



South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
IDEA/Part C Early Intervention System

Family Guide to the IDEA/Part C System

IDEA/Part C Family Guide

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Welcome to IDEA/Part C!

What is IDEA/Part C?

Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA/Part C) provides supports to families with children ages birth to three with disabilities, or delays in development. Your child has been referred to IDEA/Part C because you or someone who knows your child has a concern about his/her development. This Family Guide will walk you through the IDEA/Part C system from the day of referral to the day your child leaves IDEA/Part C.

Your Rights, Our Responsibilities

As a federal education program, you and your child have rights under IDEA/Part C that begin at referral and continue until your child's third birthday or when your child exits IDEA/Part C, whichever comes first. You will receive a notice of these rights at each step of the way.

Your Child's Records

Each IDEA/Part C form you are asked to sign explains the information to be gathered, with whom it will be shared, and the purpose of sharing the information. It will also tell you if the information will identify your child or be anonymous. Any information shared that identifies your child must have your consent. The same confidentiality applies to all information in your child's record. Your Intake Coordinator will give you a form to review that explains our responsibilities and your rights regarding your child's record.

For additional assistance about your rights, you are encouraged to contact our state's Parent Training and Information Center at Family Connection of South Carolina at 1-800-578-8750 (Para Español: 1-888-808-7462). Family Connection of South Carolina has regional offices across the state and serves all 46 counties in South Carolina, providing system navigation and connection to resources free of charge to families. <https://www.familyconnectionsc.org/>



You must provide permission for all the activities below. You will receive written notice in advance of each of the activities, except for referral to IDEA/Part C and notification to your school district.

First Steps: Getting Started

Referral and Initial Contact

When IDEA/Part C received your child's referral, a member of the Central Referral Team (CRT) contacted you to make sure the referral information was correct and to ask you if you would like to talk to someone to learn more about IDEA/Part C. Along with this Family Guide, you have received several permission forms for you to read and sign, and an appointment date and time to meet with an Intake Coordinator to begin the intake process.

Orientation and Intake

During the orientation and intake appointment, you will meet your Intake Coordinator. This person will be your guide in the first few weeks of IDEA/Part C activities and will begin by asking questions to get to know you and your child. These questions may include a screening or an eligibility evaluation (described below). **This person's work with you will end**

once your child's eligibility has been decided, but the Intake Coordinator will be a part of the team developing the first plan for your family and child, either by attending the initial IFSP team meeting or sending written information to the meeting.

In the orientation and intake meeting, the Intake Coordinator will:

- Go over your rights in detail.
- Describe the purpose of IDEA/Part C.
- Review the forms sent to you by the CRT, helping you complete them if needed.
- Answer any questions you may have about the IDEA/Part C Program.
- Gather additional health history as needed.
- Address concerns you may have about your child's development.

Initial Eligibility for IDEA/Part C

The eligibility process includes reviewing information to determine if your child is eligible. This review will include:

- Getting your child's medical and developmental history, including interviewing you about how you see your child's development.
- Reviewing medical, educational, or other records.
- Gathering information from other sources such as family members, other caregivers, medical providers, social workers, and educators, if necessary, to understand the full scope of your child's unique strengths and needs.
- Administering an IDEA/Part C eligibility evaluation unless your child has a qualifying diagnosis.
- Identifying your child's level of functioning in thinking/reasoning/problem-solving, communication, moving around and using his or his hands, doing things for independently, and relating to adults and other children.

Category I: Developmental Delay

The stages that infants and toddlers go through are made up of different skills, such as walking and talking. These skills, or developmental milestones, usually happen by certain ages. Most children develop skills in a predictable order. They crawl before they walk, and they point before they use words to tell you what they want. However, it is important to remember that every child develops in their own style and at their own pace.

The South Carolina IDEA/Part C early intervention system considers a child to have a developmental delay if they are considerably behind other children of the same age in one or more of the following areas:

- Cognitive Development - thinking and learning skills.
- Physical Development - moving, seeing, hearing and health.
- Communication Development - understanding and using sounds, gestures, and words.
- Social-Emotional Development - responding to and developing relationships with people.
- Adaptive Development - taking care of oneself when doing things like feeding or dressing.

Your child's development will be evaluated through a variety of ways including observation, parent report, and evaluations and assessments by qualified developmental professionals. Evaluations and assessments are individualized to address the unique needs and concerns of your child and family.

Category II: Established Condition

A child is considered to have an established condition if the child has a diagnosed physical or mental disorder which has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay. Examples include certain genetic disorders, neurological

disorders, severe prematurity, vision impairment, hearing loss or autism.

(The above descriptions are summaries and not a complete definition of the eligibility categories. You can get more information by asking your Intake Coordinator.)

Service Coordination

If your child is eligible for IDEA/Part C, the next step is selecting a Service Coordinator. The federal law for IDEA/Part C requires that each family always have an assigned Service Coordinator. The choice of provider for service coordination must be made after your child is found eligible for IDEA/Part C services, but before the family and child assessments and development of the initial IFSP. Your Intake Coordinator will explain the purpose of service coordination and is responsible for sending relevant information about you and your child to your new Service Coordinator. To help you make your decision, a description of each type of Service Coordinator and the choices for area were included in the intake packet mailed to you after referral.

Your Intake Coordinator will give you more information about the Service Coordinators in your area that work with your child's diagnosis or delay. The Intake Coordinator will then contact the ones you choose so that your service coordination can be immediately transferred. **If the service coordination choices you selected are not available, or you do not have a choice in mind, the Intake Coordinator will automatically make a referral to the next company on the list that works where you live. The Intake Coordinator cannot make the choice for you or make a recommendation regarding which company you should choose. You may change Service Coordinators at any time.**

Service Coordination for Implementation of Your Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

Your Service Coordinator will coordinate:

- Across agency lines, serving as a single point of contact.
- Required evaluations and assessments.
- Doctor's visits, diagnostic appointments, and sessions with your early intervention service providers as needed.
- Access to early intervention services and other services, making referrals, scheduling appointments.
- Early intervention services identified on the IFSP in a timely manner.
- Funding sources to pay for early intervention services.
- The development of transition plans.

Your Service Coordinator will help you:

- Gain access to early intervention services and other services.
- Access treatment and supports from qualified providers.
- Follow up on early intervention services and other services.
- Understand your rights and the procedural safeguards.
- Develop, review, and evaluate your IFSP.

Family Assessment

Now that your child is eligible for IDEA/Part C, the next step is to begin gathering information to develop the IFSP. To make sure the plan and your early intervention services are focused on changes important to you and your child, the Service Coordinator will offer to complete a voluntary **family assessment** that identifies and describes the resources, priorities, and concerns you have, and the supports and early intervention services you may need to enhance your family's capacity to meet the developmental needs of your child.

Child Assessment

The last step before developing the Initial IFSP is to assess your child's unique strengths and needs. Just as the evaluation told you **what your child is able to do** when compared to other children the same age, the assessment will tell you and those working with your family **how your child does these things** in your family's routines and activities, and what skills or supports might be needed for her or him to participate more fully with your family. The assessment must include observation of your child based on what you share in the family assessment. The child assessment will include:

- A review of the results of the eligibility evaluation from your Intake Coordinator. If a standardized tool was used to help determine your child's eligibility, those results can be used as the initial child assessment.
- An observation of your child that is guided by the information gathered in your family assessment.
- Identify and describe how your child participates (or functions) in each area of development.

Next Steps: The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

What is an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)?

The Individualized Family Service Plan, or IFSP, is your family's written plan for IDEA/Part C. It describes how you and your early intervention team will work together to address the needs identified for your child and family. The IFSP is family centered which means that you will be an active team member and the key decision maker in the IFSP process.

The IFSP is based on information from your child's evaluation and from the concerns, resources, and priorities that you identify. Like a road map or travel itinerary, the IFSP shows where you are going (child and family outcomes or goals), how and when you might get there (services and projected timelines), and who will be going with you for support (service providers, family, friends, and/or other community supports).

Your Service Coordinator is responsible for explaining the IFSP to you. He or she will make sure the IFSP is written and will answer any questions you have.

Your signature on the IFSP shows your participation and your agreement with the plan. However, if you disagree with all or part of the IFSP, you have the right to share your concerns and ask for changes. You may accept or refuse any or all services suggested to you. You may stop a service anytime you wish. A copy of the IFSP will be given to you after it is completed and signed.

The written IFSP is reviewed every six months. However, your needs and resources may change more frequently. You can request an update or review of your child's IFSP at any time.

Once the outcomes are identified, you and the IFSP team will discuss:

- If any additional evaluations are needed.
- Any early intervention services you may need to help you child reach these outcomes.
- Strategies likely to work best to help your child learn.
- How often early intervention services will be delivered and when early intervention services will be provided.
- How the early intervention services will be paid.

IDEA/Part C requires that early intervention services be delivered in your home or community and in activities or places where other children the same age as your child would typically learn. Services delivered outside of your routines and activities for any reason must be justified in the IFSP, include a plan for returning services to your home or community, and be reviewed every six months during the periodic or annual review of your plan. If there are no providers who can come to your home, the IFSP must say why, and how often the Service Coordinator will follow-up in finding a provider. When a provider is available to come to your home, the IFSP must be changed to add that person.

If you choose to use a provider who does not come to your home when one is available, or use a provider not under contract with us, IDEA/Part C is not allowed pay for that service.

What Early Intervention Services are Available to My Child and Family?

A variety of supports and services are available through IDEA/Part C. Service Coordination is a required service. This means that IDEA/Part C must make them available if they are included on your IFSP.

Service Coordination is the only service each family must receive. All other EIS are determined by your concerns, resources, the changes you want to see for your child and family, and what you need to help you help your child develop and learn.

Available Early Intervention Services (EIS)

- Assistive technology
- Audiology
- Family training, counseling, and home visits
- Medical services for diagnosis and evaluation
- Nursing services
- Nutrition services
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Psychological services
- Service coordination
- Sign language and cued language
- Social work services
- Special education & instruction
- Speech and language pathology
- Transportation
- Vision services

Who Will Provide the Services for My Family?

After the plan is developed, your Service Coordinator will find qualified people to provide services on your plan and to make sure the plan is carried out as it has been written. **You must contact your child's Service Coordinator to arrange all services and make any changes to services or providers.**

Who pays for services?

By federal law, IDEA/Part C must explore all funding sources prior to using State or Federal early intervention funds. South Carolina's system of payments for early intervention services includes private insurance and public benefits/insurance (for example, Medicaid). There are no fees to participate. Insurance coverage changes should be shared with your Service Coordinator as soon as possible. More information can be found in the Written Notice Related to Private Insurance and Medicaid Part C.

IDEA/Part C services *cannot* be denied or delayed if you do not have private insurance or Medicaid.

Early Childhood Outcomes

One way to learn more about your child's progress is through three "child outcomes" that are measured for every child in the United States who is in a program like IDEA/Part C at entry and again at exit. Your Service Coordinator will review the document entitled, '*A Family Guide to Participating in the Child Outcomes Measurement Process*' with you before the IFSP team meeting. The outcomes may be measured at the initial IFSP team meeting, or up to a month after the initial meeting, and again at the IFSP Team meeting just before your child exits IDEA/Part C (see below).

Reviewing, Evaluating, and Changing The IFSP

To make sure your IFSP stays current and useful as your child grows and your family needs change, IDEA/Part C requires:

- A six-month review of the IFSP.
- A change review to update/revise the IFSP as needed.
- An annual meeting to re-evaluate your child's eligibility and review the IFSP.

Future Steps: Leaving IDEA/Part C

The Transition Plan

At or around your child's second birthday, your IFSP Team will work with you to plan your child's transition from early intervention at age three, and if eligible, to preschool special education services. **This transition involves key decisions about your child's future.** By sharing concerns and preferences with both your IFSP team and the preschool program staff and actively participating in transition planning, you will help your child adjust to new settings and services. During the transition process, your Service Coordinator is required to ensure the following:

- Formal notification is sent to the local school district when your child turns two years old. This lets the school district know that your child is potentially eligible for preschool special education services.
- A review of IFSP outcomes, supports, and/or services is discussed at the IFSP team meeting held closest to your child's second birthday and changes are made to support your child's transition.
- A formal transition referral is sent to the local school district when your child is between 27 and 33 months of age. This starts the school district's process for scheduling its eligibility determination process.
- Your permission is obtained before sending any information about your child to the school district or other agencies to make sure there is not a break in services. This applies to both the transition referral and the transition conference.
- A transition conference with the program you have chosen is held between age 2 years and 3 months and 2 years and 9 months of age.

Family Outcomes

For all families, the goal of IDEA/Part C is to support and empower you to take care of your child, make informed decisions, and have the resources you need for your child to fully take part in family and community activities. How well IDEA/Part C does this is assessed through *family outcomes*. In other words, have IDEA/Part C supports and services help you:

- Understand your child's strengths, abilities, and special needs.
- Know your rights and advocate effectively for your child.
- Help your child develop and learn.
- Develop support systems.
- Access desired services, programs, and activities in your community.

You will receive a Family Outcomes Survey with instructions for completion during your family's participation in IDEA/Part C services and always immediately following your child's exit from services. Your responses to this survey are important, as they let us know how well we are meeting the needs of families.

Concerns and Complaints

There may be times when you have a concern that needs to be addressed, a disagreement with your Service Coordinator or an Early Intervention Service (EIS) provider or feel that your rights under IDEA/Part C have been violated.

For **concerns or disagreements**, informal solutions are encouraged. This includes talking with the Service Coordinator or early intervention service provider about a concern or disagreement (ex., a provider who is frequently late for appointments). If the concern is not resolved, a meeting of the IFSP team may be requested, or the issue can be brought to the attention of:

- The Service Coordinator's supervisor at:
 - South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (SCDDSN)
 - South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind (SCSDB)
- Early Intervention Service Providers, including company managers or owners
- An agency-level program manager at SCDDSN or SCSDB
- An IDEA/Part C State Office Regional Coordinator

If at any time you think your or your child's rights have been violated, you have the right to file a formal written complaint about services received or denied. You may also request mediation and/or a due process hearing to resolve disagreements. The links to the supervisors, program managers, and regional coordinators contact information, as well as all forms, instructions, and resources explaining dispute resolution options are available online at our website below <https://msp.scdhhs.gov/babynet/site-page/part-c-babynet-disputes-and-concerns>

IDEA/Part C Step-by-Step

This is an overview of the steps your family may take while in early intervention.

First Steps: Getting Started

1

Referral

- Referrals may be made by calling the central referral line or submitting a referral via the online webform at <https://babynet.scdhhs.gov/prebabynet/>
- When the referral is received, an Intake Coordinator will be assigned to assist your family.

2

Initial Contact and Eligibility Evaluation

- During your initial contact with the Intake Coordinator, you will be asked about your child, his or her development, and medical history.
- In order to determine if your child is eligible for IDEA/Part C services, an evaluation of your child’s current abilities may be completed.

3

Family and Child Assessments

- The family assessment will help us learn your concerns and priorities, and in which parts of your day you would like your child to participate.
- The child assessment will show us your child’s unique strengths and needs, and if any adaptations may be needed to help him or her participate in your routines and activities.

Next Steps: Services

4

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

- You, your Service Coordinator, and others will develop the IFSP together.
- Development of the initial IFSP must occur within 45 days of referral.

5

Delivery of Services

- Your child will receive the services as outlined in the IFSP.
- Services listed in the IFSP should begin no later than 30 days after the IFSP is developed and signed by the family.

6

IFSP Reviews

- As the needs of your child and family change, supports and services may also need to change.
- The IFSP will be reviewed at least every six months to make sure it still fits your priorities and your child’s and family’s needs.
- You can request an update or review of your IFSP at any time.

Future Steps: Leaving the Program

7

Transition

- Children transition out of IDEA/Part C when they are no longer eligible for the program or when they turn three years of age.
- Transition plans are outlined in the IFSP.



For additional information, please visit the IDEA/Part C website at <https://msp.scdhhs.gov/babynet/>