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# What's the IDEA\* About the Infant and Toddler Program?

If your infant or toddler has been identified with a hearing loss, s/he may be eligible for services under the Infant and Toddler Program of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA is the federal law that governs the education of children with disabilities. The Infant and Toddler Program is also known as "Part C." Each state must have a "child find" system to locate eligible children. To find out if your child is eligible, contact your local school district.

In exchange for federal funding, states and local agencies agree to follow specific state and local plans to provide services to children and their families. Individual states and local agencies may have their own name for their infant and toddler program, also known as an early intervention program. The services offered may include:

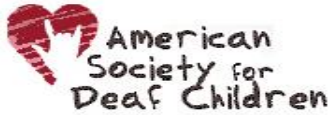
- family training, counseling, and home visits;
- special instruction;
- speech-language pathology and audiology;
- sign language and cued language services;
- vision services;
- assistive technology devices (such as hearing aids) and assistive technology services; and
- other services.

The manner in which services are provided varies from place to place. In some areas, services are managed by a health department. In others, they are provided through an education department. In any case, service providers are to work together to ensure that appropriate services are offered to each child and family.

An important requirement of early intervention programs is that an Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) be developed for each child and family. The IFSP is a written plan

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\*The "What's the IDEA" series describes various sections of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This is educational material, not legal advice. ASDC assumes no liability for this material. © American Society for Deaf Children, 2006.



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that outlines the services your family and child will receive. The IFSP is based on information about your child and family and is written by the multidisciplinary team, which includes professionals and the parents of the child. It is evaluated once a year and reviewed every six months, or more if needed. Before the IFSP is written, there must be:

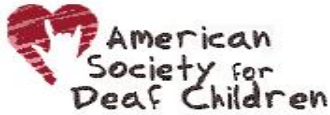
- a multidisciplinary assessment of your child and identification of services appropriate to meet his or her needs. Appropriate qualified personnel should assess your child in the areas of:
  - cognitive development,
  - physical development, including vision and hearing,
  - communication development,
  - social or emotional development, and
  - adaptive development.

For example, an audiologist would evaluate your child's hearing.

- a family-directed assessment of the resources, priorities, and concerns of your family. This is based on discussion with your family and must be voluntarily on your part. Here is where you can tell the multidisciplinary team what you have to support your child, such as your own skills, extended family, or ability to access information. You can express your priorities for your child, such as developing age appropriate language, meeting other developmental milestones, or having a good relationship with siblings. You can document your concerns, such as you were not expecting your child to have a hearing loss and are not sure what to do, you are concerned that hearing aids for your child will be unavailable because of cost, or you are not sure what resources are available in the community.
- an identification of the supports and services necessary to help your family meet the needs of your child. This is an extension of the discussion of resources, priorities, and concerns. The multidisciplinary team can identify these supports and services.

The IFSP must contain:

- a statement of your child's present level of development (based on the multidisciplinary assessment);
- a statement of your family's resources, priorities, and concerns relating to your child (as described above);
- a statement of the major outcomes expected, including pre-literacy and language skills;
- a statement of specific early intervention services necessary;



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- a statement of the natural environments (such as the home or a community setting) in which early intervention services will be provided, including a justification if services are not provided in a natural environment;
- dates of the start of services, and duration of services;
- the identification of the service coordinator who will be responsible for implementing the plan; and
- the steps to be taken to support the transition of your toddler to preschool or other appropriate services.

The contents of the IFSP must be explained to parents. Parents may accept or decline early intervention services. There are a number of procedural safeguards in place to ensure that infants and toddlers and their families receive appropriate services. These include:

- a means to resolve complaints by parents, including through legal means such as an administrative complaint or law suit;
- the right to confidentiality;
- the right to accept or decline services;
- the right to examine the child's records;
- written prior notice (in most cases in the parent's native language) regarding the child's identification, evaluation, and placement; and
- the right to use mediation to resolve disputes.