

Supporting Infant and Toddler Early Intervention in Pennsylvania

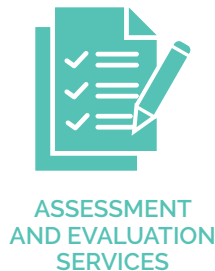
What is Infant and Toddler Early Intervention (EI)?

Infant and Toddler EI is a program that provides services to children from birth to 3 years who have a developmental delay or a high probability of having a developmental delay. Also referred to as Part C EI, these services aim to improve outcomes that are critical to a family's ability to support their child's health, optimal development, educational success, and lifelong well-being.

Infant and Toddler EI services are structured to identify and meet the needs of young children in five developmental areas: physical development; cognitive development; communication development (language); social or emotional development; and adaptive skills.

These services are delivered through an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) developed in collaboration between an EI team of professionals and the family. Families are trained and encouraged to carry out recommended activities at home.

Infant and Toddler EI services include, but are not limited to:



The federal Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers was authorized in 1986 under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)—which is where the Part C of the term derives. States administer the program, and in Pennsylvania, it is jointly overseen by the Department of Education (Part B) and the Department of Human Services (Part C), with direct administration by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning.

What is the difference between Part C and Part B Early Intervention?



Infant and Toddler EI (Part C)

- Age of children served: Birth through 2
- Location of service delivery: Through coaching and collaboration in the child's home or other natural environments, like child care centers or Early Head Start programs
- Administration of program: County government, with contracted professionals
- State government oversight: Pennsylvania Department of Human Services

Preschool EI (Part B)

- Age of children served: 3 through 5
- Location of service delivery: Outside of the home—often in early care and education environments like child care centers, pre-k programs, and Head Start programs
- Administration of program: Predominantly through Pennsylvania's Intermediate Units, except in Philadelphia County, where it is administered by Elwyn
- State government oversight: Pennsylvania Department of Education



Who is Eligible for Infant and Toddler EI Services?

EI services are available for all infants and toddlers with delays in development and their families. No diagnosis is needed. Unlike some other early childhood programs, there is no income eligibility or cost to the family regardless of income.

Under federal EI rules, each state defines eligibility. In Pennsylvania, an infant or toddler with a disability is defined as a child experiencing a 25% developmental delay in one or more of the five areas of development (listed above) or has a diagnosed physical or mental condition with a high probability of resulting in developmental delay.

Families may self-refer to Infant and Toddler EI. Children are also referred from birth hospitals/neonatal intensive care units (NICUs), pediatric primary care providers, early care and education providers, other health or social service agencies, including home visiting services, and those who serve vulnerable families in homeless shelters and domestic violence agencies.

Benefits from children receiving EI services:

- ✓ Reduced educational costs by minimizing the need for special education.
- ✓ Enhanced capacity of families to meet their child's needs.
- ✓ Improved child health and education outcomes.
- ✓ Enhanced development of infants and toddlers with disabilities.

How Can Policymakers Support Infant and Toddler EI?

Infant and Toddler EI is funded through a patchwork of sources in most states, including Pennsylvania. Funding streams include federal Part C funds, state Part C funds, county matching dollars (10% of state allocation to the county), and Medicaid fee-for-service payments to EI providers. By law, federal funds must be the last funding source used (i.e., payer of last resort). Federal funds are also limited and fall short of covering the program's total cost in every state. Infant and Toddler EI depends on state funding support to ensure that every child needing services is referred to and receiving them.

In 2021-22 there were 46,200 children in Pennsylvania served in Infant and Toddler EI. This shows that likely only a small fraction of infants and toddlers who may be eligible participate in EI.

As part of the final 2024-25 state budget package, policymakers should **support at minimum Governor Shapiro's proposed increase of \$16.6 million for Part C Early Intervention**, which will serve an additional 3,000 children and their families.

- This is just a first step in a much-needed broader solution that also includes a long-needed rate adjustment for Early Intervention providers and will serve additional children.
- Additional support would help to address key issues in the sector, including workforce shortages, achieving equitable enrollment, moving to the coaching model, and addressing the growing needs of families across the Commonwealth.



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Thrivling PA is an initiative of the Early Learning Pennsylvania coalition, which advocates for access to voluntary, high-quality early care and education and healthy development opportunities for every child in Pennsylvania.