

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – SAN DIEGO REGIONAL CENTER (SDRC)

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1. What is Early Intervention?

It is a coordinated set of services designed to help eligible children close any developmental gaps. Services can include but are not limited to, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and behavioral services.

2. Are Early Start and San Diego Regional Center the same?

The Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities under Early Start is California's response to federal legislation ensuring that early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families are provided in a coordinated, family-centered system of services that are available statewide. Early Start is one part of what the Regional Center is responsible for.

3. Who is eligible? How long can a child be served through the Early Intervention program?

Children birth to age 36 months must meet one of the criteria listed below:

- Have a developmental delay of at least 33% in one or more areas: cognitive, communication, social or emotional, adaptive, or physical and motor development including vision and hearing.
- Or-have an established risk condition of known etiology, with a high probability of resulting in delayed development.
- Or-be considered at high risk of having a substantial developmental disability due to a combination of biomedical risk factors.

4. Who can refer a child to Early Intervention?

Anyone! A medical provider can refer as well as family, day care, etc.

5. How is a referral made?

For Early Start, the initial request for services is made by phone. During the phone call, the Early Start Program is explained, and permission is secured for the referral information to be shared with the other participating agencies at a weekly referral review meeting. Following that meeting, a Service Coordinator is assigned to coordinate evaluations and plan for needed services and supports.

6. What evaluations are done through Early Intervention and what does that entail?

Eligibility can be determined several ways such as through review of medical records or limited developmental testing that assess for areas of delay. The developmental testing may involve bringing your child in for a few hours to complete testing with an instrument such as the Infant-Toddler Developmental Assessment-Second Edition (IDA-2).

7. What happens after the evaluation?

Eligibility for Early Start must be determined within 45 days of the initial request. If the child is found eligible for the program, an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is developed in collaboration with the family and any other participating agencies that will be providing early intervention services. If the child is found not eligible, the family will be referred to other appropriate resources to address their concerns.

8. What services are provided through Early Intervention?

Development of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), including age 3 transition planning. Coordination of required Early Intervention services based on the needs of the child. Services may include: Assistive Technology; Audiology Services; Family Training, Counseling, Home Visits; Health Services; Medical Services (evaluations for early intervention services); Nursing Services; Nutrition Services; Occupational Therapy; Physical Therapy; Psychological Services; Service Coordination; Sign Language/Cued Language Services; Social Work Services; Special Instruction; Speech and Language Pathology; Transportation and Related Costs; Vision Services.

9. **Where do Early Intervention services happen and how is that determined?**

Services may be provided in the family home or at a specific center. This is determined through availability of resources, the family's needs, and several other factors.

10. **Who is eligible for services after age 3 years? How is eligibility determined? How long can a child be served through the Regional Center?**

After age 3 years, services are provided to individuals (children and adults) with developmental disabilities living in San Diego and Imperial Counties. These individuals **must have Intellectual Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, Epilepsy, and/or other conditions similar to Intellectual Disability**. The disability must originate prior to 18 years of age and likely to continue indefinitely. The individual **must also have substantial disability in at least 3 areas**: Communication, Self-Care, Self-Direction, Economic Self-sufficiency, Mobility, Capacity for independent Living.

11. **What services are provided after age 3 years?**

Behavior Intervention Training, Dental Services (under special circumstances), Medical Services (under special circumstances), Nutrition Services, Nursing Services, Psychological Services, Residential Services (parental fee may be required), Respite, Social Work/Service Coordination, Transportation (under special circumstances).

12. **How are services funded before age 3? After age 3?**

Prior to age 3 (Early Start)-The Early Start program is California's response to federal mandates. Although services are required as a condition for receiving a federal early intervention grant, this grant covers a relatively small portion (10%) of associated service costs. State funding covers the bulk of service costs (77%), with other fund sources (such as health insurance billing) covering the remainder of costs (13%).

After age 3 services are funded through generic resources such as insurance (BHT, mental health resources) or the school district. The Regional Center is the payee of **last resort**.

13. **What can parents do to help their child while they are waiting for evaluation or therapy services to start?**

Start gathering any medical documentation that may be helpful for the Regional Center. Provide lots of one-on-one support. Limit screen time as much as possible. Ask your child's pediatrician if other referrals may be needed.

14. **What is helpful for pediatricians and other professionals to communicate when referring a child to the Regional Center?**

If the family is reporting concerns that warrant a referral; please be specific with describing concerns. For autism spectrum disorder, indicate if there are "red flags" such as scripted speech, repetitive behaviors, sensory difficulties. Examples of concerns for intellectual disability could include reading below grade level and poor adaptive functioning. The term "diagnostic clarification" is too vague and will likely make it difficult to move forward with a referral.



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