

When in Doubt, Reach Out:

What to Expect When I Ask for Help from IECMH or EI

April 22, 2025

OCDEL Early Childhood Education Conference

Stable and Secure: Supporting Children Through Trauma Sensitive Approaches



Jen Murphy, IECMH Program Manager



Dr. Brandi Binakonsky
EITA Consultant



Deysi Keegan, Assistant Director of Rapid
Response Team Trying Together



Shared Principles

- ✓ Individualized
- ✓ Child centered
- ✓ Family focused
- ✓ Strengths-based
- ✓ Partnership driven
- ✓ Capacity building



Pennsylvania's Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) Program

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC)

IECMHC is a program of the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), administered by the Pennsylvania Key.

IECMHC is a free resource that supports children's social-emotional development from ages 0-5 within early learning programs participating in Keystone STARS.



What is Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health?



Why do we call it Mental Health?

IECMH is synonymous with healthy social and emotional development. It is the developing capacity of the child from birth to age 5 to:

- Form close and secure interpersonal relationships
- Experience, regulate and express emotions; and
- Explore the environment and learn in the context of family, community, and cultural expectations for young children.

(Adapted from [ZERO TO THREE: National Center for Infants, Toddlers & Families](#))

How Infant/ Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Works

Mental health consultation is not about fixing kids. Nor is it therapy.

Mental health consultants partner with adults to foster healthy growth and development.

IECMHC provides support for families and child care professionals who work with children experiencing persistent or puzzling challenges.



IECMH Consultants help caregivers of infants and young children to:

- Recognize every child's strengths and potential
- Understand what children's challenging behaviors are trying to communicate
- Respond to problem behaviors in an encouraging and positive way
- Create supportive environments for children
- Build relationships with families

The Pyramid Model

- PA's IECMH Consultation model is grounded in The Pyramid Model's scientifically-anchored practices
- These practices help caregivers enhance children's social-emotional learning, giving them confidence and competence in the real world
- Through a problem-solving and capacity-building relationship, IEMCHC equips caregivers to build stronger relationships with young children, so they feel safe, supported, and valued



When to request services?



Are you concerned about the social-emotional development and/or behavior of a young child who is enrolled in a child care facility?

Attachment: Does not seek familiar adults for comfort, displays little emotion, fearful or “on-guard,” rejects or avoids affection

Self-regulation: Tantrums, inconsolable “fussiness” or irritability, poor impulse control, or limited coping skills with emotions and stress

Communication: Limited or no communication (including non-verbal), lack of age-appropriate language skills

Aggression: Intentional physical contact with others (hitting, kicking, biting, choking, pushing, poking, pulling hair, spitting, throwing things)

Interaction: Withdrawn, difficulty playing, sharing or taking turns, little interest in sight/sounds/touch

Why call IECMH?



Accessing IECMHC Services

Providers can request IECMH services by completing the [Request for Service Form](#)

Completed forms can be submitted via email PAIECMH@pakeys.org or faxed to 717-213-3749



IECMHC Services Include:

Observation of a child in the early education classroom setting

Partner with **child care professionals** to identify a child's areas of strength and need

Develop a **child-specific action plan** related to individual child's social-emotional development

Assist child care professionals and administrators in **communicating with families** and service providers

Assist with **resources and referrals** for a child and their family for specialized services available in their community



Benefits of IECMH Consultation

- Reduce caregivers' stress
- Boost caregivers' confidence
- Increase caregivers' reflective practice skills
- Fewer incidents of challenging behaviors
- Reduce expulsion and suspension practices
- Link families with community services

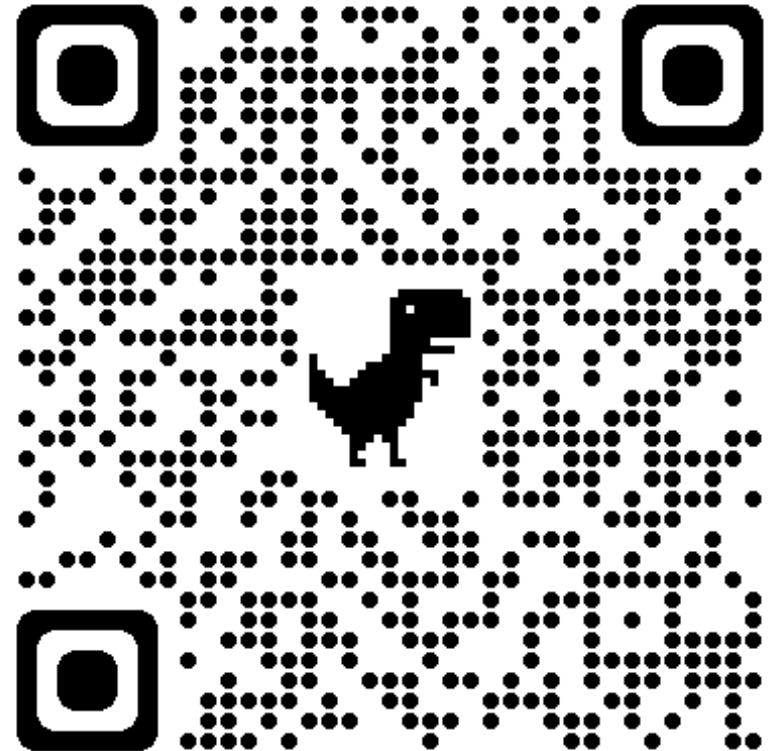
IECMHC Resources

IECMHC Website

www.pakeys.org/iecmh

Request for Services Form

<https://s35729.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/IECMHC-Request-for-Services-Full-Application-fillable-rev-10.11.21.pdf>



New Brochure

- Explain IECMHC services to families and teachers



What is IECMHC? Video

- <https://youtube/0yjioxnuduw>
- Share with families or teachers!

IECMHC Newsletter



Signup for ***Bright Start, Bright Kids, Bright Future*** – IECMHC here:

www.pakeys.org/getting-started/about-us/newsletter-signup/



Bright Start Resources



The information on this webpage will help you understand how to nurture a child's mental health by supporting their social-emotional development.

- **Videos:** These short educational videos build professionals' knowledge of social-emotional development and early childhood mental health.
- **Print Materials:** Customizable brochures for families to help parents and caregivers support social-emotional development from birth to age 8.
- **Communication Tools:** Ready-to-use social media content, posters, a fact sheet for policymakers, and more.
- **Messages:** These messages can help deepen your understanding of social-emotional development and help you have more effective conversations with families.
- **Early Childhood Mental Health Specialists/Consultants:** Professionals who provide free and confidential supports for children's social-emotional development.



www.pakeys.org/brightstart/

Virtual Office Hours

IECMH Consultants are **available by appointment** via telephone or video conference.

Find next steps for:

- Child Social-Emotional Concerns
- Child Behavioral or Developmental Concerns
- Emotional Well-being of Teachers and Caregivers
- Partnering with Families

Appointments held **twice per month**.



The Pennsylvania Key IECMHC Virtual Office Hours

The Pennsylvania Key Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) Program is offering a new service: **IECMHC Virtual Office Hours**

Are you looking for support with:
Helping a child who is struggling with behavior, attachment, peer relationships or emotion regulation?
Helping teachers and families with self-care, stress, and coping, but not sure what to do next?

IECMHC Virtual Office Hours is now accepting appointments for office hours throughout Pennsylvania!

IECMHC Consultants are available by appointment to provide IECMH Virtual Office Hours consultation via telephone or video conference. IECMH Virtual Office Hours is a short-term, collaborative, problem-solving conversation to help you find next steps for:

- Child Social-Emotional Concerns | Child Behavioral or Developmental Concerns
- Emotional Well-being of Teachers and Caregivers | Partnering with Families

Who can request IECMH Virtual Office Hours?

Services are available at no cost to families, child care professionals and specialists supporting Keystone STARS child care programs. We include:

- Teachers, directors, and staff in center, family, and group-based child care programs
- Families with children attending child care programs
- Early Intervention (Birth-3 & 3-5) professionals
- Keystone STARS Quality Coaches
- Mental Health/Behavioral Health agencies
- Home Visiting and Family Support Programs

How can IECMH Virtual Office Hours help your program?

IECMHC Consultation helps adults strengthen their relationships with young children and build capacity to respond to children's social-emotional needs. IECMH can help reduce caregiver stress, as well as increase caregivers' reflective practice skills.


- Figure out what's really going on when a child exhibits challenging behaviors
- Reflect and respond to problem behaviors with the power and impact of nurturing relationships
- Build partnerships with families
- Share community resources
- Consider your next steps and where to go from here

How can you request an IECMH Virtual Office Hours appointment?

Appointments are held on the first and third Fridays of the month, or other days/times by request. To schedule an appointment, [contact here](#).



Pennsylvania's Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMHC) Consultation is a free service that supports children's social-emotional development from birth through age five with early learning programs participating in Keystone STARS. [Learn more about Pennsylvania's Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program.](#)



Virtual Office Hours for Families

IECMH Consultants are **available by appointment** via telephone or video conference.

Find next steps for:

- Child Social-Emotional Concerns
- Child Behavioral or Developmental Concerns
- Emotional Well-being of Teachers and Caregivers
- Partnering with Families

Appointments held **twice per month**.



The Pennsylvania Key
IECMHC Virtual Office Hours

Are you looking for support with:
Helping your child who is struggling with behavior,
friendships, or managing their feelings?
Helping your child with challenging behavior in child care or
at home, but not sure what to do next?

The Pennsylvania Key Infant-Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) Program is offering a new service for families: IECMH Virtual Office Hours

IECMHC Virtual Office Hours is now available to families across Pennsylvania. IECMH Consultants are available by appointment via telephone or video conference. We can offer a listening ear and professional guidance to help you find next steps for:

Child Social-Emotional Concerns | Child Behavioral or Developmental Concerns
Emotional Well-Being of Caregivers | Parent-Child Core Partnerships

Who can request IECMH Virtual Office Hours?
Services are available at no cost to parents, families, child care professionals, and specialists who work with caregivers of children from birth-5 (ex: Early Intervention, Mental or Behavioral Health, Home Visitors).

How can IECMH Virtual Office Hours help you and your family?
IECMHC Consultation can help caregivers figure out what's really going on when a child has challenging behavior or social-emotional difficulties. Our consultants will help you problem-solve and identify how to respond to challenging behavior in a positive, nurturing way:

- Figure out what your child is trying to communicate through their behavior
- Build your confidence and reduce your stress level
- Encourage partnerships with other adults in your child's life
- Discover community resources
- Consider your next steps and where to go from here

How can you request an IECMH Virtual Office Hours appointment?
Appointments are held on the first and third Fridays of the month, or other days/times by request.
[To schedule an appointment, register here.](#)

IECMHC Virtual Office Hours is not a crisis hotline. If your question or situation is urgent and requires immediate assistance, dial 911 or contact one of these resources:

- PA Crisis Text Line: Free, 24/7 support for those in crisis. Text "PA" to 74741 to text with a trained Crisis Counselor
- SAMHSA National Helpline: Confidential, free 24/7 helpline. Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
- PA Support & Referral Helpline: Call 1-855-284-2494 or click Pennsylvania County Crisis Lines for the Crisis Hotline in your county.




School-Age Child Care Mental Health Consultation

Available by
appointment



The Pennsylvania Key Infant–Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) Program
now offers a new service.

School Age Child Care (SACC) Mental Health Consultation

Are you looking for support with:

- Helping children who are struggling with behavior, attachment, peer relationships or emotion regulation?
- Helping teachers and families with self-care, stress, and coping, but not sure what to do next?

**SACC Mental Health Consultation is now accepting
appointments for consultation throughout Pennsylvania!**

A SACC Mental Health Consultant is available by appointment to provide assistance via telephone or video conference. SACC Mental Health Consultation is a problem-solving and collaborative approach to help develop goals and strategies for:

- Child Social-Emotional Concerns
- Child Behavioral or Developmental Concerns
- Emotional Well-being of Teachers and Caregivers
- Partnering with Families

How can SACC Mental Health Consultation help your program?

SACC Mental Health Consultation helps adults strengthen their relationships with school age children and build the capacity to respond to children's social-emotional needs. Consultation can help reduce caregiver stress, as well as increase caregivers' reflective practice skills to:

- Figure out what's really going on when children exhibit challenging behaviors
- Reflect and respond to problem behaviors with the power and impact of nurturing relationships
- Build partnerships with families
- Share community resources
- Consider your next steps and where to go from there

Who can request SACC Mental Health Consultation?

Services are available to child care professionals participating in Keystone STARS school age child care programs (like teachers, directors, and staff in center, group-based child care programs).

How can you request a SACC Mental Health Consultant appointment?

Appointments are held on Tuesdays, with the option to schedule follow up appointments based on individual needs.

To schedule an appointment with Lauren Walter, SACC Mental Health Consultant, register [here](https://www.pennsylvania.gov/childcare), or scan the QR Code.



For additional
information about
Pennsylvania's Infant
and Early Childhood
Mental Health
Consultation services,
visit the Pennsylvania
Key website

www.pakeys.org/iecmh

Email: PAIECMH@pakeys.org



Rapid Response Team

Deysi Keegan, Assistant Director of Rapid
Response Team with Trying Together

Funded through the Preschool Development Grant (PDG B-5)

In general, the role of RRT is to:



Respond within 48
business hours to any
ECE program.



Facilitate the
development of a case
based collaborative
plan of action.



Provide short term
support to the ECE
workforce and families.



Provide efficient warm
handoffs to additional
community supports as
necessary.

General Focus of RRT:

- Assess educator practices and positive guidance strategies
 - Teacher-child interactions
 - Nurturing Classroom Culture
 - Positive Attention & Guidance
- Assess the classroom environment
 - Predictable Schedule & Routines
 - Transitions
 - Teaching Behavioral Expectations



General Focus of RRT (con't):

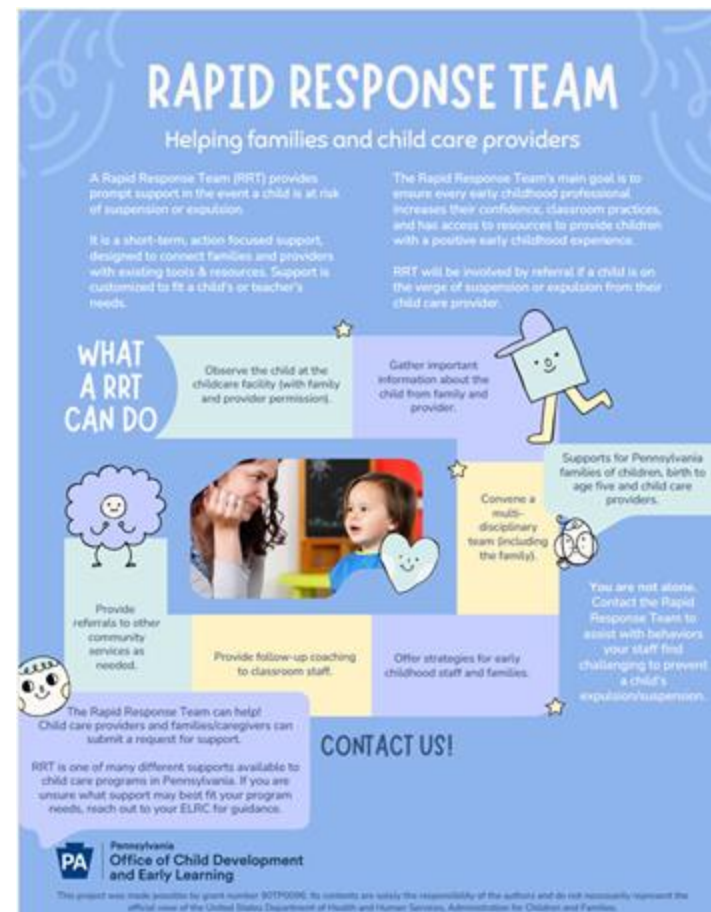
- Observe child(ren) in the classroom
 - Self-Regulation and/or Anger Management Skills
 - Peer-to-peer interactions (*relationships*)
 - Teacher-child interactions (*relationships*)
 - Emotional Literacy
 - Identify opportunities for targeted skill-building in the context of classroom routines
 - Data-informed decisions about referral need(s)
-

General Focus of RRT (con't):

- Co-create actionable strategies for the educator to utilize, to modify environment, routines and interactions.
- Connection to other supports for
 - Educator/education team
 - Professional Development
 - Quality Coaching
 - Child/Family
 - Evaluation for additional supports
 - Other community supports to meet their needs

Programs can be directed to:

- Their ELRC to be connected to the regional RRT
- The PA Key's website to access RRT contact information:
 - www.pakeys.org/pdg/rrt/



Early Intervention in Pennsylvania



Dr. Brandi Binakonsky,
Early Intervention Technical Assistance Consultant





What is Early Intervention?

Early Intervention (EI) consists of services and supports designed to help families with children, from birth to school age, with developmental delays or disabilities

What?

Why?

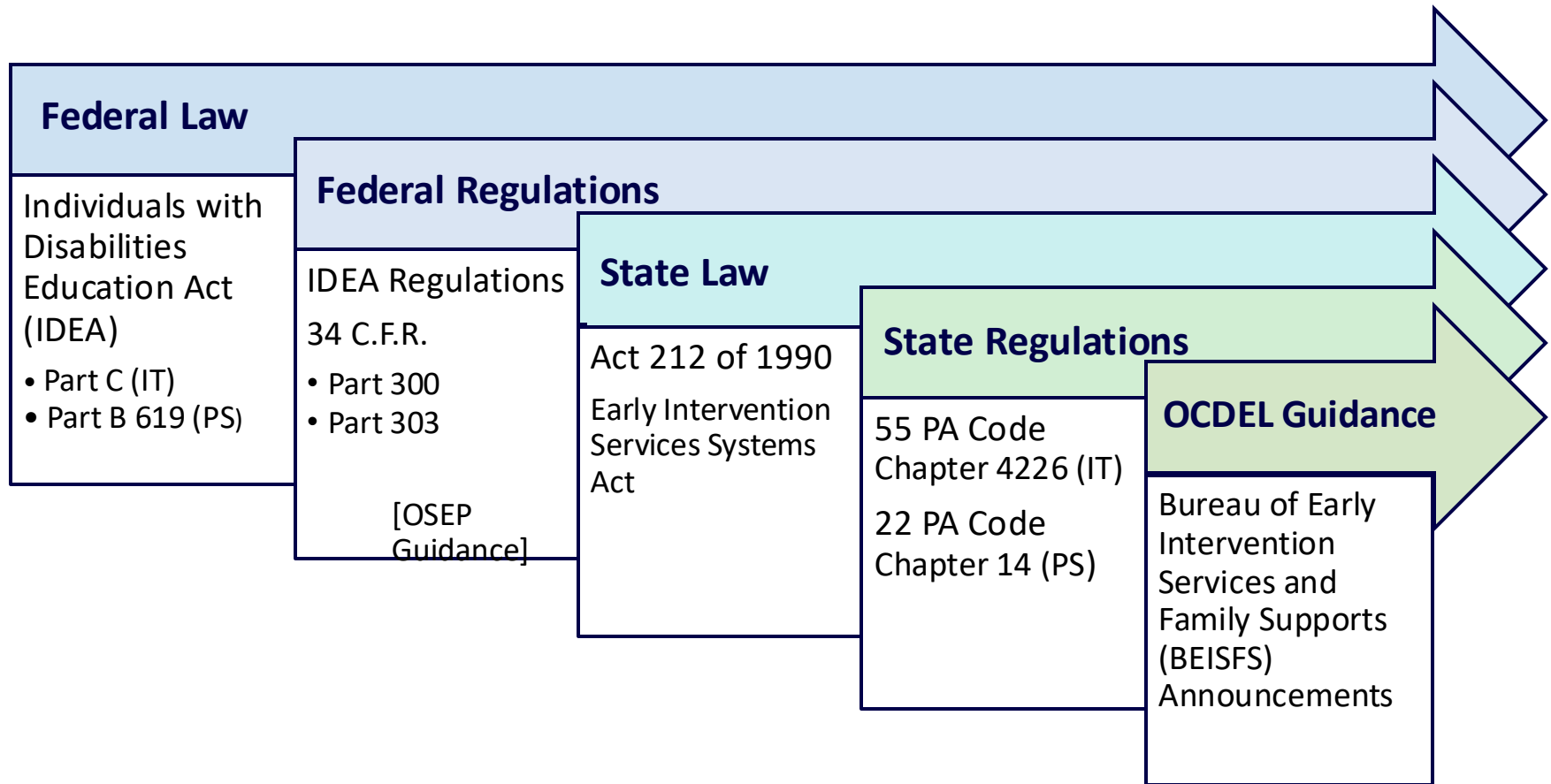
How?

Who?

Where?

Early Intervention in Pennsylvania is designed to **help children with delays or disabilities achieve their fullest potential** through **coaching supports** to enhance the capacity of **parents and other caregivers** to meet the developmental needs of the child **in the setting where children would be if they did not have a disability.**

Early Intervention Laws and Regulations



Principles of Early Intervention in Pennsylvania

Building Capacity

The primary role of EI professionals is to coach and support the family members and early childhood professionals in a child's life

Individualized Coaching

EI programs provide coaching supports that are evidence-based and individualized for the child, family, and early childhood team

Collaborative Efforts

EI and early childhood professionals work collaboratively with the family to provide culturally responsive, flexible coaching supports

Embedded Instruction

Meaningful and functional outcomes are embedded within familiar learning opportunities that exist in the child's typical routines

Developmentally Appropriate

Coaching supports integrate all aspects of child development and learning from first contacts through transitions



Early Intervention Process



Referral and Intake



Evaluation and Eligibility



IFSP or IEP Development

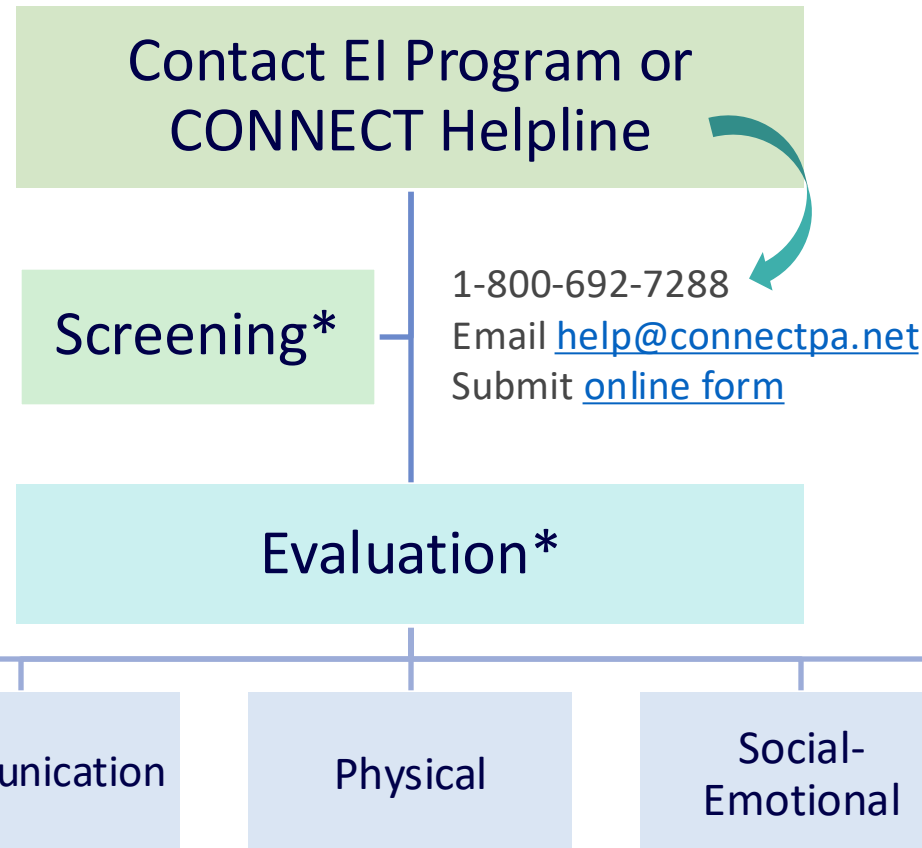


Service Delivery and Progress Monitoring



Transition

Referral and Intake Process



* Written Parental Consent Needed

Evaluation Process

Early Intervention focuses on enhancing the child's development in one or more of the following areas:

Cognitive
Development

Communication
Development

Physical
Development

Social-Emotional
Development

Adaptive
development

Timelines



Infant Toddler: 45 days from referral

Preschool: 60 days from written consent

Eligibility Criteria

Infants/Toddlers who have:

25% delay in ≥ 1 area of development

OR

a specialist's determination there is a delay even though it doesn't show up on assessments (called informed clinical opinion)

OR

a known physical or mental condition that has a high probability for developmental delays (such as Down syndrome)

Preschoolers who have:

25% delay in ≥ 1 area of development

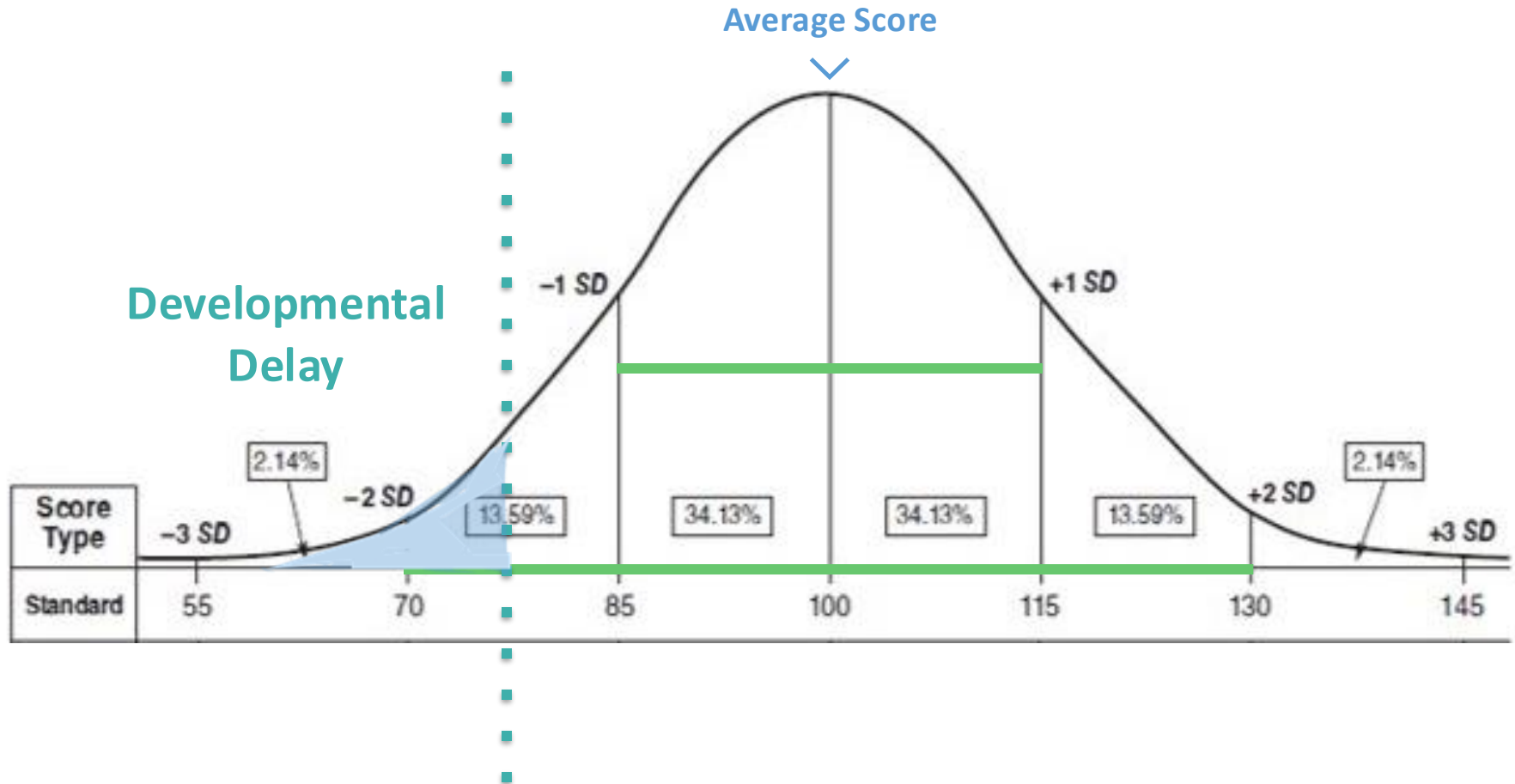
OR

a physical or mental disability aligned with IDEA disability categories*

AND

are in need of special education and related services

*autism; visual impairment, including blindness; deafness; hearing impairment; deaf-blindness; intellectual disability; traumatic brain injury; serious emotional disturbance; specific learning disability; orthopedic impairment; other health impairment; speech or language impairments; multiple disabilities



Plan Development

Infant Toddler

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

Preschool

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of child's present performance

Summary of family information and resources

Functional and measurable outcomes and goals

Description of services and supports

Location and timing of services

Timelines



Infant Toddler: IFSP meeting 45 days from referral

Preschool: IEP meeting 30 days from evaluation report

IFSP and IEP meeting can be requested at any time after services have started.

Service Delivery

Infant Toddler

Family Guided Routines Based
Intervention (FGRBI)

Preschool

Embedded Instruction
for Early Learning

Evidence-based, naturalistic intervention approaches that address specific developmental or learning goals within the context of everyday activities, routines, and transitions at home, at school, or in the community

Timelines



Infant Toddler and Preschool: Implementation no later than 14 days after parental consent for services

3R'S OF EARLY LEARNING: Foundation for Embedded Instruction



RELATIONSHIPS

Serve-and-return interactions



REPETITION

*Making neural connections by
embedding learning in everyday
activities and routines*



ROUTINES

*Predictable activities in everyday
routines that engage and motivate*

Copyright © 2020 Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies

UF | Anita Zucker Center for Excellence
in Early Childhood Studies

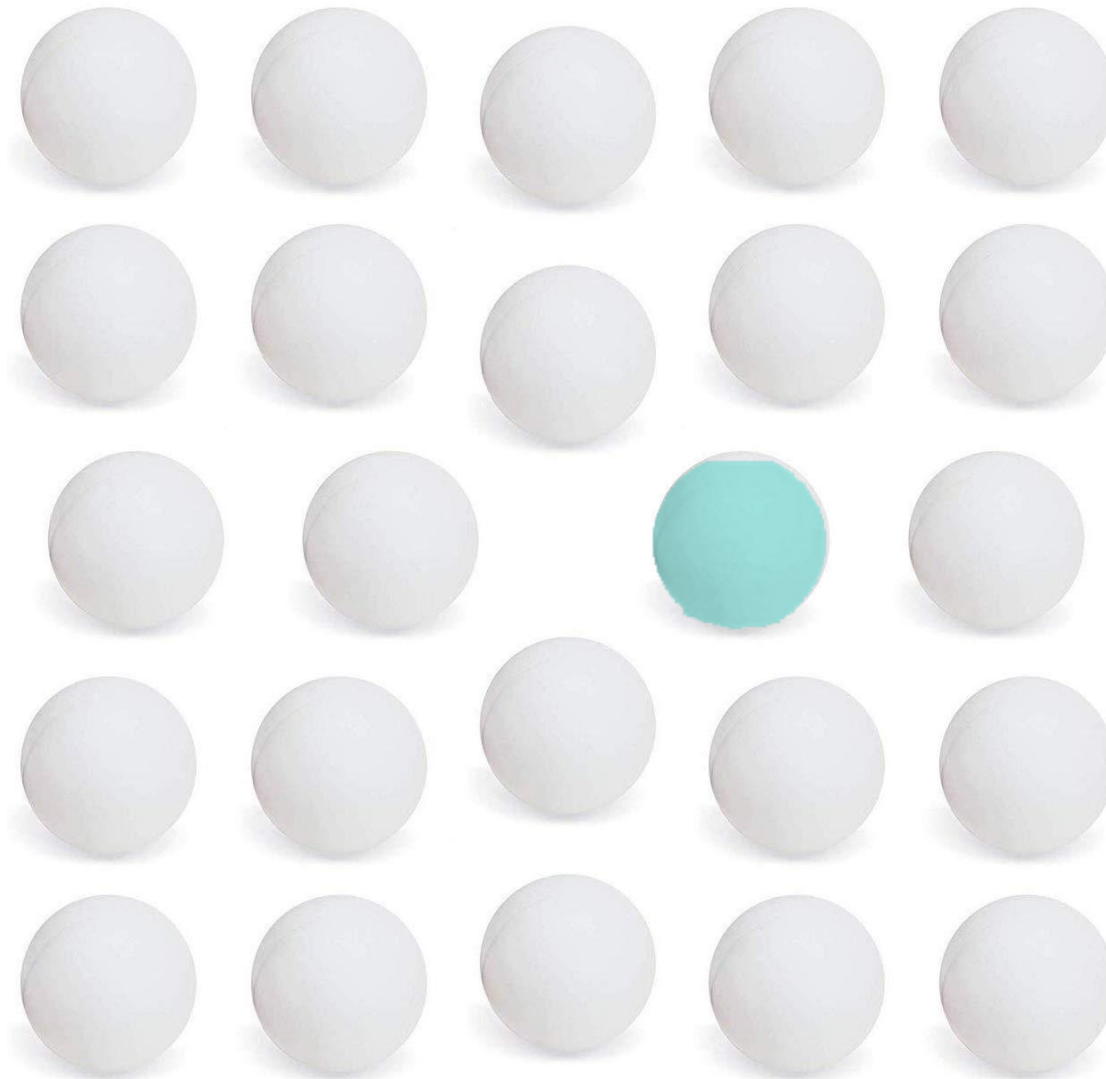
UF | Anita Zucker Center for Excellence
in Early Childhood Studies

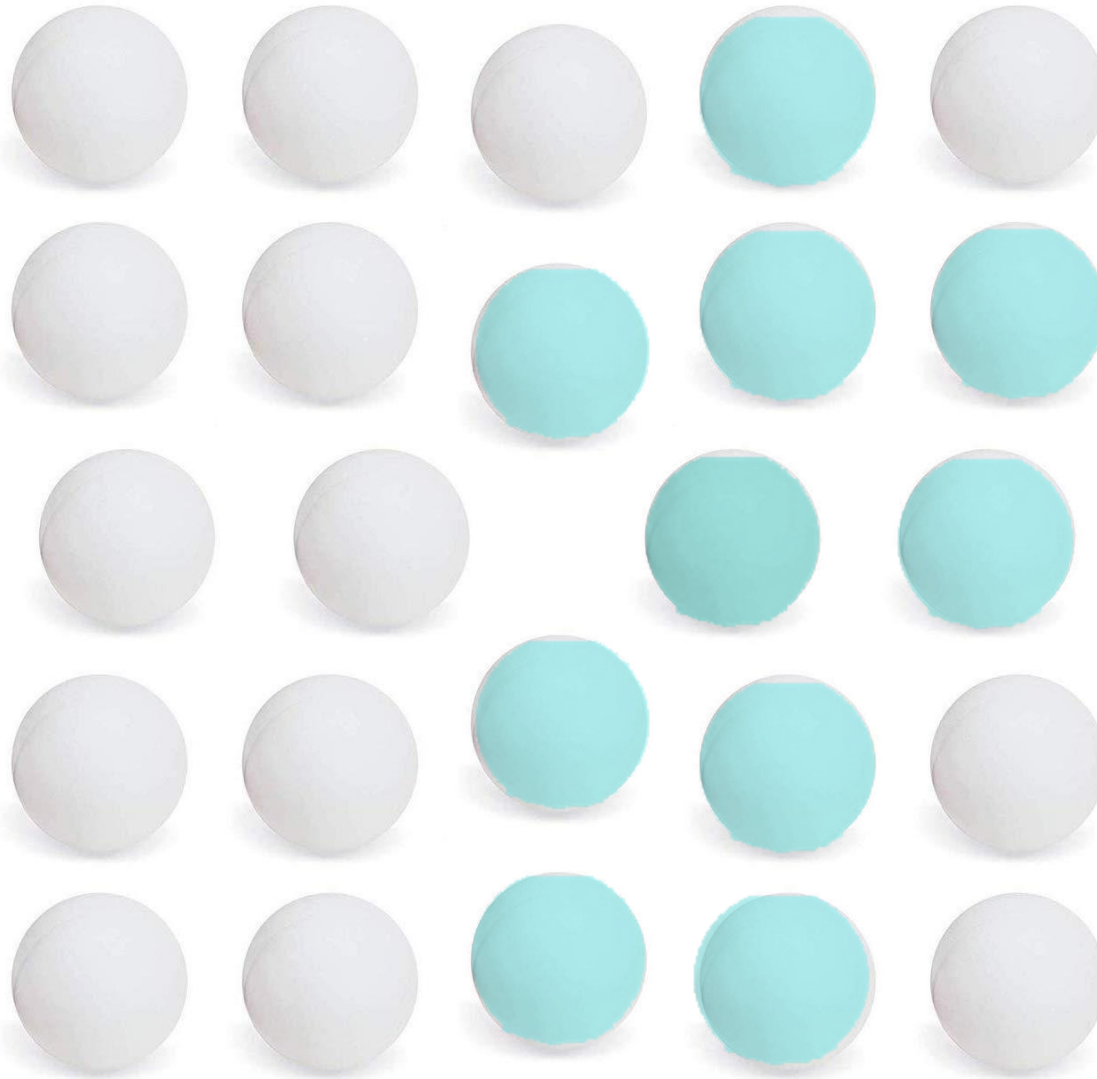
**Embedded
Instruction**
for Early Learning



1 10 minutes of play	2-3 chances to repeat words	365 days per year	730 - 1,095 everyday learning activities
2 clothing changes	3-4 chances to label objects	365 days per year	2,190 - 2,920 everyday learning activities
3 meals or snacks	1-2 requests for food/drink	365 days per year	1,095 - 2,190 everyday learning activities

Adapted with permission from Embedded Instruction for Early Learning, Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies, University of Florida. **Do not adapt without permission**





EITA Resources



EITA Portal

Access on any electronic device.

Subscribe to Portal to Practice for what's new!

Explore info on Inclusion, Coaching, Social Emotional, Autism, Leadership, and more

www.eita-pa.org
other resources
available.

Check it out today!



EITA Mobile App



Developmental Milestones



Early Intervention Technical Assistance Portal

Search

Search

Home

Professional Development

Topic of Interest ▾

Families

Cognitive
Communication
Social/
Emotional

Physical

Adaptive

Search by
Domain

Social/Emotional: 18 months

- ☐ Likes to hand things to others in play
- ☐ May have temper tantrums
- ☐ May be afraid of strangers
- ☐ Shows affection to familiar people and pets
- ☐ Plays simple pretend (i.e. such as feeding a doll)
- ☐ May cling to caregivers in new situations
- ☐ Points to show others something interesting
- ☐ Likes to carry/hug a stuffed toy
- ☐ Explores alone but with parent close by
- ☐ Seems proud to do things
- ☐ Claps when excited
- ☐ Copies other children while playing, like taking toys out of a container when another child does

EITA Portal (www.eita-pa.org) → Highlighted Resources → Developmental Milestones

Early Intervention Service Delivery Course



Welcome to the Pennsylvania PD Registry!

Online Self-Paced

#356486

Early Intervention Service Delivery: Coaching Across Early Childhood Settings

Available Saturday, July 1, 2023 - Monday, July 1, 2024

Hours 1.00 / Course Level C2: Knowledge Application

[View Overview](#)

Registration Required

Fee Free Event

Register By 07/01/2024

Register

Web Based

E-Learning

Primary Trainer

Jennifer Furness

Sponsor

Early Intervention Technical Assistance

Overview of Preschool Early Intervention Service Delivery Framework



Welcome to the Pennsylvania PD Registry!

Online Self-Paced

#368926

Overview of Embedded Instruction for Early Learning in Pennsylvania

Available Monday, July 1, 2024 - Monday, June 30, 2025

Hours 3.00 / Course Level C2: Knowledge Application

[View Overview](#)

Registration Required

Fee Free Event

Register By 06/30/2025

[Register](#)

Web Based

E-Learning


Primary Trainer

Jennifer Furness

Sponsor

Early Intervention Technical Assistance

Collaborating for Inclusive Classroom Practices



Welcome to the Pennsylvania PD Registry!

Online Self-Paced

#356485
Collaborating for Inclusive Classroom Practices in Early Childhood: Building Relationships to Support All Children
Available Saturday, July 1, 2023 - Monday, July 1, 2024
Hours 5.00 / Course Level C2: Knowledge Application

View Overview

Online Self-Paced

#356478
Collaborating for Inclusive Classroom Practices in Early Childhood: Focus on Attitudes and Beliefs-Online
Available Saturday, July 1, 2023 - Monday, July 1, 2024
Hours 5.00 / Course Level C2: Knowledge Application

View Overview

Online Self-Paced

#356469
Collaborating for Inclusive Classroom Practices in Early Childhood: Working Together
Available Saturday, July 1, 2023 - Monday, July 1, 2024
Hours 2.00 / Course Level C3: Critically Examine/Evaluate

View Overview

Connecting Families



Communicating Concerns

- Choose a time and place to talk in private
- Be caring, supportive, and respectful
- Begin by saying something positive about the child
- Ask the family if they have concerns or questions about how the child is developing
- Share your observations and concerns
- Be prepared with information and resources

(eXtension Alliance for Better Child Care, 2019)

**Let's
Practice!**



But my child so young!

Yes, your child is still very young, but one thing that research has shown is that the first five years are when the brain develops the fastest and is most open to learning. It is one of the very best times to support your child's development!

I'm not worried. The doctor said my child was fine.

It's great to know your child's doctor feels they're healthy and doing well! One thing to keep in mind is that doctors do not spend much time with your child. It might be hard for them to closely look at a child's development. You know your child best and have shared your observations on our program's screening form. What about sharing these screening results with your doctor?

What are they (IECMH or EI) going to do for my child?

They're a family-friendly organization. They have specialists who can discuss your concerns and take a more in-depth look at her development. If they identify an area where your child can use more support, you'll work together to create a plan and set goals.

But my child's fine at home!

It's great to hear your child doing well at home! It's very common for children to act differently at home and school, and for many kiddos, it's the other way around. Sometimes children may act out at school because they're seeking connection and don't know how to ask for help or attention in an appropriate way. Learning these social-emotional skills can help them successfully engage with others in the classroom, both teachers and other children.

Thank You

Questions?



Jen Murphy:
jenmur@pakeys.org



Deysi Keegan:
Deysi@Tryingtogether.org



Dr. Brandi Binakonsky:
bbinakonsky@pattan.net