

Facts about Early Intervention Colorado

Early Intervention Colorado is Colorado's overall system of early intervention supports and services for families who have infants or toddlers, from birth through two years of age. Early Intervention Colorado is funded through an annual federal grant under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA). Part C guarantees rights and entitlements for infants and toddlers, ages birth through two years of age, who have significant developmental delays or disabilities or have been diagnosed with a condition associated with significant delays in development and their families.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), Early Intervention Services and Natural Environments

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

Authority: IDEA, Part C, 20 U.S.C. 1432(4)(A)-(H) and 1436

Policy

Each infant and toddler who is eligible for early intervention services has an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) developed and implemented in accordance with the requirements in Part C and CRS 27-10.5.

Procedures: IFSP Development and Review

The IFSP is a process that uses a written plan to document current levels of development and early intervention services needed by a child eligible for early intervention services and the child's family.

The IFSP process:

Is family directed and developed jointly by the family, other individuals of the family's choice, members of the multidisciplinary assessment team, the service coordinator and appropriate qualified personnel providing early intervention services

- Is based on the multidisciplinary evaluation and assessment information and the family's concerns, resources and priorities
- Includes the services to be provided in the family's identified natural environment(s) that are necessary to enhance the child's development and the capacity of the family to meet the needs of the child
- Is culturally sensitive
- Identifies and organizes the formal and informal community resources and funding sources that can facilitate the achievement of a family's outcomes for their child and family
- Uses results of evaluations and assessments that are conducted
- Develops, implements, reviews, and keeps current the IFSP document for each eligible child
- Is the responsibility of service coordination that is available at no cost to the family, and
- Includes an explanation and copy of procedural safeguards available to families.

The IFSP clearly designates what early intervention services are to be provided, who will provide and fund those early intervention services, when the services will start and end, and the intensity and how frequently they will be provided. Parents retain the ultimate decision in determining whether they, their child, or other family members will accept or decline a specific early intervention service. Each agency or person who has a direct role in the provision of early intervention services is responsible for making a good faith effort to assist each child eligible for early intervention services in achieving the outcomes of the child's IFSP. However, an agency or person is not responsible if a child does not achieve the growth projected in the child's IFSP.

A state prescribed IFSP form has been adopted. Communities are required to use this form and may not alter the template in any way. The form is available in English and Spanish. An infant IFSP is also available for use with a newborn who is in a hospital or newly discharged.

IFSP development and review procedures include:

- 1) A meeting to complete an initial IFSP conducted within 45 calendar days of the date of referral for a child who has had an evaluation/assessment for the first time and is determined to be eligible for early intervention services.
- 2) A periodic review of an IFSP for a child and the child's family every six months, or more frequently if conditions warrant or if the family requests such a review sooner than six months. The purpose of the review is to determine the degree to which progress toward achieving the outcomes is being made, whether modifications or revisions of the outcomes are necessary, and what early intervention services are needed and how they will be provided. The review may be carried out by a face-to-face meeting or by any other means that is acceptable to the parents and other participants. The review of the IFSP must include prior written notification to family members. Parental signature that confirms participation in the review and consent for any new services is required.
- 3) An annual meeting is conducted to evaluate the IFSP for a child and the child's family. It is revised, as appropriate, to ensure that results of current evaluations and assessments and ongoing information about the child and family are updated and used to determine what early intervention services will be provided. The annual review of the IFSP constitutes a repeat of the entire IFSP process, including prior written notification to the family, presentation and explanation of all procedural safeguards and parental signatures.
- 4) A requirement that the IFSP meetings be:
 - In settings that are accessible and convenient to families
 - In the native language of the family or other mode of communication used by the family, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so, and
 - Scheduled with, and written notice provided to, the family and other participants early enough before the meeting date to ensure that they will be able to attend.
- 5) The initial IFSP is developed within a reasonable time after the multidisciplinary assessment and no longer than 45 calendar days from the date of referral.
- 6) The contents of the IFSP are developed in collaboration with the parent(s), other family members, and other team members. Informed written consent from the parent(s) must be obtained prior to the provision of any early intervention services described in the IFSP. If a parent does not provide written consent for a particular early intervention service, or withdraws consent after providing it, that service is not provided. Early intervention services are provided for which parental consent is obtained. Withdrawal of consent for one service does not prevent the provision of other services for which the family continues to give consent.
- 7) Families are provided a copy of the IFSP in English. If a family's language is other than English, the IFSP document is translated and a copy provided to the family unless it is clearly not feasible to do so.
- 8) Services identified on the IFSP begin as soon as possible, but no later than 28 calendar days from the date of parental consent to early intervention services. The timely initiation of services applies to the initial IFSP, as well as any subsequent reviews or annual updates of the IFSP in which a new service is added.
- 9) Provisions may be made for an eligible child and their family to receive early intervention services prior to the completion of evaluation and assessment when those supports and services are determined by qualified professionals to be immediately necessary and when the following conditions are met:
 - Parental consent is obtained
 - An IFSP meeting is held at which an interim IFSP is developed that includes: the name of the service coordinator who will be responsible for the implementation of the interim IFSP and coordination with other agencies and persons, and the early intervention services that have been determined to be needed immediately by the child and the child's family, and
 - The evaluation and assessment are completed within 45 days of the date of referral.

Participants in IFSP Meetings and Periodic Reviews

Procedures have been developed that ensure each initial and annual IFSP meeting includes the following participants:

- 1) The parent(s), legal guardian or surrogate parent acting as the “parent”
- 2) Other family members, as requested by the family
- 3) An advocate or person outside of the family, if the parent requests that the person participate
- 4) The service coordinator
- 5) The person(s) directly involved in the evaluation and assessment process for an initial evaluation; or the person(s) involved in ongoing assessment if the child is already in services, and
- 6) The person(s) who will be providing early intervention services to the child or the family, as appropriate.

The participants at IFSP meetings are determined, in consultation with the parent(s), according to the roles to be represented. If a person involved in the evaluation process is not able to attend the IFSP meeting, arrangements are made for the person's involvement through other means, including: participating in a telephone conference call, having a knowledgeable authorized representative attend the meeting, or making pertinent records available at the meeting.

Each periodic review provides for the participation the parent(s) of the eligible child, other family members as requested by the parent(s), and the service coordinator. If conditions warrant, provisions are made for the participation of other representatives identified above, particularly if the child's developmental needs have changed and/or if services on the IFSP are being changed.

Content of the IFSP

An IFSP is a written document containing all of the elements required in Part C. The state also requires that the information describing the contents of the IFSP be accessible to families by using alternative means of documentation when needed, including verbal, sign language, or taped recordings in the native language of the family. The content of the IFSP includes the following:

- 1) For an initial IFSP, the multidisciplinary evaluation and eligibility page that documents the signatures and roles of the multidisciplinary evaluation team members, the eligibility determination of the child, the signature of the CCB representative, and parent signature confirming their understanding of the child's eligibility status
- 2) An objective statement of an infant's or toddler's present levels of development that is acceptable to both the parent(s) and the provider(s) in the areas of physical development, including vision, hearing, and health status, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development and adaptive development
- 3) With concurrence of the family, a statement of the family's resources, priorities, and concerns related to enhancing their child's development
- 4) A statement of the measurable results or outcomes expected to be achieved, including preliteracy and language skills, as developmentally appropriate for a child and the criteria, procedures and timelines used to determine the degree to which progress is being made, and whether modifications or revisions of the desired outcomes or early intervention services are necessary
- 5) A statement of specific early intervention services to be provided based on peer-reviewed research, to the extent practicable
- 6) A statement of the location in which early intervention services will be provided. Services in settings other than a natural environment occur only when the desired outcomes cannot be achieved satisfactorily in a natural environment and the IFSP includes a justification of the extent, if any, to which the services will not be provided in a natural environment. If a justification is necessary, documentation is recorded on the IFSP page designed for this purpose and includes:
 - The identification of which outcome(s) is/are not being achieved satisfactorily in a natural environment and why there is a need to change the service to a non-natural setting. Documentation is required to substantiate that sufficient time and appropriate services in a natural environment have been attempted
 - A description of the proposed setting and how the setting may result in progress toward meeting the outcome(s), and
 - Documentation of the steps and timelines to be taken to move towards the provision of services in a child's natural environment.

- 7) A statement of the following for each early intervention service:
 - Method of service delivery (i.e., how the service is provided, such as through direct individual instruction, consultation with other team members or the parents, or group instruction to the parents)
 - Projected dates of services showing the date services start, which must be within 28 days of parental consent unless otherwise noted in the IFSP, and end
 - Intensity showing the length of time the service is provided during each session, and
 - Frequency of the services showing the number of days or sessions that a service will be provided).
- 8) A statement that includes, to the extent appropriate, medical or other supports and services necessary but not required under early intervention service definitions and funding sources to be used in paying for those services or the steps that will be taken to secure those services through public or private sources. This requirement does not apply to routine medical services, unless a child needs those services and the services are not otherwise available
- 9) The identification of the service coordinator who will be responsible for the implementation of the plan and coordination with other agencies and persons, including transition services
- 10) The steps and services needed to support the transition of the toddler at three years of age into other services and/or environments and, if appropriate, into Part B preschool services, and
- 11) The signatures, titles and dates of all parties in attendance. The IFSP is not considered valid without the signature of at least the following:
 - The parent(s)
 - Service coordinator, and
 - For the initial and annual IFSP, at least one member of the team involved in the evaluation and/or assessment.

Allowable Early Intervention Services

As defined in Part C, early intervention services are developmental services that are provided under public supervision and are provided at no cost to the family. Colorado does not use a schedule of sliding fees for parent participation in payment for early intervention services. Services are designed to meet the developmental needs of the child as identified by the IFSP team, are based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practical, and are available to all infants and toddlers and their families in the state. Allowable early intervention services include:

Assistive Technology	Physical Therapy	Social/Emotional Intervention
Audiology Services	Psychological Services	Speech Language Pathology
Developmental Intervention	Respite Care	Transportation
Health Services	Service Coordination (above and beyond entitled service coordination)	Vision Services
Nutrition Services		
Occupational Therapy		

A complete description of these services is provided in the current Early Intervention Colorado State Plan under Part C of IDEA.

Community Centered Boards that share communities with Early Head Start programs are required to develop and maintain specific interagency operating agreements to meet the needs of young children who are receiving services in both early intervention services and Early Head Start programs.

Provision of Services in Natural Environments

Authority: IDEA, Part C, 20 U.S.C. 1432(4)(G), 1435(a)(16), and 1436(d)(5)

Policy

Early intervention services are provided in natural environments to the maximum extent appropriate. Early intervention services are available in settings that individual families have identified as natural or normal for their family, meaning home and community settings where the family's everyday routines and activities occur. Early intervention services are provided in a natural environment other than a natural environment only when the desired outcomes for a child cannot be achieved satisfactorily, as determined by the IFSP team.

System Planning Procedures

Each CCB provides early intervention services in natural environments to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of each child and family. If a natural environment requirement creates a barrier to the implementation of a child's IFSP due to unique community or family circumstances, DDD works with the CCB to develop creative strategies that are consistent with the natural environment policy and responsive to the needs of the child and family. At a minimum, a plan to transition the provision of early intervention services into a natural setting as quickly as possible must be developed.

Individual Child Planning Procedures for Early Intervention Services in a Natural Environment

- 1) A family's lifestyle, routines, schedule, priorities and the environments that are natural and normal for that family are first identified.
- 2) Appropriate services for a child are driven by the identification of functional outcomes that are relevant to those natural environments identified by the family.
- 3) Strategies and activities to address the functional outcomes are developed by the IFSP team. Qualified early intervention personnel may support specific strategies and activities in consultation with family members and other caregivers.
- 4) If there is a determination that early intervention services cannot be provided in a child and family's natural environment as defined above, written documentation is provided on the IFSP as defined in the Early Intervention Colorado State Plan, Section II, G (c)(6).
- 5) Service settings are not selected based solely on factors, such as category of disability, severity of disability, configuration of the delivery system, age, availability of services, availability of space, availability of equipment or administrative convenience.
- 6) The IFSP team determines which early intervention services are needed. The preference of any single team member is not a justification for services to be provided in an environment other than one that is natural and normal for the everyday routines and activities of that child and family.
- 7) In some situations, a family may prefer to access services and/or activities that do not meet the guidelines for "Allowable Early Intervention Services" and/or the IFSP team determines that the services are not necessary for a child or family to meet the outcomes on the IFSP.

The state prescribed IFSP form includes an optional page that may be used to document services or activities that a family chooses to include because they consider them important to their child and family. The family and the service coordinator may record this information at any time. The service coordinator explains that the activities listed on this optional page are in addition to those that the IFSP team has identified as necessary to meet a child's functional outcomes. The activities that are listed on this optional page are not covered by state or federal funds related to early intervention services. The coordination and payment for any services or activities on this optional page are entirely the responsibility of the family.