



Accessing Services Birth through 21

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Accessing Services in New York

Ages Birth - 3 Years Old (Early Intervention)

Here's a general guide to accessing Early Intervention (EI) Services in New York. Please note that there is **no cost** to families to go through this process. It is funded by the Department of Health.

1. **Screening and Referral:**

- If you suspect your child (aged 0-3 years) may have a developmental delay or disability, the first step is to request a screening. This can be done through your pediatrician, a local health department, or directly with the municipality's EI program. You can simply dial **311** and say that your child needs Early Intervention Services.
- You will be connected to an agency that will provide you with an initial service coordinator and help you gather all the documentation you need to start the process.

2. **Evaluation:**

- Your initial service coordinator will conduct a general screening, and if this screening indicates a potential delay, your child will have access to a comprehensive evaluation.
- Depending on your concerns, you will be contacted by a team of professional clinical specialists, such as an occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech therapist, or psychologist.

- They will schedule evaluations at a location convenient for your family to determine if your child is eligible for EI services. This can be done in your home if you prefer.
3. **Eligibility Determination:**
- Based on the evaluation results, the team will determine if your child is eligible for Early Intervention services. Eligibility is typically based on having a confirmed developmental delay in one or more areas of development or a diagnosed disability.
4. **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP):**
- If your child is found eligible, you and a team of professionals, including a service coordinator, will develop an IFSP. This plan outlines specific goals for your child's development and the services they will receive to achieve those goals.
 - **Family-Centered Approach:** The IFSP process emphasizes collaboration with families, ensuring that services are tailored to meet the unique needs of each child and family situation.
5. **Service Coordination:**
- A service coordinator will be assigned to help you navigate the EI process. They will assist in arranging services, connecting you with resources, and supporting your family throughout the process.
6. **Starting Services:**
- Once the IFSP is developed and agreed upon, services will begin.
 - **Types of Services:** EI services can include early intervention special instruction, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, assistive technology, and other services as identified in the IFSP.
7. **Annual Reviews and Transitions:**
- The IFSP is reviewed every six months and must be updated annually. Transition planning begins at least six months before your child turns 3, as they may transition to preschool special education services or other appropriate programs.

Contact Information:

- **New York State Department of Health Early Intervention Program:** This is the overseeing authority for EI services in New York. Their website (https://www.health.ny.gov/community/infants_children/early_intervention/) provides detailed information and contacts for local EI programs. Call **311**.
- **Local Municipality or County:** Each county in New York has a local EI program coordinator who can provide specific information and guide you through the process.
- **Early Childhood Direction Center:** These centers provide information, referral, and support to families regarding EI services. You can find the nearest center on the NYS Department of Health website or by calling **1-800-522-5006**.

Navigating the Early Intervention process can feel overwhelming, but the key is to start with a screening or evaluation if you have concerns about your child's development. Early intervention can make a significant difference in your child's development and future success and empower families with the resources and tools they need to support their child's growth and well-being.

Ages 3-5 (Preschool Services)

Accessing services for preschoolers in New York involves a collaborative process between families, Early Intervention (EI) providers, and the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE). Here are more detailed steps and considerations:

1. **Transition Process from Early Intervention (EI):**

- **Transition Planning Conference:** This conference, held at least six months before your child turns three, is a pivotal step. It brings together you (the parent or caregiver), the EI service coordinator, CPSE representatives, and potentially other professionals involved in your child's care. The purpose is to discuss your child's progress, review evaluation results, determine eligibility for preschool special education services, and develop a transition plan.
- **Timeline Awareness:** It's crucial to be aware of the timelines and deadlines involved in the transition process. This ensures that evaluations are completed on time and that there is a smooth continuation of services as your child moves into preschool special education. Your service coordinator will keep you updated on the timeline. It is important to stay in continual contact with your coordinator and maintain a good relationship.

2. **Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) Process:**

- **Referral and Evaluation:** After the transition planning conference, if your child is found eligible for preschool special education services, a referral is made to the CPSE. The CPSE will then conduct a comprehensive evaluation, which includes assessments across various developmental domains.
- You will be contacted by a team of professional clinical specialists, such as an occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech therapist, or psychologist.
- They will schedule evaluations at a location convenient for your family to determine if your child is eligible for Preschool services. This can be done in your home if you prefer.

3. **Individualized Education Program (IEP):**

- If your child is determined eligible, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be developed. The IEP outlines your child's educational goals, specifies the services and supports they will receive, and details the educational placement that best meets their needs. The IEP is a legally binding document that guides your child's educational program.

4. **Types of Preschool Special Education Services:**

- **Program Options:** Depending on your child's needs and the recommendations of the CPSE, preschool special education services may be provided in various settings:
 - **Special Class in an Integrated Setting (SCIS):** Classes that include both children with disabilities and typically developing peers.
 - **Special Class:** Classes exclusively for children with disabilities.
 - **Related Services:** These include therapies such as speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and others as specified in the IEP.
 - **Special Education Itinerant Teacher (SEIT):** Individualized services provided in natural environments such as home or daycare settings.
- **Transitioning into Preschool:** The CPSE ensures that children with disabilities are provided appropriate services to prepare them for kindergarten or the next educational placement.

5. **Advocacy and Support:**

- **Parental Involvement:** As a parent, you play a crucial role in the CPSE process. You have the right to participate in all meetings, review evaluation results, and contribute to the development of your child's IEP. Advocating for your child's needs and preferences is important throughout the process.
- **Resources for Support:** Early Childhood Direction Centers and other advocacy organizations can provide information, guidance, and support as you navigate the preschool special education system. They can assist with understanding your rights, accessing services, and addressing any concerns or challenges that arise.

6. **Ongoing Monitoring and Adjustments:**

- **Annual Review:** The IEP is reviewed annually to assess your child's progress towards their goals and to make any necessary adjustments to the educational program and services.
- **Transitions:** As your child approaches kindergarten age or transitions to a different educational setting, the CPSE ensures that the transition is well-planned and supports your child's continued growth and development.

Navigating preschool special education services in New York involves understanding the process, actively participating in evaluations and meetings, and advocating for your child's individualized needs. By working collaboratively with EI providers, CPSE representatives, and other professionals, you can ensure that your child receives the support they need to thrive in their educational journey. trust is set up correctly and complies with all relevant laws and regulations. Here's why you should consider a special needs trust for your child with a disability:

Ages 5-21 (School Age Services)

Accessing school-age services in New York for children with disabilities involves a comprehensive process managed by the Committee on Special Education (CSE). Here's a deeper dive into the steps and considerations involved:

1. Transition from Preschool to School-Age Services

- **Transition Planning:** This phase begins when your child is around age 4 or 5, typically during their last year of preschool special education services. The transition planning process involves:
 - **Reviewing Progress:** Evaluating your child's progress and current needs as documented in the preschool IEP.
 - **Determining Eligibility:** Assessing whether your child continues to meet eligibility criteria for special education services under the CSE.
 - **Developing a Transition Plan:** This plan outlines the services and supports your child will need as they move from preschool to school-age services.
- **Transition Conference:** Similar to the preschool transition conference, this meeting involves you, educators, therapists, and other professionals to discuss and plan your child's transition to school-age services.

2. Committee on Special Education (CSE) Evaluation and IEP Development

- **Referral to CSE:** Following the transition conference, a referral is made to the CSE to initiate the evaluation process for school-age services.
- **Comprehensive Evaluation:** The CSE conducts a thorough evaluation to determine your child's educational needs. This evaluation may include assessments in academic skills, cognitive abilities, social-emotional development, communication skills, adaptive behavior, and other areas relevant to your child's learning.
- **Individualized Education Program (IEP):** Based on the evaluation results, the CSE develops an IEP tailored to your child's unique strengths and needs. The IEP:
 - **Goals and Objectives:** Specifies measurable goals and objectives that your child will work towards during the school year.
 - **Services and Supports:** Identifies the special education programs, related services (such as speech therapy or occupational therapy), accommodations, and modifications your child requires to access and make progress in the general education curriculum.

3. Types of School-Age Special Education Services

- **Educational Placement:** The CSE determines the most appropriate educational setting and services for your child, considering factors such as their abilities, needs, and preferences. Options may include:
 - **Special Education Classes:** Structured classes designed specifically for students with disabilities.
 - **Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT):** General education classes that include both students with disabilities and their typically developing peers, with support from two teachers.
 - **Related Services:** Additional supports and services that complement your child's educational program, such as therapies, assistive technology, counseling, and specialized transportation.

4. Advocacy and Support

- **Parental Involvement:** You play a crucial role in the CSE process. It's essential to advocate for your child's educational needs, participate in IEP meetings, and collaborate with school personnel to ensure the IEP is implemented effectively.
- **Understanding Rights:** Familiarize yourself with your rights under federal and state special education laws, including procedural safeguards and dispute resolution options.

5. Monitoring and Review

- **Annual Review:** The IEP is reviewed at least once a year to assess your child's progress towards their goals, determine the effectiveness of the services and supports provided, and make any necessary adjustments to the educational program.
- **Transition Planning:** Beginning at age 15, the IEP includes transition planning goals and activities to prepare your child for post-secondary education, vocational training, employment, and independent living.

Additional Resources and Support

- **Committee on Special Education (CSE):** Each school district in New York has a CSE responsible for coordinating evaluations, developing IEPs, and ensuring that special education services are provided in compliance with state and federal regulations.
- **Parent Centers and Advocacy Organizations:** These organizations provide valuable resources, workshops, and support to help you navigate the school-age special education system, understand your rights, and advocate effectively for your child.

By actively participating in the CSE process, staying informed about your child's educational rights and options, and collaborating with educators and service providers, you can ensure that your child receives the specialized supports they need to succeed academically and socially in school. Remember – you are your child's best advocate!

Conclusion

Accessing Early Intervention and special education services in New York can feel overwhelming, but these free, individualized programs are designed to support your child's unique needs from birth through school age. By starting with a screening, participating in evaluations, and collaborating with service providers, you can ensure your child receives the necessary resources to thrive.

As caregivers, your advocacy is key. Use available resources like the Department of Health, local municipalities, and advocacy organizations to guide you. Every step you take today builds a stronger foundation for your child's future success.
