



Part 5: Part C Infant and Toddler Intervention Services and Part B Preschool Special Education Services; Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is it important for school districts to receive clinical audiology reports very quickly for young children with recently confirmed hearing loss who have been referred for possible early intervention or preschool special education services?

- Clinical audiologists and school district Early Childhood Special Education teams working together with families makes it possible for eligible young children and their families to begin to receive supports and services in a timely manner.
- Receiving clinical audiology reports of a child's hearing levels and hearing technology recommendations quickly is critically important to school district teams in order to plan and complete valid evaluations of a young child's functioning and needs, determine a child's eligibility for support services, and create responsive IFSPs/IEPs for services—all within legally required timelines.

2. What is the timeline for the school district's evaluation process after a referral?

After receiving a referral and parent consent to proceed, the school district is under IDEA legal timelines for completing initial evaluations, determining eligibility for services, and conducting IFSP/IEP meetings for eligible children. For infants and toddlers, all requirements, including the initial IFSP meeting, must be completed within 45 calendar days of the district receiving the referral, unless the district is unable to obtain parental consent. For preschool age children, the evaluation must be completed within 30 school days of receiving parent consent.

3. Which professionals evaluate children who are referred for possible early intervention or preschool special education services following confirmation of hearing loss?

Evaluation teams for all young children referred include licensed professionals with areas of expertise in supporting young children with special needs and their families. The membership of each team is individually determined based on the family's concerns and the child's observed or reported health or developmental challenges. Evaluation teams for children with hearing loss may include Teachers Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Teachers, Educational Audiologists, and Speech Language Pathologists. Additional specialists may be included on the team for children who have multiple developmental concerns in addition to hearing loss.

4. What happens during the first visit to the home after a child with hearing loss is referred for possible early intervention or preschool special education services?

- The initial visit(s) to a child's home provides the school district team with the opportunity to listen to families and share information.
- When first meeting with families, district team members will introduce themselves and their roles. They will listen to the family share whatever information families are comfortable sharing about their child. Families may share their hopes and dreams for their child, their concerns and needs, their experiences, their understanding of the child's hearing loss, community supports that they are receiving or would like to receive, and the types of information and assistance that they feel would be most helpful to their child and family. Families may also ask questions.
- The team member(s) will share beginning information about early intervention or preschool special education services, the process of eligibility evaluations and developmental assessments, the inclusion of parents in all aspects of planning and providing support services, and their parental rights under IDEA. Team members and families will often review clinical audiological reports that have been received, discuss the child's hearing levels and any recommended hearing technology. Given the parent's/guardian's consent, the school district professionals and the parents will then start to plan next steps.

5. What types of assessments are administered to young children with hearing loss?

Depending on the child's age and reported developmental concerns, a variety of assessment tools may be used, including parent interview tools, observations of the child within their home, childcare, and/or community settings, criterion-referenced developmental inventories based on typical child development, and norm-referenced developmental assessments. Assessments are typically completed over a few visits to learn more about a young child's functional levels across developmental domains, including cognitive, physical, communication, social emotional and adaptive development.

6. What do school district early intervention teams look like?

- The membership of IFSP teams for infants and toddlers are individually determined based on each child's reported health or developmental challenges and the family's priorities and desired outcomes for their child. Each licensed team professional brings unique perspectives, background knowledge and skills, and experiences to supporting families and young children with developmental delays or disabilities.

- IFSP teams for children with hearing loss may include Teachers Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Teachers, Educational Audiologists, and Speech Language Pathologists. Additional specialists may be included on the team for children who have multiple developmental concerns in addition to hearing loss.

7. How frequently do education professionals meet with families of young children with hearing loss?

- The types of support services that are provided, the frequency, schedule and location of services are all individually planned through the IFSP process to support each family's needs, priorities, and desired outcomes for their child.
- Infant and toddler early intervention primary service providers meet with families most regularly. Other team members may also join in home visits periodically to meet with families and/or childcare providers. Some team members may meet directly with families less frequently but provide ongoing consultation to the team. IFSP team members meet with families specifically to review the child's IFSP at least once every six months.

8. Who decides the educational service options and school placements for children with hearing loss?

Each child's IFSP/IEP team of parents/guardians, educational service providers, and school district representatives work together to consider the educational support services and placements that they believe will support the child's development, address the child's needs, and support progress on desired outcomes and learning goals determined through the IFSP/IEP process.

9. At what age do young children typically start speech therapy if they are delayed in speech/language development secondary to hearing loss (6 months, 12 months, 18 months)?

- There is not a specific age at which speech and language therapy services are typically started for young children with hearing loss. For an infant or toddler with hearing loss, a speech language pathologist may be involved as an IFSP team member/service provider at any time the IFSP team of professionals and parents determines those supports are needed to help facilitate the child's development—even before a language delay may occur.
- A broad goal of early intervention services is to support each family as they support their child's development across all domains, including language and communication development. The services, service providers, and desired outcomes for each child are determined through the IFSP process. Team members help families explore ways to communicate. Families' communication choices of what works best for their child and family is respected and supported.

10. What happens if parents decline early intervention services through their school district?

- Parent and family participation in any Part C Infant and Toddler Intervention Services is voluntary.
- Parent and family involvement is central to all aspects of Part C Infant and Toddler Intervention Services. If at any time parents/guardians are not comfortable with the services proposed or provided by the school district through the IFSP, the educational team will discuss with the family their concerns and possible IFSP modifications that the parents/guardians feel would better meet the family's and child's needs for support.
- If parents/guardians decline all Part C Infant and Toddler Intervention services proposed or provided, school district ECSE staff will typically share information about community resources that families may choose to explore on their own. Teams often invite the parents/guardians to contact the district ECSE program again if, later, the parents/guardians would like to reconsider receiving support services. School district ECSE program staff may also follow up with the family in 3 to 6 months to see if/how they may be helpful to the family.

Note: For policy and guidance information related to Part C Infant and Toddler Early Intervention Services and Preschool Special Education Services in Minnesota, questions can be emailed to MN Department of Education Early Childhood Special Education leadership staff at mde.ecse@state.mn.us.

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