



Florida's Early Steps is a partnership with providers and families to deliver services that support children's well-being and development where they live, learn and play.



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Questions and Answers taken from "A Parent's Guide to Accessing Programs for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers with Disabilities" by the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY).



Features of Early Steps:

- *Brings services into the child's life rather than fitting the child into services.*
- *Maximizes each child's everyday natural learning opportunities.*
- *Enhances each child's development and participation in community life.*
- *Provides each child with a consistent team for evaluation and services.*
- *Gives families options in service decisions and encourages active partnerships.*

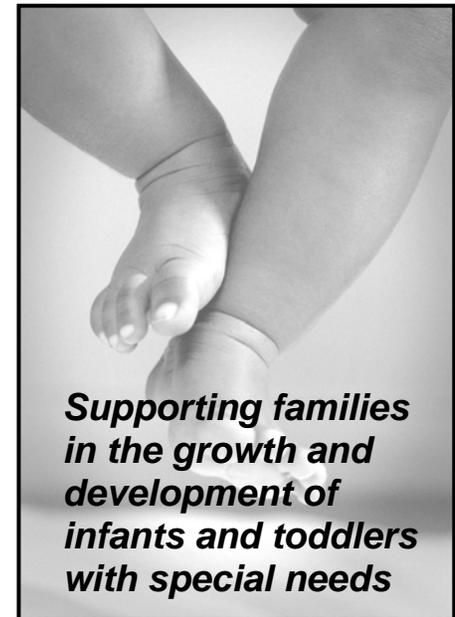
For more state and local information, visit our Early Steps website at: <http://www.cms-kids.com>

If you have a child or know of a child who may need Early Steps services, call toll-free at 1-800-654-4440 (voice or TDD).



Florida's Part C Early Intervention System
Florida Department of Health

Phone 1-800-654-4440 (voice or TDD)
Web <http://www.cms-kids.com>





Early Steps offers early intervention services to infants and toddlers (birth to thirty-six months) with significant delays or a condition that places them at risk of developmental delay. These services are provided by 16 contracted local Early Steps offices across the state of Florida. Early Steps provides families or caregivers with services to enhance their child's development so they are ready to learn when they enter school. For Early Steps services there will not be a charge, or they will be covered by insurance or Medicaid if applicable.

Q: What are early intervention services?

A: *These are services for infants and toddlers that are designed to identify and treat a problem or delay as early as possible, before the age of 3.*

Early Steps helps infants and toddlers who have special needs to be:



- Involved in as many of their family's daily activities as possible,
- Supported in participating in community activities,
- Included in playing and learning with children without disabilities on a regular basis.

Early Steps partners with families and caregivers because none of the above can be achieved without you.

To be enrolled in Early Steps, your child must first be found eligible. If your child is eligible, a thorough assessment will be made of your child's skills and abilities. In addition, an Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP) will be designed just for your family with expected outcomes and goals based on your child's development.

Each Child is Unique

Each child grows at an individual pace, but research shows that a child's first three years are the most important time for learning. Beginning interventions early puts your child on the right path to learn and develop at their full potential. Participating in Early Steps has many benefits for your family, including an evaluation and assessment of your child's strengths and needs.



Your child's development will be assessed in the following areas:

- Physical:** health, hearing, vision
- Cognitive:** thinking, learning, problem solving
- Gross & fine motor skills:** moving, walking, grasping, and coordination
- Communication:** babbling, languages, speech, conversation
- Social/emotional:** playing and interacting with others
- Adaptive development:** self-help skills, i.e. feeding, toileting, dressing

These assessments help identify services that will benefit your child. Services are provided during your child's daily activities so that natural learning opportunities are maximized while still meeting your child's everyday needs.

Q: What is an evaluation and assessment?

A: *Evaluation refers to the procedures used to determine if a child is eligible for early intervention services. Assessment refers to the ongoing process of gathering and using information about how a child is developing and determining what kind of help they might need.*

The Family as a Teacher

As parents and caregivers, you are your child's first teachers. You are the first to know your child's needs and strengths and are best at providing daily support during everyday routines.

During their first contact with your family, an Early Step team member(s) begins to identify everyday routines, activities, and places with your input. These may be activities such as visiting grandparents, walking to the store, getting the mail, feeding the dog, and doing the laundry. Since families change, the process of identifying everyday routines, activities and places is part of an ongoing assessment process.



Early Steps takes a partnered approach to early intervention by providing families and caregivers with training and support to increase learning opportunities for their children.

Moving Forward as a Team

Early Steps will put together a team of service providers to address your child's needs. This team will develop the Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP) based on family/caregivers outcomes and goals.

The Early Steps team also selects a primary service provider for each child as a central point of contact. This person can be a therapist, other licensed healing arts professional or an Infant Toddler Developmental Specialist (ITDS). The primary service provider is selected based on the needs of the child and family, the IFSP goals, and expertise in the areas of needed support.

