



Nebraska Early Development Network
A Family's Guide to
Early Intervention Services
in Nebraska

<http://edn.ne.gov>



What is Early Intervention?

Early Intervention can help you and your family support and promote your child's development, within your family activities and community life. Nebraska's Early Development Network supports children birth through three years of age who have special developmental needs. The Nebraska Early Development Network program "connects" families with early intervention services, such as occupational, speech or physical therapy, to help infants and toddlers grow and develop and help their families in this process. It is a voluntary program and does not discriminate based on race, culture, religion, income level, or disability.

Contact Information

Who can I contact for more information?

For more information on your rights, or if you need help understanding the information provided, contact any of the following:

- Your Services Coordinator: _____
- Provider: _____
- IFSP Team _____
- _____
- Your Local School District
Name: _____
Contact Information: _____
Special Education Director: _____

- Statewide Contacts

Connie Shockley
PTI Nebraska
Parent Support Coordinator
3135 North 93rd Street
Omaha, NE 68134
1-866-991-6713
402-991-6713
Email: cshockley@pt-nebraska.org

Nina Baker
PTI Nebraska
Health Information Coordinator
3135 North 93rd Street
Omaha, NE 68134
1-888-490-9233
402-346-9233
Email: nbaker@pti-nebraska.org

Mark Smith
Munroe-Meyer Institute
Consumer/Family Coordinator
985450 Nebraska Medical Center
Omaha, NE 68198
(402) 559-5744
(800) 656-3937
Email: msmitha@unmc.edu

Joan Luebbers
Nebraska Department of Education
Early Development Network
301 Centennial Mall South
PO Box 94987
Lincoln, NE 68509-2463
(402) 471-2463
Email: Joan.luebbers@nebraska.gov

Amy Bunnell
Early Development Network
Program Coordinator
DHHS, Medicaid & Long-Term Care
301 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, NE 68509
(402) 471-9329
Email: amy.bunnell@nebraska.gov

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Introduction

Who is this document for?

This document is for any parent who has a concern regarding the development of their infant/toddler or whose infant/toddler has health care needs.

Why do I need this document?

As a parent, you have rights under both federal and State Special Education Law that affect any services your child may be eligible for. This document will help explain some of those rights, the process and important contacts if you have questions.

What is Early Intervention?

Early Intervention is a collection of services families may need if their infants/toddlers have developmental delays and/or health care needs.



What is the Early Development Network (EDN)?

The Early Development Network (EDN) provides Early Intervention Services that are *voluntary and free* for children in Nebraska from birth to age three and their families. <http://edn.nde.gov>

The Early Development Network (EDN) is a partnership between:

- families and their young children with special needs (birth to age three)
- providers from the Nebraska Department of Education
- providers from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and,
- other community agencies.

How do I know if my child is eligible? (Rule 51 - 006.04)

If you have a concern about your child's development, or your child has been diagnosed with a health condition that will affect his/her development, he/she may be eligible for services.

The assigned EDN Services Coordinator will request your written permission for evaluations through the Special Education Department of your School District. Evaluations are conducted by a Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MDT), consisting of a team of professionals within your school district and yourself.

The Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MDT) determines eligibility for free and appropriate early interventions services/education under state guidelines. Eligibility guidelines are found in Rule 51, section 006.04 (Eligibility for Special Education). <http://edn.ne.gov/Rule512008.pdf>

What is a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)? (Rule 51 - 003.27; 007.01)

Free appropriate public education or FAPE means infants/toddlers who are found to be eligible under state and federal requirements, shall receive special education and related services which are provided at no cost to parents.

What is the Special Education Law?

Federal Law

The Federal Law is called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It outlines rights and responsibilities regarding special education for children with disabilities and their parents. More information can be found at:

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/idea2004.html>

Nebraska State Law

In Nebraska, early intervention services are outlined in the Early Intervention Act. The state regulations covering special education in Nebraska is Rule 51. More information can be found at: <http://www.nde.state.ne.us/LEGAL/cover51.html>

What are these numbers? (i.e. Rule 51 - 006.04)

Throughout this guide, you will see reference numbers provided that will guide you to topics listed in Rule 51. Each reference number lists the section and paragraph where the topic can be found.



“I truly value the friendships and connections I made, I will continue to cherish their impression.”



What Happens after my Child is Referred?

What does a Services Coordinator do?

During your first visit, the Services Coordinator will talk about the program and the process as well as answer any questions you and your family may have. With your permission and consent, the Services Coordinator will gather information about your child and family.

A Services Coordinator will:

- Contact your family to determine if you are interested in Early Development Network services
- arrange for evaluation of your child
- work with agencies that provide services
- inform you of services in the community
- make sure services are delivered smoothly and properly
- inform your family about advocacy and support groups

You are entitled to help from a Services Coordinator up to the time of the evaluation. If your child is verified as having a disability, their services will continue. *You* may also decide the help of a Services Coordinator is not needed. In that case, your child's services will be coordinated by your family and the local school district.

What is an MDT?

With your consent, an evaluation of your child is conducted by a Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MDT).

This team includes you (the parents) and a variety of qualified professionals who evaluate your child and determine if your child meets the state requirements to receive Early Intervention services. (Rule 51 - 003.45) An MDT evaluation must be completed within 45 calendar days from the date of referral. (Rule 51 - 009.04B3)

The make-up of the MDT is determined by the child's needs. Professionals who may be included on the team are:

- an infant/preschool educator
- a psychologist
- a speech-language pathologist
- a physical therapist
- an occupational therapist
- a vision specialist
- an audiologist
- a nurse
- a doctor



What is an Evaluation? (Rule 51 - 003.24)

A complete evaluation includes parent input, observation, and testing in each of the following areas of your child's development. This evaluation will look at all areas of your child's development, including:

- Cognitive – ability to learn and how your child learns;
- Physical – ability to move, see, and hear as well as health development;
- Communication – ability to understand language and express needs;
- Social/emotional – ability to relate with others; and
- Adaptive skills – ability to dress, eat and take care of oneself.

An evaluation is a way of seeing if your child is eligible for early intervention services. The evaluation will occur only with your written permission and at no cost to you. You, your child, and the professionals on your team will be involved in this evaluation.



What is an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)? (Rule 51 – 006.07)

If you do not agree with the findings of the MDT, you can request an IEE at the expense of the public schools. An IEE is conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the school district. The public school must consider the results of the independent evaluation in making recommendations for eligibility of services.

“Our team was wonderful in helping us navigate through all the paperwork at a time when our lives were turned upside down.”

What is an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)?

If eligible, your child can receive early intervention services. You will have a meeting with your EDN Services Coordinator and other service providers to write an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Your first IFSP meeting must be held within 45 days of the referral. Services begin when you have agreed to the IFSP that has been developed. The plan will reflect your family's concerns and priorities.

The IFSP is an ongoing process that adjusts to the changing needs of your child and family. It is reviewed every six months and rewritten on a yearly basis. If there are major changes in your child's health or development, or your family's situation, a review can occur at any time.

An IFSP is several pages long and includes the following information:



- **Present levels of functioning** – what your child is able to do now
- **Family's Concerns and Priorities** – family concerns are what you are worried about for your child and family. Some of these concerns may center on academic and/or development and some may be more family centered (i.e. things that would help your family to support your child). Priorities are those concerns you have identified as being the most important to address at this time.
- **Family's Resources** – the strengths and abilities or formal and informal supports your family has to help meet the changes you want for your child.
- **Outcomes** – measurable changes you want to see for your child or something you want for your family. These are sometimes referred to as “goals”.
- **Early intervention services needed** – what services are needed, how often and how long, where they will happen, and who will pay for them. (See page 7 for a listing of possible services).
- **Natural environments** – settings that are natural or normal for your child's age peers without disabilities. (See page 8 for more information).
- **Other services** - these services may be medical, child care, recreational or any service you want the IFSP team to know about.

- **Timelines** – when services will begin and end, and when the team will formally review the plan again.
- **Name of your Services Coordinator** – someone to help you navigate the system that is named in your plan.
- **A transition plan** when your child nears the age of three – exploring and planning services after your child is three years old and exits from the Early Development Network.
- **Assistive technology** - refers to a wide range of tools which can be used to support your child as they play, communicate, and participate in daily activities.

You may invite other family members, a friend or support person to the meeting. Bring any information about your child you feel is important to share.

What services does early intervention include?

EDN services that are appropriate and agreed-upon by the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team are provided *at no cost to your child and family*. These services are family-centered and written on the IFSP. They are provided year round.

Services may include, but are not limited to:

- Services coordination.
- Assistive technology.
- Audiology.
- Family training, counseling, and home visits.
- Health services.
- Medical services for diagnostic or evaluation.
- Nursing services.
- Nutrition services.
- Occupational therapy.
- Physical therapy.
- Psychology services.
- Social work.
- Special instruction.
- Speech-language pathology, sign language, and cued speech.
- Transportation.
- Vision services.



When do services begin?

The process of evaluation, determination of eligibility, assessment and the development of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) must be completed within 45 calendar days from the date of referral to the Early Development Network. A delay may occur if your child is hospitalized or your family has other extenuating circumstances. Services must begin in a timely manner after the IFSP is developed.

What is meant by services in “natural environments”? (Rule 51 – 007.12B4b)

Natural environment is different for each family and is defined as settings where children of the same age without disabilities would be found. Consider where your child would be spending time if they did not have a disability. Whenever possible, EDN services occur in natural environments.

Examples would include community child care centers, church or synagogue play groups, public parks and pools, libraries, grocery and department stores, fast food restaurants, family vehicles, public transportation, birth and holiday parties, movies, barbers, dentists, festivals and fairs to name only a few. What is ‘natural’ for one child may not be natural for all children (i.e. riding daily in dad’s pick-up truck).

A location may not be a natural environment if it is where primarily persons with disabilities or illness go (i.e. clinics, hospitals, special schools/classrooms). The provision of early intervention services for any infant or toddler may occur in a setting other than a natural environment only if early intervention cannot be achieved satisfactorily for the infant or toddler in a natural environment.

What is an Assessment? (Rule 51 - 003.03)

An assessment is an ongoing collection of information about your child’s strengths and needs. Assessments are used by the EDN Service Providers to determine your child’s level of progress and whether program changes need to be made as your child grows. Assessments are ongoing and the information is included in the review of your child’s IFSP.

What happens in the summer? - Year Round Services (Rule 51 – 007.18)

School districts are required to provide year round services for children birth to three. This includes providing services over the summer months. Services may not be interrupted, modified or otherwise changed for reasons unrelated to your child’s needs such as service provider’s availability or scheduling. Only your child’s needs and your family’s preferences should dictate a reduction in services.

What happens when my child reaches age three? (Rule 51 - 007.16)

At the age of 3, your child will transition out of the Early Development Network. You may choose to stay in the Early Development Network until August 31st after your child’s third birthday. If she/he is still in need of special education services, she/he will transition from an Individualized Family Service Plan to an Individualized Education Program. You and your team will schedule a meeting to ensure that the process of transition goes well for everyone. This meeting should occur at least 90 days prior to your child’s third birthday. The meeting can be held up to nine months prior to your child’s third birthday.

The team will review your child’s program options for the remainder of the school year, describe how your family will be involved in the transition process, and develop the transition plan with you.

What Additional Information do I need to know?

Why would I need Prior Written Notice? (Rule 51 - 009.05)

You have the right to receive a written notice within a reasonable amount of time before the school district proposes or refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of your child or the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE – see page 2). It must include a description of the action proposed or refused and an explanation of why the action was proposed or refused. It must be written in an easily understandable manner, and in your native language.

What does informed consent mean?

It means that the Early Development Network (EDN) must have your permission in writing before any evaluations or services are provided. The information will be provided in your native language or other mode of communication, and your consent is voluntary and may be revoked at any time. (Rule 51 - 003.11)

You can decide not to give permission for any specific services and you may refuse a service at any time while keeping the services you choose to receive. The Early Development Network (EDN) must also have your permission before sharing information about you or your child with others. Consent means you have been fully informed about the activity for which consent is being sought and you understand and agree. More information on informed consent can be found in Rule 51, section 009.08.

Is information about my family confidential? (Rule 51 - 009.03J1)

Your consent must be obtained before personally identifiable information is disclosed to parties other than officials of participating agencies unless specifically not required in the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). If you have any questions, you can request local policies and procedures regarding how your confidentiality is protected.

Can I review my child's records? (Rule 51 - 009.03)

Yes. You have the right to request, review and receive copies of the records. You have the right to be informed about the types and the locations of records collected, maintained, or used in the program, who in the program has access to those records, and when they see those records. You can request information about who has seen the records or copies of the records. You may review all records that relate to your child. You can request that information be changed if you believe it is inaccurate or misleading or violates the privacy or rights of your child or family. The local agency will decide if the information is amended and will inform you of any refusal along with the further information on your rights (Rule 51 - 009.03G).



What if I don't agree with a decision about my child's services?

If you (1) disagree with any of the recommendations for your child, (2) think that your child is not receiving the services needed, (3) think the law is not being followed, or (4) your rights have been violated, you have the right to voice your concerns and be heard.

When you disagree, you have the following options:

Work it out informally

You may try to work the problem out informally by meeting with your services coordinator/case manager and/or your IFSP Team. Or, if you are not comfortable, you may use any or all of the following options:

Request Special Education Mediation

You may choose Special Education Mediation which is a voluntary process where a neutral third party helps parents and providers resolve disagreements. Special Education Mediation is free. See page 15 for specific office contacts.

File a Complaint

You have the right to file a written complaint with the Nebraska Department of Education and have your complaint investigated by the State Complaint Investigator. The complaint must be written, signed and include the facts about the complaint. Contact the Nebraska Department of Education at 402-471-2471 for more information.



Request a Due Process Hearing

You have the right to request a due process hearing. This is a formal hearing or proceeding conducted by a Hearing Officer appointed by the Nebraska Department of Education. A request for a due process hearing must be in writing and include the complaint. For additional information you can contact either PTI Nebraska or the Nebraska Advocacy Services (see page 15).

If you would like additional information or resources, please refer to the contacts on page 3 or see the list of resources starting on page 13.

What are my rights in receiving EDN Services?

Your Services Coordinator will give you this Family Guide to Early Intervention Services along with the Parent Rights Brochure that explains your rights.

Before eligibility for special education is determined, you have the right to:

- Services Coordination (Page 4)
- Be the primary and final decision maker for your child
- Access services which include:
 - Early identification of concerns (Page 1)
 - A multidisciplinary evaluation (Page 1, 4, and 5)
 - Determination of your child's eligibility (Page 1)
 - An Independent Educational Evaluation (Page 5)
 - Voluntarily withdraw from or refusal of the EDN process/specific services (Page 10)

If your child is determined eligible to receive EDN services, you have the right to:

- Services Coordination (Page 4)
- An Individualized Family Service Plan (Page 6)
- Receive early intervention services related to your child's development (Page 5 and 7)
- Agree to the services, but disagree with how often or where the services will be provided
- Refuse some services recommended by the IFSP team and still receive other services (Informed Consent – Page 10)
- Participate in all meetings concerning your child's early intervention services and changes in delivery of services
- Have meetings at a time and place agreeable to your family
- Receive timely written notice of (Page 10):
 - Any changes with any service involving your child;
 - Who will be in attendance at meetings
 - The date/time/location of MDT and IFSP meetings
- Receive notices and IFSP documents in your native language or mode of communication used in your home. (Page 10)
- Receive services in your child's natural environment (Page 8)
- Dispute Resolution (Page 11)
- Informed consent (Page 10)
- Confidentiality of information/records (Page 10)
- Year round services (Page 8)
- Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE – Page 2)
- Access to the entire IFSP team
- Receive services until August 31st of your child's 3rd birthday (Transition – Page 8)

What Resources are available?

- **IFSPweb www.ifspweb.org**

IFSPweb is an educational/information online assistance program designed to help families develop Individualized Family Service Plans for young children with disabilities.

- **PTI Nebraska (Parent Training and Information)**

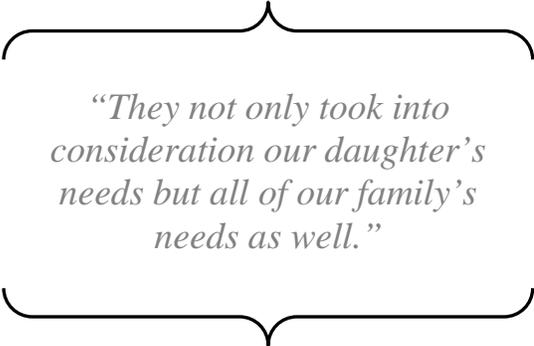
The mission of PTI Nebraska is to provide training, information and support to parents in Nebraska who have a child birth through twenty six with special needs. Resources are provided for parents, other family members, school personnel and interested others.

Connie Shockley
Parent Support Coordinator
3135 North 93rd Street
Omaha, NE 68134
1-866-991-6713
402-991-6713
Email: cshockley@pti-nebraska.org
<http://www.pti-nebraska.org>

- **Nebraska's Family to Family Health Information Center**

Nebraska's Family to Family Health Information Center is a federally funded family-run center established to assist families of children with special health care needs to make informed choices about health care to promote good treatment decisions, cost effectiveness, and improved health outcomes. PTI Nebraska (Parent Training and Information) is home to the Family to Family Health Information Center and funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Division of Services for Children with Special Health Needs.

Nina Baker
Health Information Coordinator
3135 North 93rd Street
Omaha, NE 68134
1-888-490-9233
402-346-9233
Email: nbaker@pti-nebraska.org



“They not only took into consideration our daughter’s needs but all of our family’s needs as well.”

- **Munroe-Meyer Institute**

Mark Smith
Consumer/Family Coordinator
985450 Nebraska Medical Center
Omaha, NE 68198
(402) 559-5744
(800) 656-3937
Email: msmitha@unmc.edu

“We were able to locate resources and equipment that made a world of difference in our lives.”

- **Nebraska Department of Education**

Part C Co-Coordinator
301 Centennial Mall South
P.O. Box 94987
Lincoln, NE 68509-4987
(402) 471-2295
Web: <http://edn.ne.gov>

- **Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services**

Part C Co-Coordinator
P.O. Box 95026
Lincoln, NE 68509-5026
(402) 471-9310
Web: <http://edn.ne.gov>

- **Answers4Families**

Connecting Nebraska’s Families. When there is someone in your family with special needs, you may find yourself looking for answers. Answers4Families.org is Nebraska’s support and information connection for families and professionals seeking assistance. This website is a collection of articles, resources and referrals organized by target groups.

Center on Children, Families, and the Law
P.O. Box 880227
206 S. 13th Street, Suite 1000
Lincoln, NE 68588-0227
(402) 4272-0844
(800) 746-8420
Web: www.answers4families.org

“Even when all I needed was a shoulder to cry on, our team was always there for us.”

- **Assistive Technology Program (ATP)**

Lincoln Office
3901 N. 27th Street, Suite 5
Lincoln, NE 68521
(402) 471-0734
(888) 806-6287
Web: <http://www.atp.ne.gov/>

- **Arc of Nebraska**

The Arc of Nebraska is committed to helping children and adults with disabilities secure the opportunity to choose and realize their goals of where and how they learn, live, work and play.
The Arc Office
1672 Van Dorn Street
Lincoln, NE 68502
402-475-4407
arcneb@inebraska.com
<http://www.arc-nebraska.org/>

- **NAS – Nebraska Advocacy Services**

Nebraska Advocacy Services, Inc. (NAS), The Center for Disability Rights, Law and Advocacy, is a private, non-profit organization designated by the Governor to protect and advocate for the rights of Nebraskans with significant physical or mental disabilities.

NEBRASKA ADVOCACY SERVICES

The Center for Disability Rights, Law and Advocacy
134 South 13th Street, Suite 600
Lincoln, NE 68508
The Protection & Advocacy System in Nebraska
Phone: (402) 474-3183
Fax: (402) 474-3274
Toll-Free: (800) 422-6691
E-mail: info@nebraskaadvocacyservices.org
<http://www.nebraskaadvocacyservices.org/>

- **Mediation Centers**

Mediation is a process in which trained mediators assist people in conflict to communicate & to make voluntary, informed choices in an effort to find a mutually acceptable resolution to their dispute. There are five Medication Centers in Nebraska.

<http://www.nde.state.ne.us/sped/mediation/centers.html>

Center for Conflict Resolution
P.O. Box 427
Scottsbluff, NE 69363-0427
Phone: (308) 635-2002
1-800-967-2115
Fax: (308) 635-2420
Email: info@conflictresolutioncenter.com

Serving the following counties: Arthur, Banner, Box Butte, Cheyenne, Dawes, Deuel, Garden, Grant, Hooker, Keith, Kimball, Morrill, Scotts Bluff, Sheridan, Sioux.

Central Mediation Center
204 East 25th, Suite 5
P.O. Box 838
Kearney, NE 68848-0838
Phone: (308) 237-4692
1-800-203-3452
Fax: (308) 237-5027
Email: info@centralmediationcenter.com

Serving the following counties: Adams, Blaine, Buffalo, Chase, Clay, Custer, Dawson, Dundy, Franklin, Frontier, Furnas, Garfield, Gosper, Greeley, Hall, Hamilton, Harlan, Hayes, Hitchcock, Howard, Kearney, Lincoln, Logan, Loup, McPherson, Merrick, Nuckolls, Perkins, Phelps, Red Willow, Sherman, Valley, Webster, Wheeler, Thomas.

Nebraska Justice Center
428 N. Broad, 3rd Floor
P.O. Box 1062
Fremont, NE 68025
Phone: (402) 753-9415
1-866-846-5586
Fax: (402) 721-6790
Email: jmarhof@quest.net

Serving the following counties: Antelope, Boyd, Boone, Brown, Burt, Cedar, Cherry, Colfax, Cuming, Dakota, Dixon, Dodge, Holt, Keya Paha, Knox, Madison, Nance, Pierce, Platte, Rock, Stanton, Thurston, Washington, Wayne.

The Resolution Center
5109 W. Scott Rd., Suite 414
Beatrice, NE 68310
Phone: (402) 223-6061
1-800-837-7826
Fax: (402) 223-6625
Email: trc@bvca.net

Serving the following counties: Butler, Cass, Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Polk, Richardson, Saline, Saunders, Seward, Thayer, York

The Mediation Center
610 "J" Street, Suite 100
Lincoln, NE 68508
Phone: (402) 441-5740
Fax: (402) 441-5749
Email: ckarges@themediationcenter.org

Serving the following county: Lancaster

Concord Center
9802 Nicholas Street, Suite 375
Omaha, NE 68114
Phone: (402) 345-1131
Email: dblue@concord-center.com

Serving the following counties: Douglas, Sarpy



“Don’t be afraid to ask a lot of questions, our Service Coordinator was always willing to listen and answer any questions we had.”



Nebraska Early Development Network



Co-Lead Agencies:

Nebraska Department of Education
PO Box 94987
Lincoln, NE 68509-4987
402-471-2471

Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services
PO Box 95026
Lincoln, NE 68509-5026
402-471-9310

