

Celeste

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) is a statewide program for families with children, birth to three, with disabilities and developmental delays. Families and professionals work as a team to plan appropriate services based on the unique needs of the child and family.

Research shows that growth and development are most rapid in the early years of life. Early intervention responds to the critical needs of children and families by:

- promoting development and learning;
- providing support to families;
- coordinating services; and
- decreasing the need for costly special programs.

For more information, visit <http://txchildren.org/ECI>.

Early Intervention Works



“The caring staff at Betty Hardwick Center in Abilene has worked with Celeste from infancy to age three. Her coordinators and therapists helped Celeste in so many ways I don't even know where to begin. With their help she has blossomed into a beautiful 3 year old girl. If it weren't for the hard work and effort that ECI has put in, I don't know where we would be. Celeste has Down syndrome. In the beginning she showed some delays in the area of gross motor skills. She was slow to roll over, crawl and walk. After weekly skills training and working with her daily on techniques we learned

from her Early Interventionist, she's not only walking, she's running around with good balance. She was also slow in the area of speech; Celeste had difficulty forming words due to her lack of oral motor strength and could only make vague utterances at first. By the time she was 2½ she was really starting to use her words and she uses the sign language skills so well we could understand clearly what she wants. The ECI staff always made recommendations as to what we should work on between sessions and have helped us as a family set goals for ourselves and Celeste. One of our family goals was that I return to school to pursue an associate's degree and I have completed that goal this year! There are not enough words to express our thankfulness and love for ECI.”



Leslie, Celeste's mom

ECI goes to families and focuses on working with the child and family in their natural environment, such as at home or in a child care center.

ECI Services must be fully funded in order to sustain a quality system that reaches children with developmental delays who are in need of services.

It is crucial that ECI continues to receive adequate funding to give families the support they need:

- Without increases in funding, ECI services will not keep up with the more than 2,235 new children who will need services between 2012 and 2014.
- If ECI service levels are not sufficiently funded, children in ECI will not receive the hours of service they need each month.

If the ECI system is not strengthened:

- Young children and families will not receive services in time to significantly change the child's trajectory, requiring they access additional, more costly services as the child ages.
- Other systems—such as schools, child welfare, and juvenile justice—will be called on to deal with unaddressed problems that may become more entrenched, difficult, and expensive to treat.
- Texas taxpayers will spend more on interventions, which have less of an impact on a child's future success.

Ensure families' access to developmental services that adhere to ECI's family-focused model by:

- Preserving the ECI model—one that is developmental, evidence-based, family-centered, and cost-effective. Movement towards a medical or clinical service model must be avoided.
- Ensuring ECI is appropriated necessary funds to provide services to all children who are eligible.
- Avoiding further restricting of ECI eligibility by funding Exceptional Items 1 and 2 in the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) Legislative Appropriations Request. Ensuring that ECI services keep up with caseload growth and provide children with the hours of service they need is key to making sure children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families can access services shown to alter their developmental trajectory.
- Increasing the average number of ECI service hours children receive to the minimum recommended levels in order to promote early success for children and better prepare them to enter other systems, such as schools.

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It is critical that Texas maintain its ECI system and continue to help Texas children reach their full potential.

