



3311 Beach Blvd Jacksonville FL 32207  
Phone: (904) 396-1462 Fax: (904) 396-1199  
[www.newheightsnefl.org](http://www.newheightsnefl.org)

# **EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES & THERAPY**

## **Family Handbook**

## **Important Tips about Early Intervention**

Early Intervention (EI) is Part C of the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" and is a developmental program serving children from birth to age 3 with developmental delays, disabilities and at-risk conditions. Services are authorized based upon functional outcomes that focus on child development and family capacity building, education and support that address developmental needs rather than medical needs.

Part C requires states to provide services in "Natural Environments". Under Section 303.18 of Part C, Natural Environments is defined as *settings that are natural or normal for the child's same age peers who have no disabilities*.

Recommendations for outcomes and strategies for services, with frequency, intensity, duration and location will be determined at the Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP) meeting in collaboration with the child's family and are based on the family's identified priorities and concerns. Prior to making any changes to an IFSP such as increasing/decreasing the frequency or intensity of services that were originally identified as a need on the IFSP, an IFSP team meeting must be convened to discuss the recommendation and justification for the change.

### **WHAT IS PART C?**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), (P.L.105-17) (Reauth. 2006), Part C, is federal legislation that ensures early intervention services to infants and toddlers with developmental delays or with established conditions that may cause developmental delays. Its purpose is to provide financial assistance to State programs to:

- (a) Develop and implement a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, interagency program of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families;
- (b) Facilitate the coordination of payment for early intervention services from Federal, State, local, and private sources (including public and private insurance coverage);
- (c) Enhance the States' capacity to provide quality early intervention services and expand and improve existing early intervention services provided to infants/toddlers with disabilities and their families;
- (d) Enhance the capacity of State and local agencies and service providers to identify, evaluate, and meet the needs of historically underrepresented populations, particularly minority, low-income, inner-city, and rural populations;
- (e) Require referrals from primary referral sources (physicians and other health care providers, hospitals, daycares, etc.) within 2 working days after a child is identified;
- (f) Require a multidisciplinary evaluation & IFSP within 45 days of referral,
- (g) Require service coordination and a transition process.

### **Florida's Part C Early Steps Program**

Children's Medical Services within the Florida Department of Health is responsible for the administration and oversight of the Early Steps Program. Early Steps is a program for infants and toddlers, birth to 36 months, and their families and includes funding from state and federal sources. The CMS Program office contracts with an organization in each of 15 service areas throughout the state to coordinate and implement the program requirements.

The Early Steps program endorses a transdisciplinary approach that calls upon service providers of different disciplines to share their knowledge and expertise with one another and with families in order to efficiently provide services that empower caregivers to become active agents in the improvement of their children's development. Intervention is embedded into everyday routines and activities that take place in natural environments. Infants and toddlers

who are determined eligible for the Part C program receive services as determined by the Family Support Team and recorded on the Individualized Family Support Plan. New Heights of Northeast Florida contracts with Northeastern Early Steps to provide early intervention and therapeutic services determined by the Family Support Team.

### **THERAPY SESSIONS**

1. Actively participate in the session. Your child will benefit most from your working with us to learn new strategies to address your child's needs. Our task is to observe, coach, and model by providing you with specific feedback on the child's use of target skills, your use of strategies that make the interaction positive, or the potential for learning in the routine.
2. Provide a clean space to play in with a few of your child's favorite objects to play with. It might be the middle of your living room floor, at your kitchen table, or in your child's room. Whatever space you have available that is large enough for your child to move around and for us to join him/her.
3. Eliminate distractions- Please turn OFF your television during your child's sessions. Televisions can be very distracting to everyone in the room, especially young children. Also, remember we all will be working together during the session and none of us want to be distracted.
4. Since we are in your home, we understand that there might be brothers and sisters around and we will work with you to find a comfortable balance in working with your child and meeting their siblings' needs. Sometimes it works fine to have other children playing in the same room and at other times it can be distracting for everyone. We will problem solve together to figure out the best way to address everyone's needs. We realize that playing with and working things out with brothers and sisters is a major part of life.
5. Ask questions! All of us assume others understand what we are talking about only to find out later they did not. It is important that we all be clear about what we are doing together so that your child can make the most progress.
6. Please be ready to participate and engage at your appointment time. We appreciate having your child awake and ready to join us since we are on a tight schedule and will only have the agreed upon time to be with you and your child. This may mean reorganizing your family schedule on the days you have appointments with us. We will try hard to arrange convenient times with you, but we must rely on your investment in receiving services to be ready for our services.

### **ATTENDANCE AND CANCELLATION POLICIES**

- Notification of cancellations must be received at least 24 hours BEFORE the scheduled appointment time.
- We will make every effort to reschedule cancellations; however, this is not always possible depending upon our commitments to other families.
- If your child misses two consecutive sessions and you have not called to inform us, your child will automatically be discharged from the program.
- If your child misses more than 50% of the scheduled sessions during any month, our team will review the reasons for absence along with your child's ongoing attendance records in making a decision regarding ongoing services and will contact you to discuss the matter.

## **HEALTH POLICIES**

- If your child is sick with a fever, diarrhea in the past 24 hours, or has a communicable illness, we ask that you call and cancel your session. If for any reason you feel your child will be unable to tolerate a session, please call us in advance to discuss the issue with us.
- Please inform us in the event of any hospitalization or surgeries. Your child may require written clearance from your doctor to resume services.
- Please inform us of any changes in your child's medications.
- Please inform us of any change in your child's primary care physician.

## **MEDICAID / INSURANCE**

Notify us immediately of any change in your child's Medicaid or Insurance coverage.

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We feel very honored to provide services to your family and want to meet you and your child's needs. Should you have any concerns with services for any reason:

1. Discuss your concerns with your child's therapist.
2. If your concerns cannot, or have not, been addressed in discussion with your child's therapist, please call Sue Driscoll, CEO at 904-369-1462 ext. 112.
3. If you still have concerns, please contact your service coordinator at Northeastern Early Steps to discuss possible solutions.

**Thank you for sharing your child with us!**