

The basics

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) is a statewide program for families with children birth to age 3, with developmental delays, disabilities, or certain medical diagnoses that may impact development. ECI services support families as they learn to help their children grow and learn.

The Texas Health and Human Services Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program provides services statewide to families with children birth up to 36 months who have developmental delays, disabilities or certain medical diagnoses that may impact development.

Most ECI services are provided at home; however, services can be provided in other settings. An important outcome of ECI is that families receiving services feel they know how to support their children's development both at home and in their communities. Community settings can include early care and education programs, library programs, or typical play in the neighborhood park or playground.

ECI services are intended to support the child and family, along with community providers, so the child can fully participate in the community experience. What this looks like will be different for every child because every child has different needs. The child's plan for services should be addressed on a regular basis and individualized to meet the needs of the child and the expectations of the family.

ECI families want their children to participate in community settings. Why? Because learning new skills in other settings help their children to:

- learn skills that are useful for everyday life,
- interact with other children, who model the desired skills,
- practice new skills,
- experience a sense of belonging,
- develop social skills,
- be motivated to try new things, and
- gain confidence in their abilities.

Parents may ask that some of their ECI services be provided in their child's early care and education classroom. In this setting, the ECI provider is focused on coordinating learning activities with the teacher to ensure the child is fully participating in

class activities. This may mean adapting the activity, changing or rearranging the classroom, suggesting new or different ways to use toys and equipment to meet the child's needs, or supporting peer relationships in the classroom. In addition, ECI providers work with the teachers to designate the best time to provide services such as during circle time, snack time, or outdoor play, for example, to help meet the child's needs and goals.

BE MOTIVATED TO TRY NEW THINGS.

ECI may also work with a teacher to understand how to structure tasks in smaller developmental steps to support and document a child's learning. This allows parents and teachers to set realistic expectations for the child. And together they are better able to recognize and applaud the child's accomplishments. The ECI provider's role is not to replace communication between the family and a child care provider, but to offer strategies that support the child's development both at home and in the child care setting.

Here are some suggestions or possible questions you may want to discuss with a family:

- Identify experiences they think will benefit their child. If they are not sure, ask if they are open to exploring ideas and share what you have observed.
- Ask parents what activities their child likes. This will help you know which activities will be a good fit for the child.
- Discuss together what strengths you both see in the child.

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- Think about some of the challenges that may come up. Share ideas you have about minimizing the challenges to participation. Ask what works at home.
 - What are their goals and expectations for their child?
 - How does the parent want communication to occur? What works best?

Early Intervention provides immediate and long-term benefits for children and families. To find out more about ECI services, call 1-877-787-8999 or visit the ECI web page at hhs.texas.gov/eci.

Here are some additional topics you may find of interest:

ECI Resources: A robust collection of resources of interest to families of children with developmental delays or disabilities.

ECI Professionals: ECI has licensed and credentialed professionals who provide services.

ECI Program Search: Find a local ECI program in your area.

ECI Videos: Learn more about ECI from a family's perspective.

Information for Families: Learn about ECI and review the developmental milestones from birth to 36 months. ■