

EI and Child Care: Natural Partners in Natural Environments

Video Transcript

Narrator: Illinois' Early Intervention Program's mission is to assure that families who have infants and toddlers birth to 36 months old with diagnosed disabilities, developmental delays, or a substantial risk of significant delays, receive resources and supports that assist them in maximizing their child's development, while respecting the diversity of families and communities. Early Intervention builds upon the natural learning occurring in those first few years and is supported in each child's natural environment. Early Intervention services and supports may: answer a family's questions about their child's development; provide you with supports and adaptations for your program; improve both developmental and educational growth; help children become more independent; prevent the need for more intervention in the future; and help communities become more aware of the gifts and abilities of all its children.

Early Intervention is a Family Centered Practice

Narrator: Early intervention services are family centered and based on strengths, concerns and priorities identified by the family. Since services are family centered, families have a choice about whether or not to participate. If they decide to participate, providers will be respectful of the family's interests, values and preferences for where services will occur.

Amy (Illinois Department of Human Services): Children learn best through everyday experiences with familiar people, in familiar settings. Accordingly, federal regulations require early intervention services to be provided in the natural environment, which is defined as settings that are natural or normal for the child's same age peers who have no disability. This can be a family's home, childcare setting, or community setting.

Making a Referral

Narrator: Each child develops at his or her own pace; however, there is a typical sequence of development that is expected. If through a formal developmental screening or through observation of a child's development, you have concerns about an infant or toddler's development or behavior, you should talk with the family about your concerns. As a childcare provider, you are considered a primary referral source. As such, you are required to make a referral to the EI [Early intervention] system when a delay is identified. Families should be informed of referrals and given information about how they can contact their Child and Family Connections office. Remember that participation and further evaluation and assessment is entirely voluntary for families.

Child and Family Connections

Narrator: Child and Family Connections offices are the regional intake entities for children and families to enter the Illinois Early Intervention system. There are 25 CFC offices located around the state, each being responsible for a specific geographic area. CFC offices employ early intervention credentialed Service Coordinators. Service Coordinators assist the family with the intake process.

After a referral is made

Narrator: After a referral is made, a Service Coordinator will contact the family within two business days to schedule intake, where the Service Coordinator will share information about the system, collect information about the child and family and begin identifying strengths and needs. The family and Service Coordinator will discuss the eligibility process for services in Illinois.

Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP)

Narrator: Once a child's eligibility is determined, an Individualized Family Service Plan, or IFSP, is developed to identify meaningful, functional outcomes for the family and child, and the services that will help the family achieve those outcomes. Services are then incorporated into the family's natural environments, which may be their home, community, childcare, or other setting identified by the family. Outcomes are based on the family's strengths, needs, routines and interests. The frequency of early intervention services is determined by the IFSP team. This team includes the family, the Service Coordinator, Early Intervention providers and anyone else chosen by the family. If services are taking place in a childcare setting, you may be invited to participate in this meeting to support the family and the rest of the team.

Kimberly (Parent): As a team, their presence is vital because when she would come to IFSP meetings, she would be able to talk about what she saw Logan doing in her care which might be different than what I saw at home. So the team as a whole was able to get a bigger picture of what my child was like just based on the different feedback.

Early Intervention Services and Supports in Action

Narrator: Whenever possible, early intervention services should be provided in the contexts in which the child will need to utilize the skills. For example, language skills addressed during parts of childcare routines where child is expected to verbalize and indicate choices.

Robert (Parent): I really appreciated the teamwork between the therapists and the fact that they seem to know what each other are doing; that they seem to read each other's reports on how things are going. They do seem to try to coordinate the different things that they're doing to the greatest benefit of my son, and so their knowledge of not only what they are doing, but what the other people are doing is tremendously helpful.

Brandye (Child and Family Connections): A lot of the strategies should be embedded in just daily routines so it shouldn't feel like extra work for them. So they should really just go on with their daily routines and just bring in those extra strategies.

Melissa (Child Care Provider): Ideally, the child would be in the classroom with all the other students and with the teacher and so the teacher can learn skills of how the everyday experiences can be improved. And if somebody comes in from EI and it's like "ohh yeah, here let's do this, this, this and this. And I mean, you can almost see the kid just, like the pressure come off of the kid and you're like, "okay, show me what you just did."

Adrienne (Early Intervention Provider): Talking with the child care provider after, you know, or during each session about what's been going on throughout the week and what they see as their concerns and struggles are, as well as what the family might have concerns with and kind of giving them information about whatever they are concerned with. It's a collaborative team effort that we're all there for the best interest of the child, and we all want this child to succeed, so the more that we stay on the same page together, you know, the better the outcomes will be for the child.

Narrator: You can support a family in EI in many ways. First, you can help the family identify a developmental concern such as a delay in language development. Although it is very important to share concerns you have with the family in a timely manner, make sure to be sensitive when approaching a parent. Be willing to support and respect their responses and avoid diagnosing the child with a specific disability. Second, you can raise families' awareness of the availability of early intervention services by providing them with resources such as the phone number for their local CFC office and information on the EI program in your area. If you identify a concern, you are required to make a referral to your local CFC office as well. Third, with the family's permission, you can provide information during the assessment and intervention phases. If a child comes into your childcare program with an identified special need, ask to work with the family on their early intervention outcomes. You may ask for permission to see the child's IFSP and use it to guide your activities. Finally, you can welcome and partner with early intervention providers in your center or home-based childcare setting.

Amy: There are many benefits for supporting early intervention services for children in their childcare setting. Just to name a few, on average, children of working mothers spend 35 hours a week in childcare, so childcare

providers develop a caregiving bond that is critical to children's development. In addition, early intervention providers can observe children interacting with peers and age-appropriate activities. And last but not least, early intervention providers and childcare providers can combine skills to implement strategies systematically throughout the day. As a childcare provider, in addition to the child's parent, you are the earliest and most important teacher.

If everybody is on board and the kid is, it's going to be just totally and completely life changing.

Robert (Parent): I've got a lot of other partners in this and they're listening to me and I'm doing my best to listen to them. Of course, my wife and I then talk to each other about what's happening with the therapy and it provides just more voices, more experience, and trying to make an assessment of what he might need and what he might not. And a lot of the things we were afraid that he would need, he didn't need, but we know that now and we have a kind of a confidence and assurance because we did work with early intervention.

Revised 6/23/15