



Concerned for your Child's Development? We Can Help! Understanding Early Intervention

The Early Intervention Program (EIP) is for children birth to three years of age with a suspected developmental delay or diagnosed condition.

Initiating the process of early intervention can be a very daunting endeavor. We would like to give you some frequently asked questions that other parents have submitted.

I have concerns for my child's development but I am not sure what to do.

You can have them evaluated to see if they qualify for the Early Intervention Program. You can contact us at 631-207-1053 or the Suffolk County Department of Health at 631-853-3100 to start the evaluation process.

What does it cost?

There are no out-of-pocket expenses.

How is it funded?

Funding for early intervention services is through Suffolk County and the New York State Department of Health.

Who is eligible?

Children who are eligible for an evaluation are between birth to three years of age, suspected of having a developmental delay, or children who have a diagnosed condition which leads to a developmental delay.

After I make the initial phone call, what happens?

You will meet with a county representative in your home to fill out paperwork, and then you can choose your evaluators. The Therapy Center for Children is an approved evaluator.

Where does the evaluation take place?

The evaluation typically takes place in your home, but you can also choose a setting.

Who are the evaluators?

Therapists that have been approved by the New



York State Department of Health and have experience working with very young children.

What are the areas of development that can be addressed in the Early Intervention Program?

- *Gross Motor Skills* (large muscles used for things such as rolling, crawling, walking and climbing)
- *Fine Motor Skills* (refers to a child's ability to use small muscles: grasping, holding, transferring objects from hand to hand)
- *Cognitive Skills* (those related to children's mental development and include basic sensorimotor skills, such as object permanence, causality, means-end behavior, spatial relations and imitation.)
- *Social/Emotional Skills* (those related to toy use or social interactions with peers)
- *Language Skills* (a child's ability to understand spoken language, as well as to use their words to make wants and needs understood by others)
- *Self-Help Skills* (refers to a child's ability to attend to activities of daily living, including bottle holding and feeding)

Understanding Preschool Services

The preschool program provides services to children three to five years of age who have or are suspected of having a disability. Services provided are based upon the individual needs of the preschool child found to have a delay in development, as determined by the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) of your local school district. These services are at no direct cost to the parents. Funding for these services are provided through county taxes and state funds earmarked for special

education services provided. The Therapy Center for Children provides the following preschool services:

- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Psychological Services
- Speech Therapy

If you have concerns for your preschooler's development, you can contact your local school district or us at 631-207-1053.

Physical Therapy Services in Early Intervention

Karen Albergo-Tevez, PT

Physical Therapy (PT) services can be provided to children from birth through three years of age through the county's Early Intervention Program. The process begins with an evaluation of the child to determine his/her gross motor skill level in different areas such as stationary (sitting, standing), locomotor (crawling, walking, climbing) and skills requiring object manipulation (playing with blocks, balls). It also involves a detailed history of the child's developmental milestones and any relevant medical information.



Once the evaluation process is completed, the need for PT is determined by a team of parents, a PT, an educational evaluator, and a representative from the county's Department of Health. If services are recommended, then realistic and obtainable goals are developed by the team.

Physical Therapy should always be family-centered and child-directed. Treatment of the child takes place at the child's home or at a location that is convenient for the family. Family involvement is very important to the child's progress. It can strengthen the carryover of newly acquired skills into the child's daily life.

Therapy sessions may include strengthening/stretching activities to build muscle strength and joint stability, posture and balance activities to improve the child's ability to move through its environment without falling, and functional activities that represent things the child may encounter throughout its day, such as climbing, lifting/carrying, opening/closing, and pushing/pulling toys and other items children play with during the day. This is achieved through therapeutic play with the child by incorporating toys that require desired physical actions as well as other therapy equipment. Therapy balls, balance boards, theraband, scooters, and many other items that may seem like they are just for "play" can be incorporated into a child's therapy session in order to promote gross motor development and acquisition of specific skills.

The optimal environment for a child receiving early intervention services is when the families and Physical Therapists work together as a team with open communication and carryover into the child's daily routine. This will ensure that everyone is working towards the same goals for the child and this will help the child reach its fullest potential and maximize his/her independence and functioning in their environment.

Toys for Toddlers

Dr. Deena Abbe, Ph. D

Play is currently a hot topic. We as parents and therapists are constantly being bombarded with ideas on how to play with our kids.

I personally prefer toys with no batteries or noise. Your voice is the music to your child's ears (even if you think it's not). They recognize your voice, even in utero. So skip on most stuff with batteries and sound, if you can. To help, here are some suggestions:

You are the best toy your child can have. When you play with your child, support their activity and let them explore their world. Fifteen minutes a day of quality play time (no cell phone, no television, just child and adult) is irreplaceable. It gives you a chance to know your child, and a chance for your child to know and trust you. It strengthens the bond between parent and child. If you start with a strong bond now, when your child grows up, they will feel more comfortable and safe with you and have an easier time talking to you about what's important to them.

That being said, there is a wealth of toys out there to help you play with your child, no matter how old. The age, developmental and skill level, and interest of your child will help narrow down your plethora of toy options.

Between birth and six months old, your child is learning that they are their own person (not just an extension of you, although sometimes it might feel that way). They are learning that, when they move their arm, something happens! Rattles and squeeze toys are great for this age. And everyone talks about "tummy time": it's important for so many reasons for our children to learn to hold their head up, push themselves up with their arms, roll over from front to back (and then back to front). A great play mat with interesting shapes and textures on the floor will help encourage all these skills in your child. If you want your child to be on their belly, then the toys should not be above them, right? If they are, place them within reach (or a little beyond to encourage the child, depending on the skill level) at eye level. Best of all, you get down there, too!

By six months, your child is learning to explore his or her surroundings, usually through their mouth. Teethers are great for this. Stacking toys and rings allow children to sit up and play, and since most of these are soft, they also provide an excellent way to explore textures and shapes.

Around one year old, your child is beginning to attempt to accomplish simple goals (see something they want and crawl to it) and look for objects that are out of sight. They love the "put in" and "take out" game, and some may be starting to pull themselves up and begin cruising, if they

are not already walking. Blocks, shape sorters, riding toys (that they can push), and balls are all favorites at this age.

By eighteen months, children will begin to enjoy crayons and stuffed animals. Be aware, though, kids learn through their own discovery. Let them figure out how to color a circle or a square, and don't get too upset if it doesn't come out "perfect". Let them try and "tell" you what they made. Even if you don't understand what they are saying, this give-and-take babble sets the foundation for future language and back-and-forth conversation.



Stacking toys and rings allow children to sit up and play.

At two, these kids are taking things apart and dressing and undressing their dolls. They are learning to take turns in simple games (like rolling the ball back and forth between people). Their speech and their awareness of their surroundings are improving as well. These kids might like toys that lock and open, twist and turn. Big stacking blocks (like Mega Blocks) are great because little hands can pull them apart and put them together with ease. When they stack a tall tower, they are so proud of their accomplishment!

At three, children have longer attention spans (than, say, two seconds...) and will sit for some short nursery rhymes. They might even repeat them back to you! Now is a great time to introduce your favorite short stories. If you've gotten them used to a book and reading all along, they may be more likely at this age to sit and listen to your story. If they are not the sitting type, they might like some more "pretend" play toys, such as bigger action figures or play sets. You can act out what it's like to go to the grocery store, or to be a teacher. Simple puzzles and matching games (like memory) are appropriate at this age, as well. And best of all, with you as a patient and attentive teacher, anything is fun!

About Us

Founded by Christina Bellini-Zaher, The Therapy Center for Children, LLC is a company that provides early intervention and preschool home-based services.

The Therapy Center for Children's philosophy is that by providing these early intervention services, we will assist children to attain their maximum level of independence. This will improve the quality of life for children and their families, and will help them to actively participate in the meaningful and significant things that make their lives more purposeful.

The Therapy Center for Children is composed of licensed and experienced pediatric occupational therapists, physical therapists, psychologists, speech therapists and special educators located in Suffolk County.

The company is NYS Department of Health approved to provide early intervention services and preschool services in Suffolk County, New York. All therapist certifications require criminal background checks.

Funding for early intervention services is through Suffolk County and the NYS Department of Health. These services are of no out-of-pocket cost to families of eligible children. The Therapy Center for Children also provides private pay sessions.



Contact Us

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