

Early Intervention and Strategies

Summary

Early Intervention (EI) improves results for early growth and development in infants and toddlers, who have developmental delays or disabilities or both, by providing individualized support and services to the child and their family. Evidence indicates that EI for children consistently produces positive outcomes. However, policy makers and service providers need more long-term strategies in addition to culture changes to make EI programs more impactful. Children who struggle with effects of poverty who also use EI services may need extra support to reduce possible complications from their socioeconomic situations.⁴

Many successful intervention programs focus on both healthy individuals and their families. Toxic stress in the early years can damage developing brains. This could lead to problems that impact learning, as well as increase susceptibility to physical and mental illness.⁵ Other research indicates that care-giver mental and physical health, stress, sensitivity, and children's social skills and their school relationships are negatively impacted by issues that can be addressed by EI programs.⁶

Talking Points

- Persistent fragmentation of services and policy prevents successful use of programs.⁷
- The preschool period may be the ideal developmental stage to target for EI. This period is a critical window for intervention when children can achieve the most gains.⁸
- Including children with delays in typical educational settings is part of a larger effort to support inclusion practices. These efforts maximize children's full participation in all social, recreational and educational activities.⁹ Inclusion should not be viewed as something that is 'special'; rather, it should be part of everyday attitudes and practices.¹⁰
- Improved access to healthcare, inclusive programming, and improving professional training are long-term solutions with immediate impacts.¹¹
- States must choose to cover the costs of these services for children because funding is not mandated by federal law. Under Part C of IDEA, the *assessment, coordination of services, and development of an EI plan* are offered at no cost to parents, but *actual service costs* may be funded by families and their public or private insurances based on state policies.

⁴ Building a New Biodevelopmental Framework to Guide the Future of Early Childhood Policy. Jack Shonkoff, Child Development, 2010.

⁵ Science Does Not Speak for Itself: Translating Child Development Research for the Public and Its Policymakers. Shonkoff et al, 2011.

⁶ Intellectual Disability and Developmental Risk: Promoting Intervention to Improve Child and Family Well-Being. Cmic et al, Child Development, 2017.

⁷ Shonkoff, 2010.

⁸ Cmic, et al, 2017.

⁹ Early Intervention for Children with Intellectual Disabilities: An Update. Michael Guralnick, Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities, 2017.

¹⁰ Embracing Everybody: Approaching the Inclusive Early Childhood Education of a Child Labelled with Autism from a social relational understanding of disability. Mackenzie et al, EduPlay Children's Services, 2016.

¹¹ Guralnick, 2017.