

# Parent Handbook

This handbook will help guide your family through the steps to early childhood intervention services and tell you how the law protects you and your child.



**First Steps:  
Getting Started in ECI**



**Next Steps:  
ECI Services**



**Future Steps:  
Leaving ECI**



**Information and  
Resources**



*early childhood intervention*

# eci

**Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services  
Division for Early Childhood Intervention Services**



Texas Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) programs serve families with children birth to 36 months with developmental delays or disabilities. ECI provides family support and specialized services to strengthen the family's ability to access resources and improve their child's development through daily activities.

## Welcome to ECI!

This handbook describes what will happen during the time your family is involved with ECI. It also explains the legal rights you have as the parent of a child in ECI. Knowing and understanding your rights is important to making sure you are getting the right services for your child and family.

**Texas ECI: Family to Family** is a 10 minute video that offers a family perspective for families who have been or may be referred to ECI. It may help you understand more about ECI services and what to expect. To view, visit: [www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis/videos](http://www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis/videos)

ECI Program Name \_\_\_\_\_

Program Director \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

ECI Service Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

**DARS Inquiries Line - 1-800-628-5115**

**TDD/TTY Line - 1-866-581-9328**

**Website: [www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis](http://www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis)**

Talk to your local ECI program if you need more information or have a concern about your services. If you still have concerns or need more information, call the toll-free DARS Inquiries Line or TDD/TTY Line. Staff can connect you with someone to talk to you about your concerns.

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## A Message for Parents

from ECI's Assistant Commissioner,

**Kim Wedel**

All children learn and grow at their own pace, but some babies and toddlers need a little extra help. If you are concerned about your child's development, you are not alone. Many parents across the state have come to Texas Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) to get help for their babies.

Since 1981, Texas ECI has been providing services and support to families like yours. We know that families want to help their children develop and learn. That is why ECI provides most of its services and supports to children and families in their own homes and other places where children and families go. Our goal is for you, and others who care for your child, to know how best to help your child develop and learn.

At Texas ECI, we know that you are the most important person in your child's life and know your child better than anyone. As a parent, you are your child's first and best teacher. We encourage you to join in every step of the process, from deciding what kind of help your child and family need to working daily with your child to help him grow and learn.

Welcome to ECI! We look forward to working together with a mutual goal of a bright future for your child.



# What is the Texas ECI Program?

Your local Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program is one of many across Texas that is part of the statewide early childhood intervention services network. The state agency responsible for ECI services is the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). DARS contracts with local agencies throughout Texas to provide ECI services. No matter where in Texas you live, there is an ECI program that serves you.

The DARS Division for Early Childhood Intervention Services (DARS ECI) staff and local programs in your community work together to provide early intervention services for families and children. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) gives states the authority to operate early childhood intervention programs. ECI services are authorized in Part C of the IDEA. All ECI programs must comply with the requirements of the IDEA. DARS ECI receives funding under Part C of the IDEA, as well as from the State of Texas. ECI also receives funds through its collection of payments from sources including Medicaid, CHIP, private insurance, and fees charged to some families.

## Important Information about ECI:

**Parents and professionals work together as a team.** As part of the team, you help develop a plan for ECI services. These services will show you how you can help your child develop. You are your child's best teacher.

**Services are provided in places convenient for families.** ECI provides services in familiar places, such as your home or your child's day care center.

**We believe children learn new skills best during everyday activities.** ECI team members, from a variety of backgrounds, work together with you to find learning opportunities for you to help your child within daily routines such as bath time, mealtime, or playtime.

**Services are coordinated with other providers in the community.** ECI works with doctors, child care providers, social services, schools, and others to help your family identify and access important resources. Families have someone from ECI assigned to work with them to coordinate services.

**Families of all income levels can receive ECI services.** Families are expected to share in the cost of services. However, no family is turned away because of an inability to pay.



## **\*parent**

Includes a natural parent, stepparent, adoptive parent, foster parent, guardian, grandparent or other relative with whom the child lives, or someone else who is legally responsible for the child's welfare; surrogate parents are assigned for children who do not have someone available who meets the definition of "parent"

## **\*eligibility**

Requirements your child must meet in order to receive early intervention services from a Texas ECI program

# What are Your Rights in ECI?

You and your child have rights that begin when ECI first learns about your child's possible need for ECI services. It is important for you to know and understand those rights. They are designed to protect your child and family. This handbook contains information about your rights. ECI staff will also explain them to you, and you are encouraged to ask questions at any time to help you understand them.

In addition to the ECI Parent Handbook, there is a short (11 min.) video online that has additional information about your rights. The video, *Parent to Parent: Knowing Your Rights* (in both English and Spanish), provides an overview of some of your rights, including:

- Consent
- Prior Written Notice
- Confidentiality

This video, as well as other ECI videos, is located on the ECI Video web page at: [www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis/videos](http://www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis/videos). If you do not have access to a computer, you may request a DVD viewing from your program.

## **Consent**

One of the most important rights you have as a \*parent begins with your first contact with ECI and continues throughout your time with the program. This is the requirement that ECI get permission (called "consent") from you for almost any action that someone wants to take that affects your child. There are laws that require ECI to get the parent's written consent throughout the process of providing services to your child and family.

## **Prior Written Notice**

Another important right, which also starts when you begin in ECI and continues throughout your time with the program, is your right to adequate notice of meetings and activities in which you will be asked to participate. The notice, which is referred to in the law as "prior written notice," is intended to give you enough time to ensure that you, and anyone you might want to invite, can participate. Notice, which must be in writing, includes other information you need to prepare.

Written notice of meetings tells you about what will be discussed, any records or reports that might be used during the discussion, who will be at the meeting, when and where the meeting will take place, information about your rights related to the meeting, and any other information you might need so you can actively participate.

You will receive prior written notice for all activities involving your child's screening, evaluation, assessment, determination of \*eligibility, planning and implementing ECI services, and transition. You may get this type of notice at the same time you get notice of a meeting to discuss the issue. You will get written notice when ECI wants to begin, change or end an ECI service. The notice should contain the information you need to understand ECI's proposal so you can decide if you agree, and what you can do if you don't agree.

When you make a request of ECI about an aspect of your services, and ECI does not agree to your request, they must send you written notice telling you why they will not be granting your request. The notice should help you understand the basis of their decision and what you can do if you disagree with their denial of your request.

Your right to prior written notice is an important part of your rights while in ECI. Be sure to read any notice you receive carefully and ask for additional information if you need it. ECI wants you to understand, and participate in, decisions that will impact your child and family.

## Confidentiality

As you enter ECI, beginning at referral, you also have the right to confidentiality of the information ECI receives and shares about your child or family. Information ECI learns about your child or family while you are with ECI is confidential. With a few exceptions, ECI cannot give this information to anyone, including other agencies or professionals, without your written consent. Even after you have left ECI, your personal records remain confidential.

There may be times when ECI would like to get information about your child from other health care or service providers. ECI will first get your written consent to do so. The information ECI receives from these other sources will also remain confidential, with the same few exceptions.

As mentioned, there are a few situations in which your ECI program may need to share information about your child or family without getting your consent each time. Examples of times when ECI might have to provide information without the parent's consent include:

- Your ECI program sends information about your family, including your income and the ECI services you are receiving, to DARS ECI for administrative purposes. DARS ECI uses this information in monitoring local ECI programs to make sure they are following ECI requirements.
- Your ECI program may have to turn over records without your consent if a court orders them to or if Child Protective Services is conducting an investigation.

## Basic Rights

There are seven steps in the ECI process. As each step is described, rights that have already been explained may not be repeated.

Your basic rights, beginning with your first contact with ECI and continuing through your child's transition out of ECI, include:

- receiving information from ECI that you can understand before making any decisions about our services;
- consenting or not consenting to services;
- receiving adequate written notice of important meetings or actions; and
- knowing that the information ECI has about your child and family is confidential.

If you have any questions about your rights and how they apply at any step of the process, please ask. The person assigned to be your \*service coordinator is a good resource if you want more information about your rights.



### \*service coordinator

A person from ECI who works with your family to support your child's development and to help arrange for ECI and community services

# The Steps in ECI

This is an overview of the steps you and your child will take in an ECI program.

## First Steps: Getting Started in ECI

Step 1: Referral



Step 2: First Visit



Step 3: Evaluation and Assessment



## Next Steps: ECI Services

**Step 4: Individualized Family Service Plan Meeting and IFSP Development**

The IFSP must be written within 45 days of the referral to ECI.



**Step 5: ECI Service Delivery Begins**

Services begin within 28 days of signing the IFSP.



**Step 6: Review of Your Child's Progress**

Reviews occur regularly, but you can request a review of your child's progress at any time.



## Future Steps: Leaving ECI

**Step 7: Transition**

You must leave ECI by your child's 3rd birthday, or when your child is developing appropriately and no longer needs ECI services. Planning for transition begins by age 2.



# First Steps: Getting Started in ECI

## Step 1: Referral

### What is a referral?

A referral to ECI happens when a parent or someone else, such as a child's doctor, contacts ECI to recommend that a child be evaluated. The evaluation determines if a child is eligible for ECI services.

Within a few days of receiving a referral, someone from the local ECI program nearest to your home will contact you to set up the first visit. The visit must occur within 45 days of the time ECI received the referral. This is a time for ECI to learn about your child and family, as well as to give you information about ECI.

### What are my rights once my child has been referred?

You can ask that any information from ECI be given in your native language or in the way you prefer to communicate. This can include information provided in another spoken language, in sign language, Braille, using an assistive technology device or through an interpreter provided by ECI, if necessary.

If at any time you are told something or asked to sign something you do not understand, ask ECI to explain it in a different way. Ask questions until you are sure you understand the information. Do not sign forms until you are sure you know what they mean for you and your child. ECI wants you to fully understand the information you need to plan services for your child and family.

**IMPORTANT REMINDER:** Your rights to confidentiality, to decide what ECI services you want or don't want, and to have information presented in the way you can best understand it will continue throughout your time with ECI.

## Step 2: First Visit

### What happens during the first visit?

Your first visit with ECI may happen at your home, your child's day care, or somewhere else you choose. This meeting is a chance for ECI to learn more about your child and family and for you to learn more about ECI.

During the first visit, ECI staff will ask you about concerns you have for your child. They will discuss activities that are important to your family so they plan services with those activities in mind. They may also begin the \*evaluation and \*assessment process (described on pages 6-7).



### \*evaluation

A way to determine your child's eligibility by gathering information about your child's skills and abilities

### \*assessment

Tests used to identify your child's needs and strengths; your family's concerns, priorities, and resources; and the type and range of services needed



If your child lives part of the year with another family member, such as with a parent living in another part of the state, let ECI know. Your child may also be able to receive some services from the ECI program closest to that home.

At the first visit, the staff from the ECI program will review this *ECI Parent Handbook* with you, carefully explaining your rights. You will be asked to sign a form that states you received the handbook and that you understand it.

You may also be asked to sign forms that allow ECI to request information from and share information with others, such as your child's doctor, day care, relatives and others who help care for your child. Be sure to ask the ECI staff if you have questions.

You will be told that ECI routinely sends the local public school system limited personally identifiable information about children receiving ECI services when they are two years old. The district uses this information to fulfill its responsibility to identify children in the district who may need special education services. You can choose not to participate. If you do not want your child's information sent to the district at that time, just let ECI know.

ECI staff will also talk with you about which ECI services are provided at no cost to your family and which services may have a fee.

### **What is my role during the first visit?**

Your role during the first visit is to give ECI important information about your child and family. ECI staff will ask questions about your family and about your child's health and development. They may also ask about important people in your family's life and what kind of help you might already be getting from them.

You do not have to answer any questions you don't want to. However, ECI staff relies on you to provide the information they need to determine the need for services for your child and family. In addition to answering their questions, you are encouraged to tell them anything about your child or family that you think is important for ECI to know. No one knows your child as well as you.

If you are not sure why you are being asked a certain question or why you need to sign a certain form, ask for more information before you answer or sign.

### **What are my rights during the first visit?**

Some ECI programs may begin the evaluation and assessment process at the first visit. That is up to you and the program to decide.

Except in certain situations involving children referred to ECI by Child Protective Services (CPS), a division of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), ECI must get your consent before the evaluation or assessments can begin. You can consent to all, or just some, of the assessments. If you do not understand why any information is important, please ask.

If someone from ECI says something or asks you to sign something you don't understand, ask them to explain it another way. You have a right to know how information about your child and family will be used. If you do not understand why ECI is asking some questions, ask them to explain why they think your answer is important.

## **Step 3: Evaluation and Assessment**

### **What are Evaluation and Assessment?**

Evaluation and assessment are done to determine if your child has a delay, if there are other concerns with your child's development, and to determine what services are needed to help your child develop. With your consent, ECI will ask you about and look at areas of your child's development. This will be done by administering specific tests, observing your child and asking lots of questions. You will work with a team of ECI professionals for evaluation and assessment. The evaluation, including any assessments, is done at no cost to families.



## What will the staff do during evaluation and assessment?

The team will need to know about your child's vision, hearing, and physical abilities. They will talk to you about your child's nutrition and eating, interaction with others, and communication skills. They will check to see if any type of special equipment, called assistive technology, is needed to help your child move around, play, or communicate with others.

The staff will watch your child play and may want to see how you and your child interact and play together. In addition, the ECI team members will ask about your child and family's daily routines, activities your family and child enjoy, and other people who are important in your child's life.

This might all be done in one visit, or may be broken up into 2 or 3 visits with you. Sometimes vision, hearing, nutrition and assistive technology are reviewed with all the other areas, but sometimes the staff look at them separately using an ECI screening packet.

If ECI has a concern about the results of the evaluation or assessments, they may recommend you get additional testing, especially in the areas of hearing, vision or nutrition. ECI can help you find a doctor or other specialist who can do the additional testing. Whether you get this additional testing is up to you.

You have the right to understand why the ECI staff wants to do these evaluations or assessments on your child, how the results will be used and what will happen if the results indicate a need for further testing. Be sure you understand the process before you give your written consent.

## What is my role during evaluation and assessment?

The ECI team cannot complete the evaluation and assessment without you. You know your child best!

You may be asked to answer questions and provide information about:

- your child's development,
- your concerns about your child's development,
- your child's health status,
- any problems or issues related to the pregnancy and birth of your child,
- any family history of vision or hearing problems,
- any priorities you have for your child, and
- any resources you might already have for assisting your child and family.

## What are my rights during evaluation and assessment?

As explained at the beginning of this handbook, ECI must have the parent's written consent to do many things. With the exception of some children who are referred by Child Protective Services (CPS), a division of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), parents must give written consent for the ECI staff to do testing on their child. You can give consent for some but not all testing. If you do not give consent for a test, it will not be done. You will be asked to sign a form giving consent for any tests. You have a right to ask for and receive a full evaluation.

The results of your child's evaluation and assessment will become a part of your child's records. It is important for you to know your rights regarding your child's records. These rights apply to all of your child's records. As you go through ECI, you may want to review the section of the handbook about your rights regarding records ( see page 8).

## What are my rights regarding my child's records?

You have rights about your child's records that come from two federal laws: IDEA and Family



Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). These laws say that you can:

- Expect ECI to keep your personal information confidential.
- Inspect or review ECI records about your child and family.
- Give someone else permission to review these records for you.
- Refuse to give permission to release your records to others outside of ECI.
- Ask for explanations of information in the records that you don't understand.
- Ask for a list of what records ECI keeps on your child and family and where they are kept.
- Ask ECI to make changes to information you think is not accurate, is misleading, or that violates your or your child's privacy.
- Ask for a hearing to challenge information in your child's records that you believe is inaccurate, misleading, or violates your or your child's privacy and that ECI has refused your request to change or remove. Your ECI program will provide you with the information on how to request a hearing to challenge information in your child's records.
- Your child's records will be kept by the ECI program for 5 years after your child leaves the program. The ECI program may destroy the records anytime after 5 years with or without your consent. However, they can keep a permanent record of your child's name, address and telephone number.

**Note:** There are some situations, such as a court order or situations in which the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) is involved with the family, in which ECI would be required to share records or information that would otherwise be considered confidential.

## Resolving Disagreements

The following explains how you can pursue a complaint or disagreement with ECI. This process can be used because of a disagreement about the evaluation process or results, or at any other time you and the ECI team working with your family can't agree. It is also available to you if you are not satisfied about some experience you had in ECI that you think violated your rights.

You have a right to have your disagreement addressed by filing a complaint with DARS ECI. You also have the right to take your complaint to an independent mediator or an administrative hearing. These are important rights and ones you have throughout your time in ECI. Refer back to this section of the handbook at any time to review the process for resolving disputes. In addition, your ECI provider can explain the process to you.

Following are the procedures available for resolving complaints or disagreements about ECI:

### Resolving problems locally

Most disagreements between families and ECI programs can be resolved locally without going through the formal complaint process. Suggestions for resolving problems or concerns locally include:

- Contacting your local program director to discuss the concern with them and asking them for a resolution.
- Calling the DARS Inquiries Line at 1-800-628-5115 to ask to get in contact with someone at the ECI State Office who can help resolve a problem or concern locally.

### Filing a Complaint

If you are unable or do not want to resolve the issue locally, you have the right to file a complaint with DARS ECI. You can file a complaint about an issue involving your child, or about any aspect of the ECI system that you believe violates legal requirements.

Send a letter, fax, or e-mail to the DARS ECI office stating your complaint and requesting an investigation. (Call the DARS Inquiries Line at 1-800-628-5115 for contact information.) Clearly state in writing the facts on which your complaint is based. You do not have to complain to your early intervention services program before filing a complaint with DARS ECI, but you are required to send them a copy of your complaint at the time the complaint is submitted to DARS ECI.

DARS ECI must resolve the complaint within 60 days from the time they receive it. They will send you their findings and decision in writing.





## Mediation

When DARS ECI receives your complaint, they will contact you to offer mediation services. If you choose to try mediation, ECI will assign a neutral mediator (at ECI's expense) to see if they can resolve the problem between you and your ECI program. Both you and the program will have to agree to use mediation. It is your choice whether to accept the offer of mediation or to proceed with your complaint.

You can request mediation without first filing a complaint or an administrative due process hearing. However, you would still need to provide a written statement of the issues you want resolved. Contact the DARS ECI office to make your request for mediation.

If you and the program come to an agreement through mediation, the mediator will help you and the program put the agreement in writing. A copy of the written agreement will be given to both you and the program. Mediation agreements are confidential.

**NOTE:** Mediation requests must meet certain requirements. Contact the DARS ECI state office for more information regarding these requirements.

## Administrative Due Process Hearing

You have the right to ask for an administrative due process hearing conducted by a hearing officer if you disagree with decisions made by your ECI team. This includes decisions about eligibility, evaluation and/or services. You can, but are not required to, ask for a hearing after trying one or more of the previous methods first (resolving problems locally, filing a complaint, mediation).

An administrative hearing is a more formal process than either filing a complaint or mediation. Though you are not required to have an attorney, some parents choose to hire one because the hearing process uses legal procedures most parents are not familiar with. If you hire an attorney, it is at your expense. You can also be represented or accompanied by someone who is not an attorney, but who has knowledge and training in early childhood intervention services.

The hearing process follows these steps:

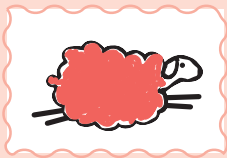
- Upon receiving a written request for an administrative due process hearing, the ECI Assistant Commissioner appoints an impartial hearing officer who is neither an ECI staff member nor a provider of services to the child or family.

- The hearing officer contacts you to schedule a hearing. The hearing must be at a time and place that is convenient for both you and the other party.
- Either party may present evidence, require the attendance of witnesses, and question witnesses. Neither side can present evidence at the hearing unless it has been shown to the other party at least 5 days before the hearing.
- DARS or the hearing officer records the hearing and provides an exact record of the hearing to the parties upon request.
- The hearing is closed to the public, unless you request it to be open.
- The hearing officer makes a decision within 30 days from the date a request for a hearing is filed. While the hearing is in process, your child, if enrolled in ECI, may continue to receive services, including those that may be in dispute.

To file a complaint with DARS ECI, request an administrative due process hearing, or to request mediation, send your request or complaint by mail or fax to:

**Assistant Commissioner**  
**Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services**  
**Division for Early Childhood Intervention Services**  
**4900 North Lamar Blvd.**  
**Austin, TX 78751-2399**  
**Fax: 1-512-424-6749**

Complaints can also be filed by e-mail. To use e-mail, call the DARS Inquires Line at 1-800-628-5115 and ask them to tell you the procedures.



# Next Steps: ECI Services

## Step 4: Individualized Family Service Plan Meeting and IFSP Development

### \*ECI staff

Persons employed by the ECI program or others under contract to the program to provide services on behalf of the ECI program.

### \*IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan)

A written plan for your child and family's services in your ECI program

### What is the individualized family service plan (IFSP) meeting?

The plan for services that you and \*ECI staff will develop for your child and family is called the Individualized Family Service Plan (\*IFSP). It is called a "family" service plan because it will include goals and activities for the family, not just your child. It is called an "individualized" plan because it is developed just for your family and child based on your individual needs. The services you agree on and who will provide them are a major part of the IFSP.

The IFSP meeting, therefore, is the meeting that will be held to develop your child and family's IFSP. While you are in ECI, the IFSP will be reviewed and updated as needed.

The IFSP meeting happens at a place and time that works for you. In addition to you, the IFSP team includes at least two \*ECI staff from different professions. The meeting can also include anyone else you want to be there, including other family members, friends or anyone you think should be involved in planning for your child and family. Your child's IFSP must be written within 45 days of when your child was first referred to ECI.

During the IFSP meeting the team will discuss:

- what your child is currently doing and learning;
- areas in which your child may need some extra help; and
- any assistance your family might need to help your child grow and learn.

**The team will decide:**

- what ECI services are needed to help your child and family;
- how often and where those services will be provided;
- who will provide each ECI service;
- goals for your child and family; and
- activities you and other caregivers can do every day to help your child reach the identified goals.



### Your IFSP will also include:

- the name of your service coordinator;
- a summary of your child's medical history;
- a description of how your child is developing;
- a description of your child's strengths and needs;
- an explanation of how the team will measure your child's progress;
- when services will begin and end;
- ideas for helping your child and family find services you need when you leave ECI;
- information about how services are paid for; and
- a summary of services your child needs that are not provided by ECI.

Sometime before or during the IFSP meeting, you will be asked for information about what insurance you have (private and public) and about your family's income and expenses. Some families may be required to pay a monthly fee, based on a sliding fee scale, for some ECI services. You may also be asked for permission to bill some services to your private insurance. ECI will explain the family cost share system to you and answer all of your questions. You will be asked to sign a financial agreement that says how much money, if any, you will be asked to pay each month. No one is refused services based on an inability to pay.

### What is my role during the IFSP meeting?

You have a very important role during the IFSP meeting—working with ECI staff and other members of the team to decide what services your child and family will receive. To prepare for the meeting, you may want to think about whether there is someone you would like to either attend the meeting or provide information about your child to the team. You may also want to think about what you would like to see your child doing (or doing more often or differently) in the next six months to one year.

During the IFSP meeting, you will be asked for your ideas about what skills and activities your child is strong in, needs help with, enjoys or doesn't enjoy and things you like doing together. The information you give the team will be important in planning what services will help your child and family. ECI team members will work with you to develop strategies or activities you can do to help your child grow and learn. Talking about the kinds of things you and your child do together will help your team come up with strategies that work with activities that are already a part of your day.

### What are my rights during the IFSP meeting?

Some of your most important rights apply before the meeting actually happens. ECI staff must provide prior written notice (see "Prior Written Notice" on page 2) that tells you when the IFSP meeting will take place so that you will have time to plan for it. For example, you may want to invite another family member or friend to be there, or you may want time to think about the decisions you will be making. The notice should also tell you what will be discussed and who else will be there. The notice should also remind you that you can invite other persons you would like to attend the meeting.

If the location, date or time of the meeting would keep you or any other person you may want to bring with you from attending, contact ECI and ask for another time or location.

During the meeting, you have the right to fully participate in deciding the services you need for your child and family. All decisions must be made on an individual basis. What is best for some other child and family may not be good for your family.

ECI cannot begin providing services unless you give consent in writing. You have the right to consent for some services but not others. If ECI staff recommend some services you do not want, you can refuse those services and still receive other services you do want. You also can, at any time, decide you do not want any ECI services.



You can disagree with ECI staff about all or some of the IFSP. You do not have to sign the plan if you don't agree with it. You can file a complaint or request a hearing by following the process described on pages 8 and 9.

Of course, be sure you get a copy of the IFSP.

## Step 5: ECI Service Delivery Begins

### What is service delivery?

Early intervention services listed in the IFSP must begin within 28 days of the date you signed the IFSP.

During service delivery visits, the ECI staff member will offer suggestions, discuss different strategies or plans of action, provide feedback and show you ways to work with your child. You will have time to ask questions and to talk with the service provider about which strategies are working and which are not. Your service provider will also want to know new things that your child is doing, any concerns you have, and any updates about your family's life that might affect your child's growth and development.

### What is my role during delivery of ECI services?

Your major role is to fully participate with the ECI staff in the service being provided. The goal is to teach you activities and strategies you can use every day with your child. Your child will make progress because of what you do with your child between the ECI visits.

It is important for you to understand why a particular activity will help your child develop. Be sure you ask your service provider to explain why a certain strategy or activity is being recommended.

### What are my rights during delivery of ECI services?

You gave consent for the services you are receiving when you signed the IFSP. However, you have the right to withdraw your consent for any of the services at any time. If you do withdraw your consent, ECI must stop providing that service.

Your service providers will write progress notes about each visit. They should leave copies of those notes for you to review. If you do not receive a copy at the time of the visit, you can ask for a copy at any time. A copy of the progress notes will also be in your child's records. You can refer back to pages 8, "What are my rights regarding my child's records?" if you need information about how to see your child's records, or to ask for a change to something in those records.

You have the right to disagree with the ECI program staff about your services. Let them know if the suggested strategies aren't working, or if you don't agree with how your services are being delivered.

If you can't come to an agreement with your ECI team about services, or if you feel that any of your rights have been violated, you can pursue any of the options for handling a disagreement discussed on pages 8 and 9 of this handbook. However, most disagreements or concerns about services can be resolved locally. You may want to talk to your service coordinator or the program director about your concerns.

## Step 6: Review your Child's Progress

Babies and toddlers can change a lot in just a few months. They are learning how to do new things all the time. While your family is with ECI, you may be trying a lot of different things to help your child grow and learn. Therefore, it is important to regularly review your child's progress.

ECI must meet with you to review your child's progress at least every six months to determine whether the services and strategies on your IFSP are helping. The first review must occur within 6 months of signing the IFSP. Reviews can occur at other times if you or any other team members think there may be a need to change your child's IFSP.







# Future Steps: Leaving ECI

## Step 7: Leaving ECI (Transition)

### **\*transition**

**When your child leaves a local ECI program. All children must leave ECI by their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday, or when no longer eligible**

### **What is transition?**

The word **\***transition means passing from one place to another. For your child in ECI, it means leaving ECI and continuing any services still needed somewhere else. All children must leave ECI by their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Some children may be ready to leave earlier while others stay in ECI until they are 3, but don't need any more services after ECI. However, many children will continue to need some extra help after their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday.

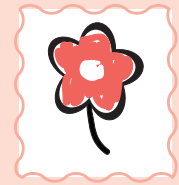
Transition is the process to help you decide what your child and family might need when you leave ECI. Because this is such an important step for your child and family, ECI will begin working with you to plan transition strategies far enough in advance so that the change will happen smoothly and without a gap in services.

Planning for your child's transition from ECI begins by at least age 2. A year may seem like a long time to plan, but you may have several options to explore. For example, you may want to learn about the differences in services between a preschool program at the local school district, Head Start, a private preschool, and therapy services in your home or a clinic. If these are options you are considering, you may need time to visit all these settings before deciding what is best for your child. Transition options address your child's medical and social needs, in addition to educational and developmental needs.

You and your service coordinator will write up the transition strategies you develop together. You will get a copy, and a copy will also go into your child's records.

At least 90 days before your child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday, your service coordinator will offer to set up transition meetings with the programs or community services you are considering for your child. This does not mean you have to enroll in those programs. It is an opportunity to learn more about what they can offer, how they determine who is eligible for their services, and what will happen next if you decide to refer your child. Some providers meet with families individually and others conduct meetings with several parents at a time.

Once you have decided on the programs or services you want to pursue, ECI will make referrals to them. With your consent, ECI will send them information about your child. Once another program receives the referral, they will contact you to let you know the next steps. This could include meetings to evaluate your child for eligibility or to plan what services your child would receive. Someone from ECI who knows your child can attend these meetings with you if you invite them. Even after a referral is made, you can change your mind at any time and decide not to enroll your child.



## What is my role during transition?

You are the most important person during transition because you are making decisions about what happens to your child and family when ECI services end. For ECI to help you in planning for the future, you need to share with them your hopes, priorities and concerns about your child's future. As you talk about different options, be sure to ask questions so you will have the information you need to make good decisions.

While in ECI, your service coordinator and other ECI staff have been available to help you find and get additional services for your child and family. Other programs may not offer this type of support for families. Of course, it's best if you can be your own service coordinator and \*advocate. However, if you think you will still need help with finding needed services and support for your child or family, ask your service coordinator to help you find another source of assistance, such as a family support or advocacy organization in your community.

## What are my rights during transition?

You will receive prior written notice of transition meetings or conferences. The decision about which, if any, programs or services you want to pursue for your child is yours. You also can decide you do not want any services after your child turns 3.

Your decision not to seek further services is not a permanent one. As the parent, you can always arrange for services yourself later. For example, if you choose not to refer your child to the local school district for special education services at age 3, you have the right to change your mind. After leaving ECI, you can contact the local school district at any time and ask that your child be evaluated for eligibility for special education.

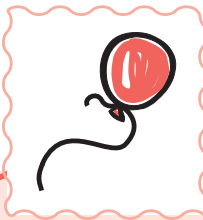
You may want to keep any information ECI gives you about community services and resources during the transition process in case you need that information after leaving ECI. You will also receive a booklet entitled \**Beyond ECI* that contains helpful information.

### \*advocate

Someone who supports or defends your child's interests and rights

### \**Beyond ECI*

A booklet developed by ECI in collaboration with the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the state agency that oversees the Texas public school system that provides information for families with children transitioning out of ECI. You should receive this booklet when you begin the transition process. If you do not receive it from your local ECI program, ask your service coordinator to bring you one or call the DARS Inquiries Line at 1-800-628-5115 to order one.



# Information and Resources

## Where can I get more information about my rights?

This handbook summarized your rights. If you want to see the full laws, regulations and rules that regulate ECI and are reading this online, you can find links online at: [www.dars.state.tx.us/rules/index.shtml#eci](http://www.dars.state.tx.us/rules/index.shtml#eci)

If you do not have access to a computer to get this information, ask your service coordinator to help you find paper copies you can look at, or go to your community library to use a computer.

### Statutes

- United States Code, Title 20, Chapter 33, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Texas Human Resources Code, Chapter 73, Interagency Council on Early Childhood Intervention Services

### Regulations

- Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34, Part 99, Family Educational Rights and Privacy
- Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34, Part 303, Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities

### Rules

- Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Chapter 101, Subchapter J, Appeals and Hearing Procedures, Division 3, Division for Early Childhood Intervention Services
- Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Chapter 108, Division for Early Childhood Intervention Services

## Where can I get more information about other resources available to me?

The **Internet ECI Resource Guide** at [www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis/resources/resourceguide](http://www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis/resources/resourceguide) contains a wealth of information including contact information.

Resource topics include but are not limited to:

- Auditory Impairments
- Cerebral Palsy
- Child Care
- Crisis Hotline for Parents
- Developmental Information
- Down Syndrome
- Education Services
- Financial and Medical Assistance
- General Health
- Parent Education
- Parent Support
- Women's Health Information



# Determination of Parent & ECI Handbook Acknowledgment Surrogate Parent Identification of Need

DARS ECI defines "parent" as the term is defined in 20 U.S.C. 1401(23):

- a natural, adoptive or foster parent of a child (unless a foster parent is prohibited by State law from serving as a parent);
- a guardian (but not the State if the child is a ward of the State);
- an individual acting in the place of a natural or adoptive parent (including a grandparent, step-parent, or other relative) with whom the child lives, or an individual who is legally responsible for the child's welfare.

Review the definition above, and then check one of the boxes below, as appropriate:

- 1. Parent/Guardian has been identified - (No further action required)
- 2. A parent cannot be identified
- 3. Efforts to locate parent have been unsuccessful
- 4. Child is a ward of the state (no foster parent has been appointed)

If #2, #3 or #4 is checked, STOP and COMPLETE the DARS ECI Surrogate Parent form before proceeding with review of the handbook.

## Acknowledgment of Receipt of ECI Parent Handbook

After this handbook is reviewed with you, read and sign the following:

I have received a copy of my ECI Parent Handbook. It informs me of my rights and my child's rights while enrolled in a Texas program funded by DARS Early Childhood Intervention. I understand that I have the right to:

- Participate
- Have my child evaluated
- Give consent, or permission
- A plan for services within 45 days of referral
- Prior written notice of IFSP meetings and evaluations
- Understand
- Confidentiality
- Review records
- Disagree
- Receive ECI screenings, assessment, evaluation, IFSP development, and case management at no cost to my family

My signature indicates I have received my ECI Parent Handbook and understand its contents.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent, Surrogate or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date







**Serving Texas families who  
have children birth to 36  
months with developmental  
delays or disabilities.**



**Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services  
Division for Early Childhood Intervention Services**

**[www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis](http://www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis)**

**For questions, compliments or concerns, call 1-800-628-5115  
or use the relay option of your choice.**