

## What is Early Intervention?

Early Intervention (EI) is a systematic program of therapy, exercises, and activities designed to address developmental delays that may be experienced by children with Prader-Willi syndrome or other disabilities. These services are mandated by a federal law called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The law requires that states provide EI services for all children who qualify, with the goal of enhancing the development of infants and toddlers and helping families understand and meet the needs of their children. The most common EI services for infants with Prader-Willi syndrome are physical therapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and social services.

Private and public health insurance programs cover payment for physical therapy, but the services and reimbursement may vary, and families should be familiar with the benefits provided by the policy or program. In addition, provision of pediatric physical therapy is required legislatively by the following acts of congress:

### **The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (PL 105-17, IDEA)**

IDEA is a federal law that supports the provision of public education for all children regardless of the nature or severity of their disability. Part C of IDEA is an optional federal program that supports Early Intervention for infants and toddlers (birth to three years). All states currently participate in Part C. IDEA includes provisions for pediatric physical therapy for children from birth to twenty-one years of age who are eligible for Early Intervention (Part C) or special education and related services (Part B) programs. IDEA interacts with other legislative mandates, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act.

### **The Americans with Disabilities Act**

ADA protects the rights of all individuals with disabilities.

### **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act**

Section 504 requires the provision of reasonable accommodations, including physical therapy, for persons with disabilities.

## **Who Pays for Early Intervention?**

The evaluation to determine whether your child is eligible for EI is free of charge if performed by a state-authorized entity. No child deemed eligible can be denied services based on ability to pay, but insurance companies may be billed and/or a sliding scale payment may be required, depending on the state in which you reside. Check with your state's EI center for information about authorized service providers and financial obligations. Frequently, there is little or no cost to parents for these services.<sup>20</sup>

## **How Do I Sign Up for Early Intervention Services?**

Parents can refer their own child. They can also get a referral for Early Intervention (EI) from their pediatrician, or find a local agency by visiting the website of the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center ([www.nectac.org](http://www.nectac.org)). Each state has its own set of laws governing EI services. Once a referral has been made, the program staff must schedule and complete an initial evaluation within a specified time.

Once the assessment is completed, a caseworker is assigned to coordinate the various services for which the infant and family qualify. EI services are individualized to meet the specific needs of each infant. The caseworker, therapists, and family will determine the duration, frequency, and location of services and will set goals based on developmental milestones.

These will be recorded in a document called the **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)**. The IFSP describes the process of planning, decision-making, and implementation of EI services for children and their families. This IFSP is periodically reviewed so that goals can be re-assessed by the whole team as the child progresses.

*Taken from: Therapeutic Interventions written by Janice Agarwal*