

Part C Early Intervention

All children grow and develop at their own pace. However, sometimes children have special developmental needs or health concerns that may put them at risk for, or cause, a developmental delay. Early intervention services are available to help families who have concerns about the development of their young child (birth to three).

Early intervention is the process of anticipating, identifying and responding to concerns about a baby's or toddler's development in order to minimize potential adverse effects and maximize healthy development. Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act provides the legislative and regulatory authority for states to carry out this process.

Early intervention supports and services include evaluations of a child's strengths and needs; individualized learning experiences; special therapies such as physical, occupational and/or speech and language therapy; family supports such as home visits; service coordination; and transition supports to facilitate a smooth change from early intervention to preschool programs. These services may be provided in homes, childcare centers, Early Head Start programs or other early childhood settings.

THE FAMILY INFANT TODDLER PROGRAM

In New Mexico, Part C early intervention services are provided under the Department of Health Family Infant Toddler (FIT) Program. The FIT Program is a state and federally funded entitlement program for families whose child is under the age of three and has or is at risk for a developmental delay or disability. Early intervention services may begin at any time between birth and age three; however, when early intervention is needed, the earlier it is provided, the better the outcome for the child and family.

The FIT Program's mission is to strengthen the capacity of families to meet the developmental and health-related needs of their infant or toddler. The FIT Program ensures that families receive supports and services that are:

- ◆ Family-centered;
- ◆ Based on relationships;
- ◆ Focused on the strengths of the child and family; and
- ◆ Provided in natural environments (where the child lives, learns and plays).

The FIT Program contracts with more than 30 early intervention agencies throughout the state of New Mexico to provide services locally. Early intervention supports and services are funded through the family's health insurance (with an annual cap of \$3,500), Medicaid and State General Funds; most services are provided free of charge to the family.

Family Infant Toddler Program

FIT Program Overview

