**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**ABOUT ALABAMA’S EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEM**

**What is Early Intervention?**

Early Intervention is a program that provides many different services for infants and toddlers under the age of three to address a developmental delay or who have been diagnosed with something that can delay normal development. Families are often referred to Early Intervention (EI) by a healthcare provider or can request services directly.

**Why is EI important?**

A child’s brain develops the fastest in their first three years of life; their adult brain is almost fully developed by age 5! If the child has a developmental delay, it’s critical for the family to get the supports and services they need to help their child as EARLY as possible. The earlier a child with a delay is referred to EI, the better their chances are to grow up healthy and reach their full potential. It’s never too early for Early Intervention.

**What is Alabama’s Early Intervention System?**

Alabama’s Early Intervention System (AEIS) is a network of EI programs providing support for families whose children are eligible for EI services. AEIS is a division of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS). It has seven offices around the state, and it partners with many local EI providers to help ensure that high-quality EI services are available for families in all 67 counties.

**Who is eligible for EI services?**

When a child is referred to EI, eligibility is determined after an EI service coordinator does an evaluation. It can be done at home, at daycare, or in another place where the child and their family spend most of their time. Children must be under three years old and either showing signs of developmental delays or diagnosed with a condition that may result in delays in one or more of these areas: physical, adaptive (self-care), cognitive (thinking and learning), language, and social-emotional development.

**How do I know if a child needs to be evaluated and referred to EI services?**

While all babies are uniquely and wonderfully made and develop at their own pace, there are some “[milestones](https://rehab.alabama.gov/NeverTooEarlyAL/home#eiIsImportant)” that all children should reach at different age levels. EI uses a “milestones” checklist to help parents see if their child is on track or seems to be behind in doing activities at the appropriate age levels.

**How does EI work with families?**

EI service coordinators work with parents to create an IFSP, which is short for Individualized Family Service Plan. This plan is a guide that outlines the goals for the child, and it maps out the kind of supports and services that are necessary to help the child and family reach those goals and how often they will be needed.

**What happens when the child turns three?**

EI assists families when it’s time for their 3-year-old to transition from EI into preschool. EI is only one division of ADRS; a family can easily transition to the ADRS [Children’s Rehabilitation Service](https://rehab.alabama.gov/services/crs), where they can continue receiving support and services for their child as they enter and progress through school.

**What does EI cost the family?**

Every child from birth to age three is entitled under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (IDEA Part C) “to support in reaching developmental milestones if they have a developmental delay.” EI receives federal and state funding to cover the cost of services so that there is no cost to the family.

More questions? Call 800-543-3098 or [an office near you](http://localhost/ADRSPublicWebsiteSolution/NeverTooEarlyAL/home#contact).