

## OVERVIEW OF SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

A continuum of services is considered to meet the individual needs of each child and family. The following special instruction or special education and related services are provided in the least restrictive environment to meet the child's outcomes or goals and objectives:

- Special instruction or special education
- Speech-language pathology
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Psychological services
- Assistive technology

In addition, behavioral support services and instructional support services are provided to school team members and families to assist them in designing and implementing a child's program. Office of Early Intervention Services Resource Teachers, Behavioral Specialists, and the Autism Specialist may provide these services. These professionals have received intensive training in intervention strategies for young children with special needs.

Frequency (how often a service is provided) and intensity (duration of each session) of the services are important areas to address when designing an intervention program. Outcomes related to the child's identified developmental needs should guide decisions about the frequency and intensity of early intervention services for an individual child and family. Flexibility in determining frequency and intensity of early intervention services is encouraged. Families and service providers can modify outcomes and services to meet the changing needs of a child and family as warranted.

Team members consider the following when making recommendations related to the frequency and intensity of services.

Are the frequency and intensity of services adequate to:

- Implement all of the outcomes or goals and objectives?
- Provide numerous opportunities for the child to learn and practice developmental and functional skills in the environments or situations where they are meaningful (including home, school, and community)?
- Provide appropriate instruction in functional communication in multiple environments, including use of augmentative communication systems?
- Accommodate the child's learning style, strengths, and needs?
- Provide opportunities for self-care skills to be taught in naturalistic settings and activities?

- Support family members in implementing family-guided intervention, including routines-based intervention, which embeds the learning and practice of skills throughout the child's daily schedule?
- Meet the unique needs of each child and family?

The hours of service in the school and during home visits are determined through the IFSP/IEP process. The amount of service may change to reflect the needs of the child and family as well as the focus outcomes or goals. Services locations are determined considering the least restrictive environment. Children are taught in early childhood classrooms with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible to meet IEP goals or outcomes.

## **SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES**

Support for families is provided through regular communication, home visits, and/or school-based program reviews as well as formal IFSP and IEP team meetings. In addition, the Office of Early Intervention Services offers several parent workshops throughout the school year. Workshop announcements are distributed through the child's teacher and through the HCPSS Family Support and Resource Center, 410-313-7161. The Family Support and Resource Center can also provide parent networking opportunities, respite care resources, and information about disabilities and services.

The Office of Early Intervention Services strives to form partnerships with families in the design and delivery of services. When differences regarding the provision of services arise between family members and school members of the IFSP/IEP team, a variety of dispute resolution strategies are utilized. Please refer to the Procedural Safeguards and Parental Rights booklet, contact the service coordinator or the Office of Early Intervention Services, 410-313-7017, with questions regarding dispute resolution processes.

## **THE CONTINUUM OF SERVICES**

A continuum of services for eligible children birth through five years of age who have developmental delays and/or autism or related disorders is outlined on the following pages. The continuum provides for a range of services and methodologies. The frequency and intensity of services may be adjusted at any time based on the child's needs.

## **SERVICES FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS (BIRTH THROUGH 2 YEARS) AND THEIR FAMILIES**

### **Early Beginnings Program**

Children, birth through two years of age, who present with mild to moderate delays in the areas of cognition, social interaction, communication, and behavior, may receive services through the

Early Beginnings Program. Services are delivered in the natural environment at the child's home and/or community-based setting.

Services Special instruction (home visits, school groups, community groups, playgroups)  
Related services  
Family training and support to embed intervention into daily routines  
Services from the Behavioral Specialist, as needed

Frequency/Intensity Frequent home visits and/or community-based sessions for children with significant needs in several areas

Family Participation Approximately 10 hours per week of routines-based intervention by caregivers is recommended

Staff/Child Ratio 1:1 sessions (family member also present)

#### Multiple Intense Needs Classes for Toddlers (Approximately 2 to 3 Years Old)

Toddlers, two to three years of age, who present with moderate to severe delays in cognition, social interaction, communication, and behavior may receive services through Multiple Intense Needs Classes for Toddlers. This program is considered for children whose outcomes cannot be fully addressed in the natural environment due to the need for a highly structured setting with opportunities to interact with typically developing peers. Children may be served through the school year of their third birthday, when appropriate. Services are provided through geographically designated Regional Early Childhood Centers and in the child's home.

Services Special instruction (group and 1:1 instruction in a classroom with typical peers and home visits)  
Related services  
Intensive family training to embed intervention into daily routines  
Services/consultation from the Behavioral Specialist, as needed  
Services/consultation from the Autism Specialist, as needed

Frequency/Intensity Up to 20 hours/week at school (4 days @ 4 hrs. /day, 1 day @ 2.5 hrs. /day) with typically developing peers  
1-2 hours per week home visits or caregiver training at school\*

Family Participation Approximately 10 hours per week of routines-based intervention by caregivers is recommended

Staff/Child Ratio 4:6:4-6 (Staff: Children with IFSPs/IEPs: Typical Peers)  
Staff includes teachers, related service providers, instructional assistants and hourly employees

\* Some children may receive additional hours per week of in-home instruction, as determined by the IFSP team.

## **SERVICES FOR PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN (3 THROUGH 5 YEARS) AND THEIR FAMILIES**

### **Preschool-Kindergarten Program**

Children, three through five years of age, who present with mild to moderate delays, may receive service through the Preschool-Kindergarten Program classes in Regional Early Childhood Centers located throughout Howard County. Specific services and placement are based on IEP goals and accommodations and modifications needed for the child to access curriculum.

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| Services             | Special instruction with peers<br>Related services<br>Family training, as needed<br>Services from Behavioral Specialist, as needed   |
| Frequency/Intensity  | 10-12.5 hours per week of instruction in the classroom with typically-developing peers<br>Extended programs as needed for some preschoolers (18.5 to 28.5 hours) and kindergartners (Up to 32.5 hours)<br>Periodic to 1 hour per week home visit |
| Family Participation | Approximately 10 hours per week of routines-based intervention is recommended  |
| Staff/Child Ratio    | 2:8:4 (Staff: Children with IFSPs/IEPs: Typical Peers)<br>Additional hourly rate employees, as needed  |

Some children may receive services in a community preschool where they are already enrolled.

### **Multiple Intense Needs Classes for Preschool/Kindergarten Children (Approximately 3 through 5 Years Old)**

Children, three through five years of age, who need a more intensive program of services to meet the IEP goals and objectives, receive service through the MINC-PK. Referral to these classes is considered for children who present with moderate to severe delays in cognition, communication, social interaction, and behavior. Specific services and placement are based on IEP goals and accommodations and modifications needed for the child to access curriculum. Services are provided through geographically designated Regional Early Childhood Centers.

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| Services | Special instruction (group and 1:1 instruction in a classroom with typical peers)<br>Related services<br>Intensive family training to embed intervention into daily routines<br>Services/consultation from the Behavioral Specialist, as needed<br>Services/consultation from the Autism Specialist, as needed |
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Frequency/Intensity Average of to 28.5 hours per week at school (Two weeks per month, 5 days @ 6.5 hrs. /day. Two weeks per month, 4 days @ 6.5 hrs. /day. Children do not attend school every other Wednesday) with typically developing peers  
Family training at school (periodic home visit as needed to address specific needs)

Family Participation Approximately 10 hours per week of routines-based intervention by caregivers is recommended

Staff/Child Ratio 4:6:4-6 (Staff: Children with IFSPs/IEPs: Typical Peers)  
Staff includes teachers, related service providers, instructional assistants and hourly rate employees

Some children may receive services in a community preschool where they are already enrolled. Some children may receive additional hours per week of in-home instruction, as determined by the IEP team.

### **Multiple Intense Needs Classes - Early Learner for Preschool/Kindergarten Children (Approximately 3 through 5 Years Old)**

The MINC-EL (Early Learner) pilot program is designed for children who present with severe delays in functional communication, engagement and social interaction. The MINC-EL provides a 1:1 staff-to-child with IEP ratio, intensive support from the autism and related disorders specialist, and a high rate of systematically designed opportunities for the child to initiate and respond to motivating conditions. Specific services and placement are based on IEP goals and accommodations and modifications needed for the child to access curriculum. The MINC-EL program is in the pilot phase through the 2006-2007 school year. Services are provided through geographically-designated Regional Early Childhood Centers.

Services Special instruction (small group and 1:1 instruction in a classroom with typical peers)  
Related services  
Intensive family training through school visits and periodic home visits, as needed  
Services/consultation from the Behavioral Specialist, as needed  
Services/consultation from the Autism Specialist

Frequency/Intensity Average of to 28.5 hours per week at school (Two weeks per month, 5 days @ 6.5 hrs. /day. Two weeks per month, 4 days @ 6.5 hrs. /day. Children do not attend school every other Wednesday). Typically developing peers attend in the morning  
Family training at school (periodic home visits, as needed)

Family Participation Approximately 10 hours per week of intervention by caregivers is recommended

Staff/Child Ratio      5:5:5 (Staff: Children with IFSPs/IEPs: Typical Peers)  
Staff includes teachers, related service providers, instructional assistants  
and hourly rate employees

## **NON-PUBLIC PLACEMENTS**

Non-public school placements, including but not limited to home-based ABA programs, may be considered if a child's IEP/IFSP cannot be implemented in a Howard County Public School System program. The IEP or IFSP team may refer a child to the Central Educational Placement Team (CEPT) to consider non-public placements.

## **OFFICE OF EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES**

If you would like more information about the continuum of services and the IFSP/IEP decision-making process please do not hesitate to call your child's teacher or the Office of Early Intervention Services at 410-313-7017.

We look forward to working with you and your child.

The Department of Special Education, Office of Early Intervention Services Staff:

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