

Family Guidebook I



Referral and Eligibility for Colorado Early Intervention Services

Second Edition



This guidebook and others are available at www.eicolorado.org

Dear Family,

Since 1964, Colorado has been helping families and their children with developmental delays and disabilities. Through the years, the Early Intervention (EI) Colorado program has guided families along the way, in order to support infants and toddlers, who need extra help developing and learning to reach their fullest potential.

This guidebook is the first of three family guidebooks and explains the referral and eligibility determination process. If your child is eligible, you will receive other guidebooks that describe the planning process, help your family determine what services may be needed and provide information about transitioning out of the EI Colorado program no later than your child's third birthday.

You are the most important person in your child's life. We encourage you and your family to participate in each step of the process. Welcome!



Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Referral for Early Intervention Services	2
An introduction to the Early Intervention (EI) Colorado program	2
Meeting Your Service Coordinator	3
Service Coordinators	3
What can you expect from your service coordinator during the referral and evaluation and/or assessment process?	3
Screening Your Child’s Development	4
Having an Evaluation and/or Assessment Done	5
How is eligibility decided?	5
What is a multidisciplinary evaluation and/or assessment?	5
What if your child is eligible?	7
What can the EI Colorado Program offer your family?	7
Your Family Rights	7
What EI services can be provided?	8
What if your child is not eligible?	8
How will you keep up with information?	9
Appendix A: Family Contact Form	11
Appendix B: Other People Who Can Help (Form)	12

Introduction

You have received this guidebook because you or someone who cares about your child has concerns about his or her development. This guidebook will describe the referral process and how your child’s eligibility is determined.

Referral for Early Intervention Services

An introduction to the Early Intervention (EI) Colorado program

The EI Colorado program is all about helping parents and families meet the developmental needs of their infants and toddlers. The words “parents” and “families” are used to mean anyone who is in charge of the care and well-being of a child. These can be legal guardians, single parents, grandparents, surrogate parents, foster parents, or other family members.

The EI Colorado program provides EI services, such as occupational, speech, or physical therapy, to help infants and toddlers develop and learn. It can also help you and your family learn ways to support and promote your child’s development, within your family activities and community life. It is a voluntary program and does not discriminate based on race, culture, religion, income level, or disability.

The Colorado Department of Human Services administers the EI Colorado program. There are local agencies known as Community Centered Boards (CCBs) throughout Colorado who are responsible for implementing the local EI Colorado program. To be connected to the CCB in your county, you can call 1-888-777-4041 or visit www.eicolorado.org, click on the “Local Early Intervention Contacts” icon and choose the appropriate city, county or zip code for your family.

If a doctor or other professional involved in your child’s life, such as child care provider, or a home visiting nurse has screened your child’s development, it is important for the EI Colorado program to have a copy of this information at the time of referral.

Meeting Your Service Coordinator

A service coordinator is a person who works with you during your child's involvement with the EI Colorado program to assist you in accessing services and supports and to inform you of your legal rights. Federal and state laws require that all children and families served by the EI Colorado program have a service coordinator. A service coordinator is your main contact and is assigned to each infant or toddler and their family within three business days of the referral being received.

Service Coordinators:

- Help families identify their strengths and needs, find resources, think about decisions the family needs to make, coordinate all the services specified on the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), and
- Make sure that the rights of the family are protected.

Your family may choose to carry out the first of these on your own. However, the early intervention system is required by law to provide someone to protect your legal rights.

A service coordinator should offer the type and amount of help that you want or need. He or she should respect your decisions and help you carry them out. The person serving as your service coordinator may change if your child's or



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family's needs and desires change. If you want to have a different service coordinator, you may make a request directly to your service coordinator or his or her supervisor.

What can you expect from your service coordinator during the referral and evaluation and/or assessment process?

Your service coordinator will help set up the multidisciplinary evaluation and/or assessment and can answer questions you might have about the process. Evaluations and/or assessments can be done in a variety of places and ways. It will most likely involve talking with you about your child, learning about your child by watching him or her play, and interacting with your child. Because you know your child best, you will be a very important part of the evaluation and/or assessment process. Your service coordinator is responsible for making sure that your wishes and concerns guide this process.

If it is determined that your child is not eligible at this time, the evaluation team and/or your service coordinator will refer your child and family to other appropriate supports



and services outside of the El Colorado program, if needed. You can always contact the CCB serving your community in the future if you have renewed concerns about your child's development. If you do not agree with the results of the evaluation, you have the right to object to the decision and to file a complaint. Your service coordinator will assist you with this process.

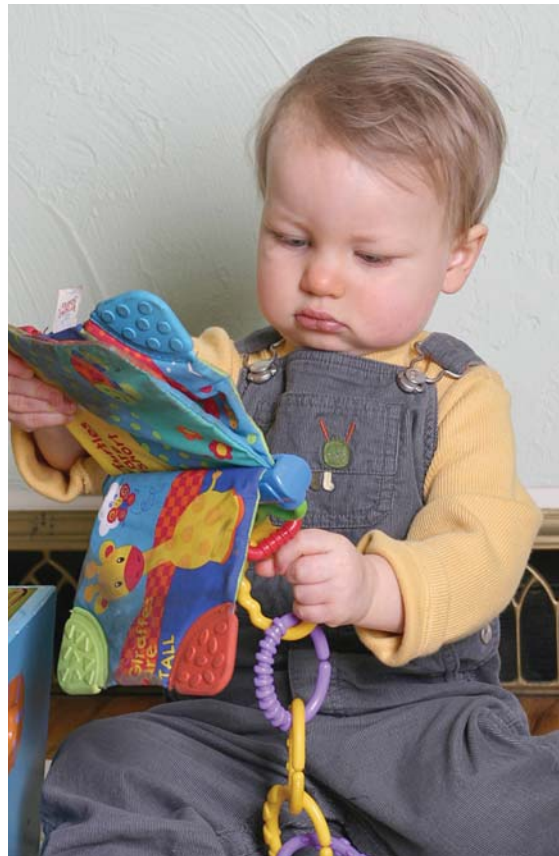
If your child is eligible, your service coordinator will work with you and the other members of the IFSP team to develop your child's IFSP. This plan is discussed in detail in the second family guidebook, "Individualized Family Service Plan and Orientation to Early Intervention Services".

Screening Your Child's Development

Depending on the reason of referral and if your child's development has not already been screened, a request may be made to screen your child's development. A screening is a quick look at how your child is developing and learning. People trained to determine how your child is developing conduct screenings to:

- Find out what areas of development, if any, are behind what would be expected for your child.
- Help an evaluation team decide what type of evaluation may be best for your child and who should be involved.
- Find out if your child's development is "on target" even though a problem was suspected.

A screening can only occur with your written permission and you will receive the results of this screening to help you plan next steps. If the screening shows your child's development is "on target," it is unlikely that your child will be eligible for the El Colorado program. Even if the screening suggests your child is developing on target, you have the right to ask for, and get, a full multidisciplinary evaluation and/or assessment for your child.



Five Areas of Development

- Adaptive or self-help skills—such as feeding and dressing;
- Cognitive skills—such as thinking, learning, and reasoning;
- Communication skills—such as understanding and using sounds, gestures, and words, pointing, understanding your words, expressing thoughts;
- Physical development—such as vision, hearing, movement and health; and
- Social emotional development—such as getting along with others, expressing feelings, developing relationships

Having an Evaluation and/or Assessment Done

All infants and toddlers referred to the EI Colorado program have the right to a free multidisciplinary evaluation and/or assessment. Multidisciplinary means a group that is made up of qualified people who have different areas of training and experience. Information from the multidisciplinary evaluation and/or assessment is used to determine your child's eligibility and will look at all five areas of your child's development. It is a process that will help you to better understand your child's developmental strengths and needs and how the EI Colorado program can help. Unless you request otherwise, the multidisciplinary evaluation and/or assessment must be completed within 45 days of the referral date. You must sign a written permission form before any evaluation and/or assessment of your child occurs.



How is eligibility decided?

Your child and family may receive early intervention services if:

- Your child and family live in Colorado;
- Your child is between birth through two years of age; and
- Your child is eligible based on either of the following:

I. Developmental Delay

A child may be determined eligible because he or she has a significant delay in one or more of the following areas:

- Adaptive development (taking care of one's self when doing things like feeding or dressing)
- Cognitive development (thinking and learning skills)
- Communication development (understanding and using sounds, gestures, and words)
- Physical development (moving, seeing, and hearing)
- Social emotional development (responding to and developing relationships with other people)

II. Based on a Diagnosis

A child may be determined eligible because he or she has been diagnosed with a condition that will likely result in a significant delay in development, and who may or may not currently have an observable delay. A list of diagnoses that will qualify a child for the EI Colorado program is available at www.eicolorado.org within the Family Members Section; the Established Condition Database icon is located on the right side of the webpage. If your child has a condition that establishes their eligibility, your child will still need an assessment to help plan for what services may be needed.

What is a multidisciplinary evaluation and/or assessment?

A multidisciplinary evaluation and/or assessment is a process that is completed with you and your child by specialists from a variety of backgrounds such as medicine, teaching, and specialized developmental areas, such as communication or movement. The number and types of specialists involved in the evaluation will depend on your concerns and the needs of your child. However, at least two different specialty areas must be a part of the eval-

uation and/or assessment team, along with your service coordinator. The evaluation and/or assessment will consider information your family reports and your child's:

- Medical history and current health status;
- Adaptive or self-help skills, such as feeding and dressing;
- Cognitive skills, such as thinking, learning, and reasoning;
- Communication skills, such as understanding and using sounds, gestures, and words, pointing, understanding your words, expressing thoughts;
- Physical development, such as vision, hearing, movement and health; and
- Social and emotional development, such as getting along with others, expressing feelings, developing relationships

The multidisciplinary evaluation and/or assessment not only helps determine your child's eligibility for EI services, it provides information to help determine which services are most appropriate, should your child be eligible. The evaluation and/or assessment also describes your child's strengths and needs. Your family's concerns, resources, and priorities are important. You can share as much or as little information as you wish. Keep in mind, an evaluation and/or assessment is not a test that your child either passes or fails. It is a way of letting you know what your child does well and where he or she needs some help. The results of your child's evaluation and/or assessment will be explained to you to highlight your child's strengths and assets, as well as areas of difficulty and next steps.

The evaluation and/or assessment team and your service coordinator will review with you the results, the information you provide about your child's history and development, and any reports received from medical providers to arrive at an eligibility decision.

You can and should participate in the evaluation and/or assessment by:

- Helping your child feel comfortable;
- Helping with activities that explore your child's abilities;
- Telling the team whether or not what they are seeing is what is typical for your child;
- Helping the team see your child's unique strengths and needs;
- Asking questions and offering your opinions about how your child's evaluation and/or assessment is going; and
- Telling the team about the types of circumstances they would most likely be able to observe the things you are most concerned about.

***Remember,
you are the expert
on your child.***

It may be helpful to share other information during your child's evaluation and/or assessment, such as:

- Your child's prenatal history;
- Your child's health and developmental history;
- When you were first concerned that something might not be quite right;
- What you may have done to learn more about your concerns; and
- What your child does or does not do that you are concerned about now.

What if your child is eligible?

Although eligibility is based on information about your child, once your child is found eligible for the EI Colorado program, the focus of supports and services opens up to include your whole family. This works best because your child and family are closely linked and affect each other in many ways. Your service coordinator is responsible for explaining the IFSP process to you. He or she will make sure the IFSP is written and will answer any questions you have.

The IFSP describes the real-life outcomes you want for your child and family. The IFSP lists how, where, and when your family will work with the EI staff to reach those outcomes. Your service coordinator will offer you more details about the IFSP and many other topics throughout your work together.

What can the EI Colorado Program offer your family?

Your service coordinator is employed by the CCB that is contracted by the state to provide EI services in your area of residence. Each CCB employs or contracts with qualified professional staff who are licensed or certified in different specialties, including early childhood education, physical therapy, occupational therapy, social work, speech therapy, and other areas of expertise. The staff will work with you and in some cases with each other as a team to reach the outcomes you choose for your child and family.

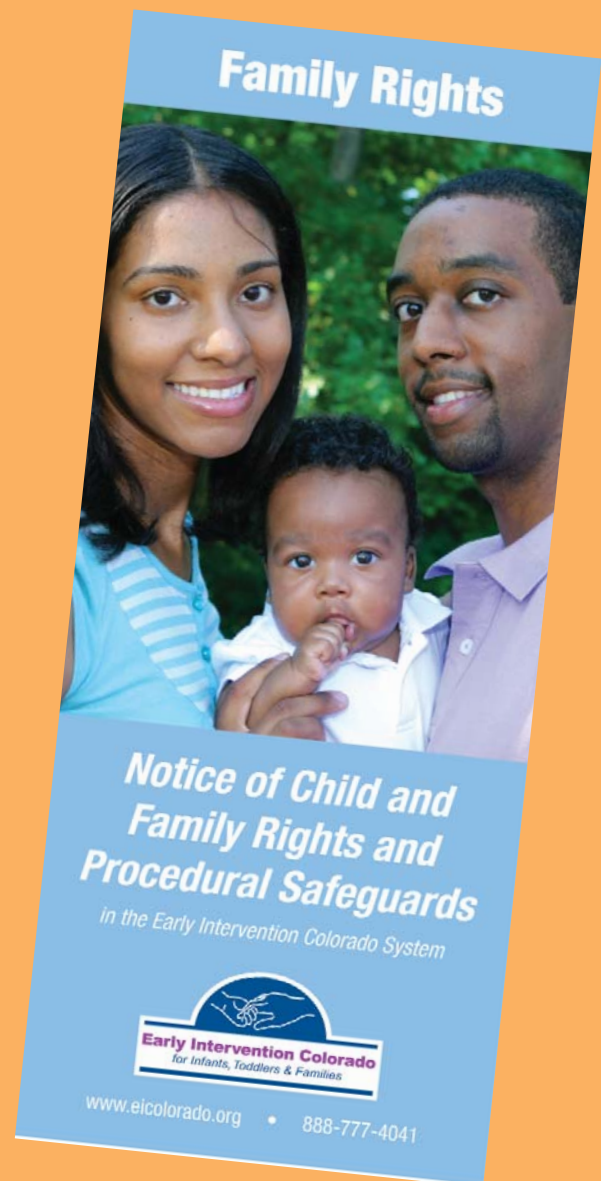
Each CCB EI program offers:

- Free eligibility evaluation by trained, qualified professionals;
- Services that will assist you to help your child during activities that are part of your family's regular routine in your home or in the places where you and your child spend time in your community (for example, a child care center);
- Supports that respect your family's culture, values, and priorities;
- Trained, qualified staff, all of whom will help you to work on goals related to your child's and family's needs;



Your Family Rights.

Child and family rights are described in the brochure *Family Rights: Notice of Child and Family Rights and Procedural Safeguards in the Early Intervention Colorado System*. Your family will receive a copy of this brochure multiple times during your involvement with the EI Colorado program. If you do not have a copy, contact your service coordinator. You can view and download a copy of the brochure at www.eicolorado.org.



- Service coordination to help bring together the different people, information, and resources that will support your child and family; and
- Some flexibility in the scheduling of visits for service delivery.

All CCBs meet the standards for excellence set by the Colorado Department of Human Services

What EI services can be provided?

Services are designed around your family's needs, concerns, and priorities. Natural learning opportunities that happen throughout your day are used for practicing new skills with your child.

Allowable Early Intervention Services...

- Assistive Technology Services
- Audiology Services
- Developmental Intervention Services
- Health Services
- Medical Services
- Nursing Services
- Nutrition Services
- Occupational Therapy Services
- Physical Therapy Services
- Psychological Services
- Sign Language and Cued Language Services
- Social Emotional Services
- Speech Language Pathology Services
- Transportation Services
- Vision Services

The EI services you receive are considered with the following in mind:

- Focus—should be on your whole family, not just your eligible child

- Outcomes—you choose which skill-building outcomes you want to work on with your child so that he or she may become successful in family and community activities
- Providers—should work with you and your family in a close partnership
- Length of Service—your participation continues until the outcomes you have identified have been reached and no one on the IFSP team has any concerns about your child's development; or until your child's third birthday, whichever comes first. Your child's transition to community resources upon exit (for example, child care, Head Start, preschool special education) is assisted by your service coordinator
- Where—EI services should be in places in your home and community that you usually visit
- Intensity—the frequency of EI services is designed to support you and your child in making progress toward the outcomes you have identified and reflect EI practices that are supported by research
- Measures of Success—your child learns new skills; your family gains confidence in meeting your child's needs and in connecting with community resources and activities

What if your child is not eligible?

If your child has not been diagnosed with an established condition and shows no delays, or only a mild or moderate delay, he or she will likely not be eligible for EI services in Colorado. If your child is not eligible, your evaluation and/or assessment team or service coordinator will offer you information about other services in your community, if needed, as well as a way to keep track of your child's development. If at any time you have renewed concerns about your child's development, you can call the CCB that serves your county of residence to schedule another evaluation and/or assessment for your child.

If you disagree with the results of the eligibility evaluation and this cannot be resolved by talking with the Early Intervention Coordinator at the CCB that serves you, state and federal law provides ways for you to resolve your concern



How will you keep up with information?

Make sure you get copies of all written information about your child (records, reports, etc.). This will help you keep track of services and advocate for your child. Remember, as time goes on, you'll probably have more information to keep track of, so it's a good idea to keep copies from the beginning and to keep it all together in one place.

Your family may find it helpful to put all the information about your child in a notebook. Your service coordinator can give you ideas for organizing the information. You might want to include this guidebook, along with other information received about the EI Colorado program in your notebook.

The sample contact form on the next page can help you start a file of information about your child. As you contact different people and places, it's a good idea to keep

records of people you've talked with and what was said. You may want to add other information to your notebook or file folder, such as:

- letters and notes (from doctors, specialists, etc.)
- medical records
- results of evaluations and/or assessments
- notes from meetings about your child
- reports from specialists
- family medical histories
- your child's developmental history, including your personal notes
- records of shots and immunizations
- notices of meetings



Appendix A: Family Contact Form



Topic _____

Date Called _____ Person You Talked To _____

Phone Number _____ Agency _____

What We Talked About: _____

What Needs To Be Done: _____

Comments: _____



Early Intervention Colorado
for Infants, Toddlers & Families

For more information
about the EI Colorado program, call

1-888-777-4041

or visit

www.eicolorado.org



Colorado Department of Human Services

people who help people