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## **EARLY INTERVENTION BECAUSE: BABIES CAN'T WAIT**

### **Why is early intervention important?**

Babies develop so quickly. Half of their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth takes place in the first few years of life. These early years are the critical foundation for later learning. Without early help, even conditions that are mild in the beginning can become severe as a child grows older. With early intervention, a child who is developing slowly has a greater chance of reaching his or her developmental potential.

### **What is BABIES CAN'T WAIT/EARLY INTERVENTION?**

The Babies Can't Wait (BCW) early intervention system begins with a complete evaluation and assessment of the child's development, at no charge. If the child has a significant developmental delay or disability, the next step is to identify services and resources to help the family meet the child's developmental needs.

### **What services are made available?**

Every child enrolled in BCW has an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), based on the results of evaluations, assessments, and the family's concerns related to their child's development. The plan includes goals for the child and family, services needed to meet the goals, and resources available to assist the family with paying for services. Early intervention services which may be made available to children and families enrolled in BCW include assistive technology, audiology, family training and counseling, certain health services, medical diagnostic services, certain nursing services, nutrition services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychological services, social work, special instruction, speech-language pathology, vision services and transportation to services. Every child enrolled in BCW also receives service coordination at no charge which assists the family and other professionals in developing and implementing the IFSP.

### **Who is eligible?**

Children, from birth to their third birthday, regardless of income, may be eligible one of two ways:

1. Children are automatically eligible if they are diagnosed with certain mental or physical conditions, including but not limited to: Down syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, cerebral palsy, and autism; OR
2. Children who are experiencing significant delays in their development may be eligible. For example, children who are very far behind their peers in learning to turn over, crawl, walk, or talk, or children with emotional, speech, and hearing problems.

### **How to contact Babies Can't Wait.**

Anyone who suspects a child may be delayed in his/her development can call Parent to Parent of Georgia at 1-800-229-2038 to find the closest Babies Can't Wait office. In Atlanta, the number is 770-451-5484. Parents can request to speak to another parent whose child has a similar disability.

Children can be referred by families, health care providers, therapists, or anyone who has a concern about a child's development.

Adapted from Children with Special Needs, Family Health Branch, Division of Public Health, State Babies Can't Wait Office 404-657-2726 or toll free 1-888-651-8224