



Early Intervention (EI) During COVID-19

- **What is Early Intervention?**
 - Early Intervention is a program of services for children ages 0-3 with, or at risk of, developmental delays. Typically, services end when a child turns 3 years old.
 - The state agency responsible for EI works with local providers to give children ages 0-3 services such as Occupational Therapy, Speech/Language Therapy, Physical Therapy, Developmental Therapy and other services.
- **What happens when a child is going to turn 3 years old, but the child's providers and family think the child requires continued services?**
 - With permission from the family, EI providers make a referral to their local school district **at least three months before the child's 3rd birthday** to determine if they are eligible for early childhood special education (ages 3-5).
 - When a referral is made, the school district **MUST** agree to do this testing. The school district will send the parent/guardian a consent form proposing evaluations.
 - Once the school district receives the signed consent form, the school district must test the child in all areas related to their suspected disability within 60 calendar days, and have a special education Team meeting with the family, EI providers, and the school district to determine eligibility.
 - **TIP:** check your state's special education regulations, as states often have their own timelines regarding parental consent, completion of evaluations, and when to meet to review testing.
- **How is COVID-19 Impacting Early Intervention?**
 - EI providers continue to offer families services through telehealth options, such as video conference, phone calls, and socially-distanced outdoor meetings.
 - **School districts must continue to accept referrals from EI providers and evaluate children for early childhood special education eligibility.**
 - School districts may hold virtual meetings to determine eligibility and services.
 - **CHILD FIND MANDATE:** federal and state laws require school districts to locate and evaluate all children ages 0-22 that may have a disability and require special education. COVID-19 has not changed this responsibility.
 - **EI providers should still make special education referrals to school districts** even if the school district is doing a 'fully remote' or 'hybrid' learning model for the 2020-2021 school year.
 - Some states have issued waivers allowing EI students who turned three in March through August 2020 to continue to receive EI services.
 - Some of these waivers have expired or will expire soon.
 - These EI students should be evaluated for Early Childhood Special Education eligibility as soon as possible.