



## Individualized Family Service Plan For Children with Disabilities Under Age Three

**IMPORTANT:** ELC's publications are intended to give you a general idea of the law. However, each situation is different. If, after reading our publications, you have questions about how the law applies to your particular situation, contact us for a referral, or contact an attorney of your choice.

### WHAT IS AN INDIVIDUALIZED FAMILY SERVICE PLAN (IFSP)?

An IFSP is a written plan that describes the specific early intervention services needed to help a child under age three who has a developmental delay develop and grow. The IFSP lists who will provide the services and where they will be provided. It also says how often, for how long and how much of a service must be provided to the child (for example, direct physical therapy, 2 thirty-minute sessions per week), and where the service will be delivered. The County and the Early Intervention provider **must** provide the children with all of the Early Intervention services listed in the IFSP.

To view a copy of the combined IFSP/Preschool IEP form (with explanations) used in Pennsylvania go to: <http://www.pattan.net/files/Forms/English/EI/IFSP-IEP-Ann070108.pdf>, or you can get a copy from your Service Coordinator.

### HOW IS THE IFSP DEVELOPED?

The first step is to find out if the child is eligible for services, and, if so, the areas in which the child is having problems. This is done through a formal evaluation. Evaluations are free, and should determine whether the child is having problems in thinking (cognition), physical development (including vision and hearing), speech and language development, social and emotional development, or self-help

skills. A child is also eligible if she has a physical or mental condition that is highly likely to result in a developmental delay. An example is fetal alcohol syndrome. An evaluation must also include a review of the child's records to determine the child's health and medical history.

For each area in which the child is found to have a significant problem, the evaluation must identify the types of services the child needs. Services can include such things as physical, speech or occupational therapy, psychological services, special instructional programs, and training for parents and other family members.

### **ARE THE FAMILY'S NEEDS PART OF THE EVALUATION AND CAN PARENTS GET HELP IN PROMOTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD?**

Yes, the family's needs can be part of the evaluation - *but only if the family agrees*. If the family does want its needs reviewed, the evaluators must also ask about any family member's concerns and what resources or supports they may need to help the child's development. Those concerns and services should then be included in the IFSP.

### **WHAT IS AN IFSP MEETING?**

If the child is eligible for services, a meeting is held to write the IFSP. The evaluation must be completed, and the IFSP meeting held, *within 45 calendar days* of the date the parents contact the County Mental Health/Mental Retardation (MH/MR) Office. The services in the IFSP must be provided to the child *no later than 14 calendar days* after the IFSP is completed, unless the family agrees to a delay. There must be an IFSP meeting each year, and reviews every six (6) months (that don't have to include a meeting). A parent can ask for a review at any time. The purpose of the review is to find out if the child is making progress and whether any changes are needed in the services being provided. If changes are needed, the IFSP must be revised at a meeting that includes the parents.

The following people must be part of any IFSP meeting:

1. The parent or parents of the child;

2. Other persons the parents want to have attend, such as another family member, an advocate or a friend;
3. The service coordinator, who is the person responsible for making sure that all services are provided and coordinated;
4. Someone who was directly involved in the evaluation of the child. If this person can't attend, arrangements must be made for the person to be involved through other means;
5. One or more of the people who will be providing services to the child or family.

### **WHEN AND WHERE IS THE IFSP MEETING HELD?**

The meeting must be held in a place and at a time that are convenient for the parents. If parents are unable to attend the meeting in person, they can still participate by telephone. Parents must be invited to the meeting in writing *at least five (5) calendar days* prior to the IFSP meeting.

### **WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE IFSP?**

Every IFSP must include a statement of the child's current levels in each of the five developmental areas and, with the family's consent, the results of the family assessment. In addition, the IFSP for every child must include:

- Measurable Outcomes and Progress Tools: What the child is expected to achieve, how progress will be determined, the extent to which progress is being made, and whether modifications are needed.
- Specific Early Intervention Services: What services the child and family are entitled to receive and how those services are linked to the outcomes the child is expected to achieve.
- Location: This includes whether the services will be provided in the "natural environment." The natural environment is the setting where the child would be if she did not have a disability, including

home and community settings. Natural settings include programs for children without disabilities, including early child care and education programs. If one or more of the services is not being provided in the natural environment, the IFSP must explain why.

- Place and Time: How *often* each service will be, and *where* each will be given and how long each service will be provided.
- Type of Service: Whether the service will be given *directly* to the child, or will be given as *consultation* to someone working with the child.
- Dates: When the services will *begin or end*, and the date of review (at least every 180 days). If it is particularly urgent, and with the parents' consent, services can begin under a short-term IFSP even before the evaluation is completed. The evaluation must still be completed *within the 45 calendar day* period.
- Name of the *service coordinator* who will be responsible for the implementation of the child's IFSP.
- Steps Towards Transition: A statement of the steps to be taken to support the child's *transition* to preschool early intervention at age three (3) including, with the parents' consent, sending information about the child to the preschool early intervention agency.

For more details about transition and to view the IFSP form, go to <http://www.pattan.net/files/Forms/English/EI/IFSP-IEP-Ann070108.pdf> and review "Section X. Transition Plan."

- Parents' Signature: When you sign the IFSP you are agreeing to everything that is in the IFSP. Remember, you can agree to some services and disagree with others. The services to which you have agreed can start while you discuss the problems with the Infants and Toddlers agency, or go to a hearing, regarding the areas of disagreement.

## **WHAT IF I DON'T AGREE WITH THE IFSP OFFERED TO MY CHILD?**

Parents have the right to disagree with all or part of the IFSP being offered. For example, the family may believe that more or different services are needed, or that the services should be given more frequently or in a different location. At the end of the meeting, the parents will be asked to sign the IFSP to show that they were part of the Team. Parents will also be given a Parents' Rights Agreement which gives them a number of choices, including rejecting all or only some of the services listed in the IFSP. The family should list any services they agree with, and those services should start right away. To work out any remaining problems, the parents can have a meeting with someone from the county, ask for a IFSP Facilitator or mediation, or ask for a hearing. For more details about these options call, ELC's offices at the number listed below, or click here for a copy of our publication *Resolving Disputes in the Early Intervention System for Infant and Toddlers Under Age 3*, <http://www.elc-pa.org/pubs/downloads/english/dis-Early%20Intervention%20Resolving%20Disputes%204-08.pdf>.

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