

# Family Education Sheet

## Early Intervention for Children (0–3) and Transition to Pre-K in Massachusetts



Boston Children's Hospital  
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Patient and Family Education  
[www.childrenshospital.org](http://www.childrenshospital.org)

### What is Early Intervention (EI)?

**Early intervention (EI)** is a family-centered program for children from birth through age 3. Your child may qualify for EI services if they have developmental delays, are at risk for a developmental delay due to social or medical history, or have a specific diagnosis.

EI services are meant to help support families and caregivers to enhance the development of infants and toddlers.

### How do I get started?

**Anyone in Massachusetts can make a referral.** This includes the parents, other caregivers, friends, doctors, and teachers.

You **do not** need a prescription or a diagnosis.

To ask for a list of certified EI programs in your community, contact Massachusetts Family TIES. Once you find out your local EI program, call them directly to begin the intake and evaluation process.

**Massachusetts Family TIES**  
<https://www.massfamilyties.org/>  
1-800-905-TIES (8437)

Once parents agree, the EI team will do an evaluation of your child and meet your family to see if your child qualifies for EI services. The evaluation focuses on key areas of child development, including feeding and self-help skills, attention and play skills, language, motor abilities, and social-emotional development.

If your child is eligible, an **Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)** will be written based on your family's needs. The IFSP meeting happens within 45 days of the EI referral. IFSP outcomes are reviewed every 6 months.

Caregivers play a major role in writing the IFSP outcomes. Your EI service coordinator may be asking questions about your and your child's daily routine to get a better idea of what is easy and hard throughout the day.

EI is a family-centered program and the focus surrounds the priorities and concerns you have for your child and family.

**Note:** You may have more than one EI agency nearby. If this is the case, be sure to look at them all to see which one can best meet your child's needs.

### What do services look like?

EI services occur where the child spends much of their time (natural environment). This can include the home, child care, or outside in the community.

Unlike outpatient therapy, EI services focus on parent/caregiver coaching to utilize important skills that help the child grow and gain necessary skills. EI programs use the PIWI Model (Parents Interacting with Infants) to guide their sessions. Caregiver involvement is the most important aspect of EI services.

Examples of available services include:

- Developmental specialists
- Nurses
- Occupational therapists
- Physical therapists
- Social workers
- Music Therapists
- Speech language pathologists
- Developmental play groups

Be sure to ask your child's clinical providers what they recommend for services. You should share their recommendations with your EI service coordinator.

### How much do EI services cost?

**EI services are free to you.** EI is federally funded, but your agency may ask for your insurance information. Most health insurance plans cover some or all of EI service costs but the Massachusetts Department of Public Health will pay for any costs that are not covered by insurance.

### Transition from EI to pre-K

**The transition (switch) from EI to special education** is a very important time for your child. If your child is enrolled in EI, your service coordinator is responsible for discussing the transition into Pre-K.

### What if my child is unable to get education services?

**Do not worry—there are options!** If your child is not eligible, or if you choose to reject any school services, you can choose to pay for preschool or enroll in **Head Start** if you cannot pay for preschool. Head Start is a good plan for families who meet federal income eligibility requirements. The program offers a preschool setting with teaching and services based on each child's needs.

**Explore Head Start and find your local contact:**  
[eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices)

**Note:** This journey can be complicated. **Use supportive resources that can help you.** There are many support groups available. Please ask your child's providers and your community organizations. You are not alone!

This Family Education Sheet is available in [Spanish](#).

