



Frequently Asked Questions

What is Early Intervention (EI)?

EI provides various supports and services to children up to three years old who have disabilities or delays in one or more areas of development. For example, a delay may be in thinking, learning, moving or seeing. Services may include assistive technology devices and services, audiology services, family training, counseling, and home visits, health services, medical diagnostic services, certain nursing services, nutrition services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychological services, social work services, special instruction, speech-language pathology, vision services, and transportation and related costs. Early intervention in Georgia is delivered through the Babies Can't Wait program (BCW). It is a federally-funded statewide program.

What is Babies Can't Wait (BCW)?

BCW is an early intervention program that serves Georgia children from birth up to their third birthday, regardless of income, who meet one of the following criteria:

- Have a diagnosed physical or mental condition which is known to result in a developmental delay, such as blindness, Down syndrome, or Spina Bifida; or
- Have a diagnosed developmental delay confirmed by a qualified team of professionals.

What services are available through BCW?

Multidisciplinary evaluation to determine eligibility and multidisciplinary assessments to determine the scope of services needed. (At no cost to family)

Service coordination that assists the family and other professionals in developing a plan to enhance the child's development. (At NO cost to family)

Access to early intervention services identified in the child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

- Evaluations and assessments
- Family training, counseling, and home visits
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Psychological services
- Respite services



Babies Can't Wait – Early Intervention Program

- Service coordination
- Special instruction
- Speech-language therapy
- Behavioral Intervention

Note: State funds are available, based on a sliding fee scale, to assist families who are determined by the local BCW Program to be unable to pay.

How do I make a referral to BCW?

Referrals to BCW can be made by phone, email, fax, letter, or in person at your local district Department of Public Health (DPH) office. Steps to complete a referral:

1. Complete the Children's 1st Screening and Referral Form ([C1st PDF Link](#)).
2. Submit form to the local BCW office that serves the county in which the child and family reside. Find your office through the [Children With Special Needs Coordinator locator](#)

Parental consent is not required to make a referral. Referral sources are encouraged to talk with the parents before referring a child to BCW.

How much does it cost to be in BCW?

Evaluation and service coordination are at no cost to the family. Other services are based on a sliding fee scale. This scale determines a family's ability to pay. A family deemed unable to pay for needed services will not be denied. Medicaid is billed for services as well as other insurance, with the family's permission.

What is Evaluation?

Evaluations help determine if a child qualifies for services. They are specialized for each child and family. They may involve a review of the child's medical records and previous evaluations. Evaluations may also include a review of the child's development, observations of the child and interviews with the parents.

What is Service Coordination?

Service coordination is an active, ongoing process that assists and enables families to access services and assures their rights and procedural safeguards. In BCW families are assigned a Service Coordinator who will support families and link them resources that will that will help their child achieve his or her maximum potential.



Babies Can't Wait – Early Intervention Program

What happens after a child is referred to BCW?

After a referral is made, the Service Coordinator (SC) begins assisting the family. The SC is the family's main contact in BCW. The SC will help families understand their rights under the program. The SC will also contact parents to get consent to evaluate and arrange for evaluations and therapies. The child will then receive an evaluation to determine if she/he is eligible for enrollment into BCW. The evaluations may be done in the child's home, childcare center or other environments that are natural to the child. After the child receives an evaluation a team of BCW professionals (Therapists, Special Instructors, and Service Coordinators) will discuss the best services available. After this meeting, the SC will contact the family to develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

What is an IFSP?

The IFSP is a family's written plan for BCW. It stands for Individualized Family Service Plan. The IFSP describes how a family and the BCW team will address the child's needs identified by the evaluation. It is also based on the concerns, resources, and priorities identified by the family. The IFSP is completed within 45 days of the child's referral to BCW, if the child is eligible and the family has decided to enroll in the program. This could be longer if a parent delays or postpones the evaluation or the meeting to discuss the plan. A review of the IFSP must occur every six months following the date of the signing of the initial plan.

Where are services located/provided?

Services are provided in natural environments, including home and community settings in which children without disabilities participate. Services can only be provided in a setting other than a natural environment when early intervention cannot be achieved satisfactorily in a natural environment. *This is a mandatory requirement by Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.*

Who will provide the services in BCW?

Services are provided by contracted agencies and individuals from both public and private sectors.

What if my child is found ineligible for the BCW Program?

Children 1st will work to link families with appropriate local resources to address their needs



What happens if my child enrolls into BCW program 6-12 months before their 3rd birthday?

If your child enrolls into BCW and their 3rd birthday is approaching with 6-12 months. Your family is still able to benefit from services. Depending on how soon your child's birthday is, the service coordinator will begin to plan and discuss transitioning into services outside of BCW.

What is transitioning?

Moving from one program to another is called Transition. As your child turns age three your service coordinator will support you in exploring available community options to help your child continue to grow and develop. View the BCW transition Brochure for more information (*Insert Transition @3 Brochure*)

What should I do if my child currently receives Early Intervention Services in another state and we are moving to Georgia?

If your child is currently receiving Early Intervention Services in another state, we encourage you to ask your Service Coordinator to make a referral to BCW prior to your family's move. Follow the steps to making a referral through Children's 1st and then contact a local BCW coordinator within your new county of residence.

1. Children's 1st Referral Form
2. Children with Special Needs Coordinator Locator

What are my rights as a parent/caregiver of a child in BCW?

As a parent or caregiver of a child in BCW you have many rights. When enrolling into the program your service coordinator will go over your rights with you and answer any questions you may have. View your rights online at <https://dph.georgia.gov/Babies-Cant-Wait>