

# Family Education Sheet

## Early Intervention for Children (0–3) and Transition to Pre-K in Massachusetts



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### What is Early Intervention (EI)?

**Early intervention (EI)** is a program for children from birth through age 3. Your child may qualify for EI services if they have developmental delays, or if your child's normal development (growth) is at risk for some reason.

### How do I get started?

**Anyone in Massachusetts can make a referral.** This includes:

- You
- Caregivers
- Friends/acquaintances
- Medical providers
- Teachers

You do not need a prescription.

Call **Massachusetts Family TIES** at **1-800-905-8437** and ask for a list of **certified EI programs** in your community. Call a local EI agency directly to begin the assessment process.

Once parents agree, the EI team will do an evaluation (study) of your child and meet your family to see if your child qualifies for EI services. The evaluation focuses on key areas of child development, including cognitive, language, motor, social, emotional, behavioral and self-help skills.

If your child is eligible, an **Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)** will be written based on your family's needs. The IFSP meeting happens within 45 days of the EI referral. IFSPs are reviewed every 6 months.

Note: You may have more than one EI agency nearby. If this is the case, be sure to look at them all to see which one can best meet your child's needs.

### How much do EI services cost?

**EI services are free to you.** EI is federally funded, but your agency may ask for your insurance information. Most health insurance plans cover some or all of EI service costs but the Massachusetts Department of Public Health will pay for any costs that are not covered by insurance.

Examples of available services include access to:

- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapists
- Developmental specialists
- Nurses
- Occupational therapists
- Physical therapists
- Psychologists
- Social workers
- Speech language pathologists

Be sure to ask your child's clinical providers what they recommend for services. You should share their recommendations with your EI service coordinator.

### Transition from EI to pre-K checklist

**The transition (switch) from EI to special education** is a very important time for your child. We recommend that you start to plan for this transition when your child turns 2. Keep this timeline (below) in mind as you make your way through this process:

#### After 2 years old: public school district referral and assessments

**Referral to public school district:** Ask your EI service coordinator to make a referral.

**Join a social skills group or playgroup:** This is optional. This may help your child get used to talking, playing and communicating with children around the same age.

**Explore additional resources:** Ask your EI service coordinator about specialty service providers.

**Review IFSP and transition plan:** Meet with your EI service coordinator and early childhood service provider.

**Create transition packet:** Organize information you will need for the transition assessment, like:

- Copies of your child's IFSP
- Immunization records
- A copy of identification, such as your child's Social Security card, passport or birth certificate
- Medical evaluation summaries
- Developmental evaluations
- Information about programs and resources in your community
- A summary of your child's communication style, strengths, weaknesses and goals
- A list of any allergies
- A list of medications, including doses (how much) and frequency (how often)

#### After 2½ years old: transition meeting and service planning

**Transition/IEP meeting and special education eligibility determination:** Meet with EI and your public school district.

**Finalize IEP decisions:** Sign an IEP no later than 1 month before your child turns 3. You can send any proposed plan and assessments to your providers for review before making a decision.

**Confirm plan for supplemental services:** Outline services that need to be continued (outside of school) past age 3. Contact these service providers about insurance coverage and availability. Contact your child's medical providers about prescriptions, letters of medical necessity or insurance referrals, if needed.

### After 3 years old: special education and pre-K (end of EI)

**Begin preschool** and share IEP progress reports and changes with your child's providers.

**Continue supplemental services** outside of school, if needed. Share progress reports with your child's providers.

**Request close communication** between school, home and community-based providers, as needed.

## What if my child is unable to get education services?

**Do not worry—there are options!** If your child is not eligible, you can choose to pay for preschool or enroll in **Head Start** if you cannot pay for preschool. Head Start is a good plan for families who meet federal income eligibility requirements. The program offers a preschool setting with teaching and services based on each child's needs.

**Explore Head Start and find your local contact:**  
[eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices)

**Note:** *This journey can be complicated. Use supportive resources that can help you. There are many support groups available. Please ask your child's providers and your community organizations. You are not alone!*

*This Family Education Sheet is available in [Spanish](#).*