for exposure or quarantine such as Meningococcal Meningitis, Hepatitis A, and COVID19. Exposure to these requires treatment from a physician and a physician’s statement before readmittance. Parents are informed if their child may have been exposed to a communicable disease.

Exposure to Communicable Diseases (cont'd)

These rules shall apply for continued participation. Following:

1. **Chickenpox:** All lesions are dry and crusted.
2. **Impetigo:** 24-hours after the start of oral medication or 48-hours after the start of topical medication and blisters are covered with crust.
3. **Conjunctivitis:** 24-hours after the start of medication.
4. **Lice/Scabies:** Following medical treatment. Lice absence of nits in hair after treatment with 1% Lindane and after 2 treatments for Scabies.
5. **Pin worms:** Following the start of treatment.
6. **Hepatitis:** Physician's statement required.
7. **Strep throat:** 48-hours after the start of medication. Child must receive a full day of drug treatment prior to readmittance, (if script is for 3x day, 3 pills must have been taken).
8. **COVID19:** Follow current program guidelines.

Child Protection Mandate

The staff at Early Intervention are very committed to the safety and well-being of all children. Because we are a state certified agency, we are mandated to report any suspected child abuse and neglect. Staff will ask if there are any suspicions of abuse with the family, and if filing a 51A is necessary, every effort will be made to inform the family of the reason for doing so on the day of filing.

Smoke-Free Policy

Smoking will be strictly prohibited within the agency owned or leased buildings, property and vehicles including offices, hallways, restrooms, kitchen areas, meeting rooms, community areas, buses, and vans. This policy applies to all employees, family members, contractors, and visitors and includes electronic cigarettes.

What Happens When your Child Turns Three

Early Intervention provides services to children from birth to three years of age. When your child turns 28 months old, your home teacher and the Transition Coordinator will begin to discuss other programs with you, such as public school or private services, if needed. If public school referral is recommended, we will ask you to sign a release giving us permission to assist you with the transition to public school.

We will host a Transition Planning Conference with you and the public school to discuss your developmental concerns for your child and help choose which evaluations will be requested of the school department. We will provide you with documented resources to assist you in understanding your rights as a parent in special education. Your home teacher will be available to you through the process to answer any questions and participate in the team meeting with the school department prior to your child turning three to ensure the transition from early intervention to public school is a smooth transition.

RESOURCES

The Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project has developed a video “What is EI and How does it work?” available on YouTube which further explains the early intervention process for families. It can be accessed using the following link – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQ_skiDZYIY

Hotlines

Abuse/Domestic Violence

New Hope	24 hrs.	508-824-4757
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Children/Family

Child at Risk	24 hrs.	800-792-5200
MSPCC	9-5	800-339-2204
Parental Stress	24 hrs.	800-632-8188
Parents Anonymous	9-5	800-882-1250

Food Stamps

Food Stamps	9-5 (M-F)	800-645-8333
WIC		800-942-1007

Health

Children’s Medical Security Plan		800-909-2677
Health Start		800-992-1895
Morton Hospital Health Services	9-3	508-823-7257
Taunton Area Emergency Services	24 hrs.	508-823-5700

Legal

MA Bar Association Lawyer Referral		800-392-6164
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Poison

Poison Control	24 hrs.	800-682-9211
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Substance Abuse

Alcohol and Drug	24 hrs.	800-327-5050
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Website: helplineonline.com

Legal/Advocacy

Department of Public Utilities	800-392-6066
MA Tenant’s Organization	617-367-6260
MA Immigration & Refugee Assistance	617-727-7888
Federation for Children with Special Needs	617-236-7210
Welfare Client Services	800-841-2900
Southeastern MA Legal Assistance	508-824-0888

Adult Education

Taunton High School/Adult Education	508-821-1100
Bridgewater State College	508-697-1200
Bristol Community College	508-678-2811
Bristol County Training Consortium	508-823-8151
Fisher Jr. College	508-823-8583
Massasoit Community College	508-588-9100
Newbury College	508-823-6760

Health/Mental Health

Attention Deficit Support Groups	508-747-5180
Community Care	508-821-7777
Community Counseling of Bristol County	508-823-6124
Department of Social Services	800-441-3143
Immunization Clinic	508-822-1447
Health Care of S.E. MA – Teen Parenting	508-822-7700
MassHealth	508-824-7020
Morton Hospital – Free Care	508-824-6911 – Ext. 1277

Housing Assistance

Taunton Department of Human Services	508-821-1420
Taunton Housing Authority	508-823-0737
MA Tenant’s Association	508-367-6260
MA Coalition for the Homeless	617-737-3508

Fuel Assistance

Citizens for Citizens	508-823-6346
Salvation Army – Good Neighbor Program	800-334-3047

Food

Citizens for Citizens	508-823-6346
Crossroads Christian Center	508-823-8234
Our Daily Bread	508-824-1788
Raynham Food Basket	508-824-2720
St. Vincent DePaul	508-823-6819
SHARE	508-828-5151
W.I.C.	508-823-6346

For a more complete list of resources, please visit www.ahsinc.org and go to the “Related Sites” page.

It is the intention of the entire Early Intervention Team at Associates for Human Services to provide you with the knowledge, support, and resources to best achieve the goals you have chosen to work on through our program. We take this responsibility very seriously and appreciate the opportunity you have entrusted to us to work with your child and family.

THANK YOU

**Associates for Human Services
Taunton Area Early Intervention**

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