# Chapter 6A:You Have Rights: IDEA Law ages 0-3 (Early Intervention)

**Introduction:** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that ensures children with disabilities are supported in their growth and development. “Part C” can be commonly used language which refers to a section of this law that outlines protections and rights for children when they are infants or toddlers. The law ensures that assessments are completed to determine if your child has a developmental delay or disability and qualifies for services. “Early intervention” is the name of the program in Ohio and is a family-based system of support. Your active participation in the early intervention process is essential to the impact of the services.

## Definitions:

**The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** is a federal law that provides services to infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities.

**Individualized Family Service Plan** **(IFSP)** is the written plan for providing EI services to an infant or toddler and the child’s family. The IFSP process is central to the delivery of EI supports and services. The entire IFSP team — not one person — makes decisions, and the IFSP documents those decisions. It’s a dynamic document that changes over time as the needs of the child or family change.

**Early Intervention Services** can include supports like modeling and special instruction, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and physical therapy. Early intervention services support families in enhancing their child’s learning and development.

What Families Should Expect:[**https://ohioearlyintervention.org/**](https://ohioearlyintervention.org/)

* Your child must be referred to early intervention. Anyone can refer a child to EI, and families can refer their own child if they have concerns. You do not need to be a doctor or teacher to refer a child. All it takes is a simple phone call (1-800-755-GROW or 1-800-755-4769) or filling out a short form online at [ohioearlyintervention.org](https://ohioearlyintervention.org/). Once a referral is made, you will be assigned a service coordinator who will explain the early intervention program and its benefits. Participating in the program is voluntary and family directed. You should share information with the team, of which the parent is a member, about your family and child and what would help you support your child’s development. This will help you to get the most out of the program. The more you can tell your team about your needs and priorities, the more the team can help.
* Your child must be found eligible for services. Some children will be eligible based on a diagnosis and others will have an evaluation to determine if they are eligible. If your child is eligible, your local EI team will also complete a child assessment and, with your permission, a family assessment. Your role in the assessment process is to share information with the team about your child’s interests and your family’s goals.
* If your child is determined eligible, you, your service coordinator, and local EI team will work together to develop the IFSP. The IFSP meeting cannot happen without you, and it should be held when it is convenient for you. It should focus on what is important to you and your family. IFSP outcomes should be written to support your typical family activities and routines, and services should be provided where and when they would help you the most. Early intervention services are usually provided in your home and other community settings where your family spends time. You should share information about your questions, family routines, and family dynamics with your team so that the IFSP is written to be most helpful to you and your family. The more you interact with your early intervention provider during visits, the more the support can help you and your child.

## What Families Want Their Team Members to Know:

* I may be overwhelmed with starting services for my child. I may or may not need a lot of support to engage in early intervention services for my child and still meet the multiple demands of caring for my child with special needs. Get to know my family and then provide me individualized supports based on my family life and needs to help me participate.
* Always talk about my child using their name, or as my child or as my son or daughter. I may not be ready to have my child referred to as disabled or special needs. It may scare, hurt, or anger me.
* You are coming into my home and learning about my child and my family’s needs. It may be difficult to open up our lives to people we don’t know who will be asking us questions about things we find challenging or uncertain. Show us respect by making sure that you follow through with the service plan, including meetings and tasks. This will support my family’s continued involvement in early intervention.
* My family might look different from your family. We might have different beliefs about the roles of family members in daily activities or routines. We might also have different ideas about how engaged family members should be with each other. Your personal beliefs are shaped by your culture, which may be different from mine. If you learn about my family culture and provide services to us that align with our culture, you will empower us to be effective partners.

## What Team Members Want Families to Know:

* Early intervention is focused on the priorities of the family. Your participation in the process from the earliest stages of eligibility is critical to developing an IFSP that meets the needs of your family. This means you should actively ask questions, provide information about your needs and family routines, and engage with providers as they work with you and your child. Providers may make suggestions, not requirements, but you are the expert of your child.
* We know you might need some time to think about and understand what we have discussed. You might feel doubtful, confused, and/or scared. However, getting started early increases the chances of greater impact on those skills your child will develop! Early help can make a big difference for your child’s development and outcomes.
* We are here to help address any issue that is affecting your family or your child’s development. If you have information that is very sensitive, ask us if you can meet with fewer people to discuss the information, or share the information with a team member you trust.

## Family Checklist:

* Does my child need a referral to early intervention?
* Do I know how to make a referral for my child?
* Do I know where my child is struggling and what supports my family needs?
* Do I know who my service coordinator is and how to contact them?
* Do I have a copy of the [parent rights brochure](https://ohioearlyintervention.org/storage/ocali-ims-sites/ocali-ims-oei/documents/EIParentRights09052019.pdf) that explains my rights in EI?
* Do I fully participate in the team process and provide important information to my team?
* Have I shared important cultural beliefs with my team?
* Do I participate in in-home activities with my child and provider and work on supporting my child when the provider is not there?

## Team Member Checklist:

* How do we support family involvement in all aspects of our early intervention program?
* Have we provided a copy of the parent rights brochure to the family?
* Have we provided prior written notice and obtained informed consent when it is required?
* Do we provide EI services and other supports in a way that is accessible to the family?
* Do we provide culturally competent services that are not filtered through any preconceived ideas we may have?
* Do we provide the highest quality services with respect for the family’s time and demands?
* Do we provide a seamless process for families transitioning out of early intervention services, including supporting families throughout the transition process?

## Resources:

[Parent Center Hub: IDEA- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](https://www.parentcenterhub.org/idea/)

[IDEA Part C](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/c)

Ohio EI Parent Rights Brochure (https://ohioearlyintervention.org/printed-materials)

[Disability Rights Ohio: FAQ Special Education](https://www.disabilityrightsohio.org/faq-special-education)

[Disability rights Ohio: Negotiation Skills for Parents](https://www.disabilityrightsohio.org/negotiation-skills-for-parents)

[Wrightslaw: Early Intervention (Part C of IDEA)](https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/ei.index.htm)

[U.S. Department of Education’s Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) website](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/?src=search)

[OCECD: Early Intervention 0-3 Years](https://www.ocecd.org/EarlyIntervention.aspx)

[CPIR: Part C of IDEA: Early Intervention for Babies and Toddlers](https://www.parentcenterhub.org/partc/)

[ECTA; Part C of IDEA](https://ectacenter.org/partc/partc.asp)