

## What are Early Intervention (EI) services like?

Services on the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) are determined based on what support adult caregivers need to implement their plan in order to support their child in reaching functional child goals on the IFSP.

*Goals for the child are participation based, that is they are designed to promote the child's ability to participate in typical activities in order to practice new skills in the context of daily living.*

Early intervention is provided in “natural environments” (places the child would be and activities the child would be doing if he/she did not have a delay or disability). So, EI professionals or “service providers” meet with children and their adult caregivers at home, at childcare programs, or out and about in the community in places where the family goes. The therapist’s primary role is supporting the adults in the child’s life to help the child learn and develop.



## Who We Are . . .

First Connections is Arkansas’ early intervention program supporting families of infants and toddlers birth to the third birthday with developmental delay or disability.

First Connections is a federally-funded program under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Every State’s Part C early intervention program is under the US Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

The lead agency responsible for administering the First Connections’ program is:



## Division of Developmental Disabilities Services

First Connections

Slot N504

PO Box 1437

Little Rock, AR 72203

800-643-3179

<https://dhs.arkansas.gov/dds/firstconnectionsweb/#fc-home>



## First Connections



***Arkansas’ early intervention program supporting families of infants and toddlers birth to the third birthday with developmental delay or disability.***

Want to know more?  
Visit our Web site’s Families Page:  
<https://dhs.arkansas.gov/dds/firstconnectionsweb/#fc-families>



## Referral to First Connections

When parents have a concern about their child's early learning and development, they often talk to their child's doctor first. The child's primary care physician can refer the child for early intervention, or a parent may self-refer.

<https://dhs.arkansas.gov/dds/firstconnectionsweb/#fc-referrals>

**800-643-3179**

Once a referral is received, the family is contacted. During the call, the family's questions are answered, and the program asks about the parent's concerns and priorities for the child's early learning.

If a family cannot be reached by phone, a letter is sent to the address included in the referral. The letter will contain a program coordinator's contact information and a "response enclosure" where the parent can indicate interest or lack of interest.

*Family participation in early intervention is voluntary.*

***Appropriate early intervention is provided to families of eligible infants/toddlers at no cost to the family. Public and/or private insurance may be used to pay for early intervention.***

## What is the process?

A meeting is scheduled at a time and place convenient to the family. At this meeting, the service coordinator guides the family through the process and gets to know the family and their goals for their child. The family receives a copy of their rights and a list of provider programs to select a provider in the area in which they live to complete the developmental evaluation (of the child).

The developmental evaluation measures a child's skills in five different areas of development: physical, communication, cognitive (thinking/learning), adaptive (self-help), and social emotional.

The family and their EI team meet to go over the results of the evaluation and determine eligibility for early intervention together as a team.

***A child is eligible to participate in early intervention if he/she has a qualifying percent delay in any one area of development or has a diagnosed condition likely to result in a delay.***

If the child is eligible, the family's early intervention team helps the family develop a plan to meet their goals for their child's early learning and development. This plan is called an IFSP, or Individualized Family Service Plan.

## Goals of Early Intervention (EI)

Families are a child's first and best teacher. Families take an active role in early intervention, learning strategies to use at home and in the community to promote their child's early learning and development through naturally occurring learning opportunities.

Families also lead their child's "EI team" with the help of their "go to" person, their service coordinator.

***With the service coordinator and other early intervention professionals to assist, families learn their rights under IDEA and learn more about their child's unique strengths, abilities, and needs as they are supported in helping their child learn and develop new skills.***

