



Why Early Start

Because all babies are different, they rarely do the same thing at exactly the same age. As a result, it's not unusual for families to have questions or concerns about their child's development. You may wonder:

- Why isn't my baby crawling?
- Why doesn't my child like being held?
- Why can't anyone understand what my child is saying?
- Why doesn't my toddler want to play with other kids?
- What about my child's hearing/vision?

You know your child's abilities and frustrations. Yet, you may not have the information you need to effectively assist your child's growth and development. With the very first phone call to Early Start, you can begin to get information and resources to answer your questions.

The earlier children who may have a developmental delay or disability receive special services, and the sooner their families receive support regarding their child's development, the farther they will go in life.

Contact your local regional center to find out if Early Start services are right for your child and family. See below or visit:

www.dds.ca.gov/rc/lookup-rccs-by-county



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For more information and support as you explore Early Start, contact your local Early Start Family Resource Center. See below, or visit: <https://frcnca.org/get-connected>

For more information about California's Early Start program, call 800-515-BABY (2229) or visit www.dds.ca.gov/services/early-start email: earlystart@dds.ca.gov



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California Early Start is a state and federally funded system of coordinated early intervention services provided through Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Early Start is administered by the Department of Developmental Services in collaboration with the California Department of Education.

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A Family Introduction to California Early Start for Infants and Toddlers with Special Developmental Needs and Their Families

When you have questions about your young child's development.



Department of Developmental Services

California Early Start

Together...We Make a Difference

The first three years of life are a significant period of growth for all children. As infants become aware of their world, they begin to explore, reach out to others, and communicate. During this time, children under the age of three who may have a developmental delay or disability need special help to reach their full potential.

Services and supports that can help your child are called early intervention services. Research shows that these services, which are based on the individual needs of your child and family, can make a profound difference in a child's future. In California, early intervention services are provided through a program called Early Start.



1

Take the First Step

If you are concerned about your child's development, the first step is to have your child referred to the local regional center to determine if your child is eligible for Early Start. You can refer your child or you can have your child's primary health care provider or another professional make the referral for you. A staff person at the regional center will be assigned to help you through the process.

The process for determining your child's eligibility for Early Start is known as evaluation. There is no cost for having your child evaluated for eligibility. During this process, your child's motor skills, communication development, learning skills, social interaction, and emotional development will be evaluated.

2

Set a Course of Action

Once the evaluation process is completed and your child is determined eligible for Early Start services, you, as the parent, work together with professionals to decide which early intervention services may be best for your child. An Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is developed for your child and family. By working closely with you, early intervention professionals ensure that services, community supports, and parent-to-parent resources, are brought together to meet your child's unique needs and the needs of your family to support your child's development.

3

Access Services

Early intervention services under Early Start are provided by regional centers and local educational agencies throughout California. Services are provided based on assessed need and delivered within your child's everyday routines, activities, and places. These include:

- assistive technology devices/services
- audiology (hearing) services
- family training, counseling, and home visits
- some health services
- medical services for diagnostic or evaluative purposes only
- nursing
- nutrition counseling
- occupational therapy
- physical therapy
- psychological services
- service coordination (case management)
- social work services
- special instruction
- speech and language services
- transportation services
- vision services

