

Family Guidebook II



Individualized Family Service Plan and Orientation to Early Intervention Services

Second Edition



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

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Introduction

Research has shown that a child’s first three years are a very important time for development and learning. Getting early intervention (EI) services now will help improve your child’s ability to develop, learn and play, and will assist you to help your child and family in ways that are important to you. This guidebook will introduce you to the planning process for developmental services for your child and orient you to the supports and services available to your family through the EI Colorado program.

The EI Colorado program ensures that all families have equal access to a coordinated program of comprehensive supports and services. This means that the staff within the system will work closely with you to provide the kinds of supports that make the most sense based on your family’s priorities and your child’s needs.

Your child can best be supported within your family, and your family is best supported within your community. Activities that fit within your daily routine and use current techniques are most likely to give the outcomes you want for your child and family.

This guidebook will explain the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and orient you to EI services.

You are the most important person in your child’s life and you will play a key role in planning your child’s EI services. It is important that you and your family participate in each step of the process.

Supports and Services...

- develop collaborative partnerships.
- are family-centered.
- occur in the natural settings where your child and family typically spend time.
- are provided using current best practices.

***Children learn best
within their families.***

Why should you enroll your child in the EI Colorado program?

The first three years of your child's life are the most important when setting the foundation for their ongoing development. This is the time when the development of your child's brain is most rapid. Starting supports and services early improves your child's ability to develop and learn. Also, getting help now may eliminate or decrease the need for special help later during your child's school years.

Your service coordinator is employed by an agency, known as a Community Centered Board (CCB) that is contracted by the state to provide EI services. 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, 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 provides:

- 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, your child's child care setting);
- Supports that respect your family's culture, values, and priorities;
- Trained, qualified staff, who will help you to work on goals related to your child's and family's needs; and
- Service coordination to help bring together the different people, information, and resources that will support your child and family.

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

What can you expect now that your child is eligible?

Once eligibility is established, a plan needs to be developed. This plan is called the Individualized Family Service Plan, or IFSP.

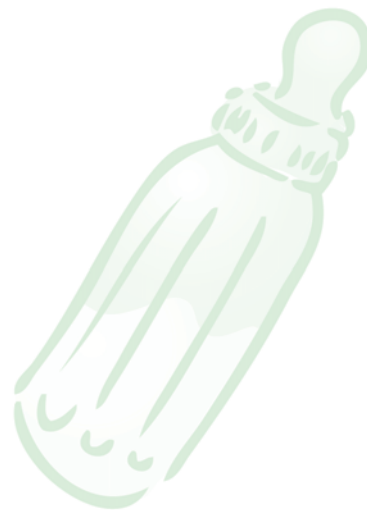
I-F-S-P means...

Individualized—your plan will be specially designed for you, your child, and your family.

Family—your plan will focus on your family and the outcomes you hope to reach for your child and your family through EI services.

Service—your plan will include all the details about the EI services in which your child and family will participate in, including when, where, and how often services will be delivered. Your IFSP can also include other services that your child and family needs that will not be paid for by the EI Colorado program, but that you want make sure are coordinated with your EI services.

Plan—your plan is written to guide EI services and helps to provide you and your service providers with a common understanding of what is important to you and what is expected of them.



Making a Plan for Services— Your IFSP

What is an IFSP?

The IFSP, is your family's written plan for EI services. It shows how you and other members of your EI team will work together to address the needs you identify for your child and family. The IFSP is family-centered. This means that you will be an active team member and a key decision-maker throughout the IFSP process.

The IFSP is based on information from your child's evaluation and/or assessment and from the concerns, resources, and priorities that you identify. It will list the services your family needs to help your child develop and learn. Also, it will list the duties of everyone involved. Some of the help you receive may come from your own family and friends, while specialists may provide other services.

Your service coordinator is responsible for explaining the IFSP process to you. He or she will make sure the IFSP is written accurately and clearly and will answer any questions you have.

Your signature on the IFSP shows your participation and your agreement with the plan. However, if you disagree with all or part of the IFSP, you have the right to share your concerns and ask for changes. You may accept or refuse any or all services recommended to you. Once a service begins, you may stop that service any time you wish. A copy of the IFSP must be given to you after it is completed and signed.

The written IFSP is reviewed at least every six months. It is also updated at least once a year. However, your needs and resources may change, so more frequent reviews can be held to make changes, as needed.

What is an IFSP meeting and who will be involved?

An IFSP meeting is designed to give you and those who have evaluated or assessed your child an opportunity to discuss your child's strengths and challenges in order to develop a plan for EI services. The outcome of this meeting is the written IFSP.



The people who must be included in your IFSP meeting are:

- you and any other family members you choose;
- an advocate or person outside of the family, if you choose;
- your service coordinator;
- a person or persons directly involved in conducting the evaluations and assessments; and
- as appropriate, persons who will be providing services to your child or family.

Another important person is your child's physician, who will be contacted (with your permission) for his or her input. If a person listed above is unable to attend a meeting, arrangements must be 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. However, an IFSP meeting can never be held without a parent or legal guardian in attendance. You and the other people who develop your IFSP and help carry out the steps of the plan are the IFSP team.

The more involved you and your family members are in developing the IFSP, the more meaningful your plan will be. Share honestly about what is important to you and what your child needs. Read the information gathered through evaluations and assessments about your child

and family and ask any questions you have. Your service coordinator will ask you to share information about your child and family to make sure that your plan is individualized. Here are some sample questions to think about before the IFSP meeting:

- What does your child like? Dislike?
- What frustrates your child?
- What does your child do during the day?
- What things do you like to do as a family? With friends?
- Which people and agencies do you find helpful?
- What are your family's strengths in meeting your child's needs?
- What else do you want the other members of the IFSP team to know about your child or family?
- What change do you want EI services to support you or your child with?

Tips for a successful IFSP meeting:

- Be prepared. Make a list of questions or matters you want to discuss. Have paper and a pen or pencil ready to take notes.
- Listen to what other team members have to say.
- Be clear about what you want for your child.
- Share and ask for information as an equal team member.
- Ask questions if you don't understand something.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help.

What does an IFSP include?

The written IFSP includes:

- Your child's strengths and needs
- Your family's concerns, resources, and priorities, if you choose



- Written outcomes (or expectations) and the steps, or strategies, to meet the outcomes
- The services that will be provided
- Where services will be provided
- How often services will be provided and the length of each contact (for example, one hour each week)
- When services will begin and when they will end
- The funding source for services
- The name of your service coordinator
- Transition steps and services for leaving EI services no later than your child's third birthday, known as the Transition Plan. The Transition Plan will be completed between the time your child is two years three months and two years nine months of age.

What EI services can be provided for your child and family?

EI 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.

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

- Focus—should be on your whole family, not just your child
- Outcomes—you choose which skill-building outcomes you want to work on with your child so that he or she may become more 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 or until your child's third birthday, whichever comes first
- Where—EI services should be provided in places in your home and community that you usually go
- 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 and your family gains confidence in meeting your child's needs and in connecting with community resources and activities

Other services that are necessary to help your child meet his or her outcome, but are not one of the EI services offered through the EI Colorado program, are also included in your child's plan. "Other services" typically describe services that your child could benefit from and are related to the outcomes on your IFSP, but are not expected to be paid for as an EI service. Some possible other services are:

- Surgery
- Other medical services or equipment
- Non-traditional therapies

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

By including these services, your child's IFSP will represent a complete picture of your child. This will be helpful to both your service coordinator and other EI providers working with your child and family.

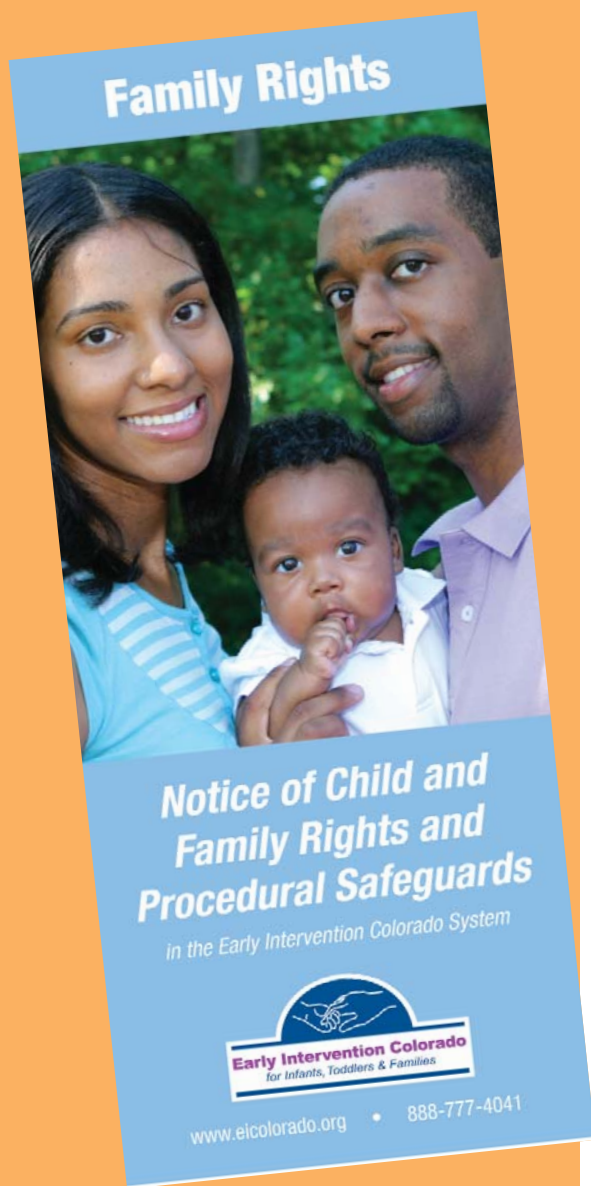
How will you know what services are needed for your child and family?

Developing your IFSP is a team effort. It is important that you have good information available to you before you make a decision about an appropriate plan for your child and family. Ask your service coordinator for information and materials to help you make good decisions. Tell your IFSP team if you want more time to think about the information before you make your decisions. By sharing information, the EI staff can help you make plans that are best for your child and family.



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.



Putting Your IFSP Into Action

Where will the services for your child and family be provided?

Typically, EI services are provided within your family's natural environment. The term natural environment refers to those settings that your family has identified as typical or normal for your family, meaning home and community settings where your family's everyday routines and activities occur. These settings reflect your family's lifestyle, interests, culture and schedule. Natural environments are those places that are routinely used by your family and typically developing children and represent a wide variety of locations such as your home, neighborhood, child care settings, parks, recreation centers, stores, buses, malls, museums, libraries, places of worship, etc.

Services are to be provided in natural environments unless your child's needs cannot be met there. In choosing services, it is important to think about the places, activities and times of the day where your child learns best. When deciding about the location of services, you and the rest of your child's IFSP team should consider all of the natural environments in your community.

If a service cannot be provided in a natural environment, the IFSP team must describe the reasons for choosing a setting that is not a natural environment and the steps to help your child receive the support to succeed in his or her everyday activities and routines.

Natural environments do not only refer to a "place". Although location is important, it is only one part of quality EI practices. Other essential characteristics include; why the service is being provided, what the service is, when it is being provided, how it is being provided and how you can help support your child's learning throughout the day. All of these elements are critical in supporting your child's development and learning.

Who provides the services for your child and family?

Many times more than one person is needed to meet all of your child's and family's needs. Your EI team may include different types of EI providers or specialists. These specialists may change as your concerns and your child's needs change.

Early Intervention Services...

- are family-centered.
- occur in natural settings.
- recognize current best practices in the EI field.
- are built upon mutual respect and choice.
- build partnerships among family members and EI staff.

Children learn best within their families.

Your service coordinator will help you to coordinate your team of EI specialists and the services they are providing. Always remember, you and your family are the most important members of your IFSP team. You, your family and your service coordinator are always members of the IFSP team.

If a provider does not speak the primary language of your family or child, an interpreter may be provided.

How will your child and family services be delivered?

Services are usually delivered to your child in two ways:

- Directly to your child by a therapist or other EI specialist. This person will also consult with the family and, if appropriate, with other people like child care staff or other service providers about how to support your child's development and learning in daily routines.
- Indirectly to your child through consultation with the important people already in your child's life. This consultation occurs by specialists working with family members and others involved in your child's life (for example, child care providers, friends, etc.) and instructing them how to support your child's development and learning throughout the day.

How can you change your services?

I. Review Outcomes:

As your child and family changes, you will also want to change the outcomes you are working toward. Your service coordinator may suggest an IFSP review, or you may request a review at any time, even if your IFSP was recently completed. You and your service coordinator will look at your current IFSP, discuss what has changed and how this affects your child's and family's outcomes. Progress toward current outcomes and any new outcomes are recorded on the IFSP.

II. Review Services

Sometimes new outcomes are likely to be achieved by changing the specific techniques your EI service provider uses or that you learn to teach your child, without any change to your IFSP team members, or the type, frequency, or location of services. At times, you may add or delete a service, or decide to have your current service(s) more or less often. This review of services is recorded on the IFSP. Your consent must be given before any services change.

How can you help your child?

You know your child best. EI specialist(s) will enjoy learning from you about your child's interests, what helps him or her learn, and what he or she would rather avoid. Together, you will develop ways to help your child. You will learn from, as well as teach, the EI specialist(s) working with your child.

Parenting is not always easy, especially when you may need some unique skills to help support your child's development and learning. You are your child's first and best teacher and advocate. As a parent and an advocate for your child, you will have to understand and tell professionals, relatives, and friends about your family's priorities and concerns. Communicating with others about your child can sometimes be frustrating, especially when they have a different point of view or do not seem to understand you. Be open with your service coordinator and EI specialist(s) if you feel that you are not being understood or listened to. Remember that your service coordinator is always your first point of contact for anything regarding your IFSP.

What are your responsibilities?

Your most important responsibility is to be an active member of your IFSP team. This means sharing information, actively taking part in developing the IFSP, and getting involved when the EI specialist is with you and your child.

Active participation is easier if you work with the EI provider during their visits. Hold or sit close to your child and practice new teaching techniques and ways of learning together. Even though days are busy, it is important for you and child to block out this time so you can focus on learning more about supporting your child's development. EI services are like coaching sessions where you learn new ways of teaching and supporting your child's development. You can then use what you have learned to support your child during playtime, meals, bath time, and other daily activities when the EI provider is not with you. Try to make learning fun for you and your child!

EI services are flexible and adjustable. If your child is not making the progress you expect and have planned for, discuss this with your service coordinator. You are the expert on your child so talk with your IFSP team and service coordinator about new things you see your child doing, or things you expected to see that he is not yet doing, so that you can plan together for changes.

How can you get the most out of your Early Intervention visit?

I. Before Your Visit

- Be prepared. Make sure you schedule your visit when you can take part in the visit and not have a lot of distractions. Decide how brothers and sisters will be involved or plan an activity for them.
- Plan the agenda. Let the EI staff know what you want to discuss at your visit. Remember or write down any questions that you may have since your last visit.
- Be ready to share what has happened since your last visit. Think about or make a list of anything you think is important to share such as a trip to the doctor or changes in routine.

Think about what suggestions or strategies have worked well and those that have not worked so well.

II. During Your Visit

- Ask questions. Make sure you understand what is being said. If you are not sure why something is being done, just ask. If it helps, ask for things in writing.
- Ask for a demonstration and be shown anything you don't understand. Practice strategies together during the visit. Hands-on instruction is the best way to learn.
- Discuss ideas for supporting your child's development and learning between visits. Practice time between visits is just as important as the visit itself. Be sure to talk about ways to use the strategies and activities during everyday family activities.

III. After Your Visit

- Try things out. Try out the suggested activities. What is working? What isn't?
- Make a note of it. Consider keeping a notebook for observations or questions that may come up between visits.
- Have fun. The best teaching and learning occurs when you and your child are having fun.

Ways to Help People Understand Your Point of View

- Talk about your priorities and those of your family.
- Have a clear idea about what you want for your child.
- Know what your child likes and dislikes.
- Share what makes you proud of him or her.
- Be aware of, and understand, your own feelings and those of others.
- Help others understand what you know about how your child best learns new things.



To find out more about these and other possibilities, contact the CCB in your county of residence. To find out more about family leadership and family engagement opportunities visit www.eicolorado.org and click on the “Family Members Section”.

Join an LICC

Each CCB has a Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC). These councils work on behalf of your child and family to:

- Promote communication and collaboration among agencies within the CCB service area;
- Share ideas and solutions in their communities; and
- Advise the CCB that supports your child and family in your community.

To learn more about being a parent representative on the LICC in your community, call your CCB and talk to the EI Coordinator.

How do you get more involved?

There are many ways that you and your family can get involved with EI services beyond the activities specifically designed for you and your child. EI Colorado depends on your ideas and information to keep services family-centered.

Think about the things that are important to you, the time you have available, and the kinds of activities that interest you. Here are some examples:

- Serving on committees or task forces created to address a specific topic
- Reviewing written materials
- Responding to surveys or phone interviews about EI services
- Participating with your State or Local Interagency Coordinating Council





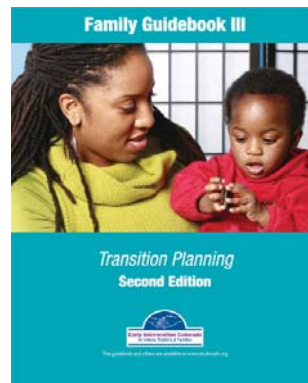
Transition Planning

When is it time to leave Early Intervention?

It is good to think about and plan for the future during the entire time of your family's experience with the EI Colorado program. Just as services are adjusted when your child makes developmental gains, EI services will be replaced by other community activities as your child grows and learns. You may notify your service coordinator that you wish to transition out of the EI Colorado program at any point. However, by law, EI services must end when your child turns three years of age.

New partners may enter your life as you plan to move beyond the EI Colorado program. If your child leaves before age three or if your child will not be receiving pre-school special education, your service coordinator will work with you to identify other available supports in your community, if needed.

Be sure to ask your service coordinator for a copy of *Family Guidebook III: Transition Planning* for more detailed information.





Appendix A: My Important Information



This form helps you to organize and track important contact information, IFSP dates, and other important information during your child's involvement with the EI Colorado program.

Name of Community Centered Board _____

Phone Number _____

Name of Service Coordinator _____

Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

IFSP Dates

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Name of Service Provider(s)

_____	Phone Number	_____
_____	Phone Number	_____
_____	Phone Number	_____
_____	Phone Number	_____

Other Important Information



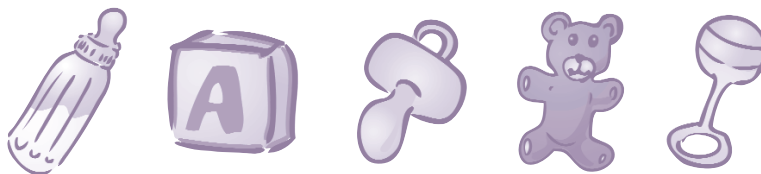
Early Intervention Colorado
for Infants, Toddlers & Families

For more information about
Colorado's early intervention system, call

1-888-777-4041

or visit

www.eicolorado.org



Colorado Department of Human Services

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