



Beyond Bubbles and Blocks

Information for EI Home Visitors



Do you know about Specialty Services in Part C early intervention (EI)?

Specialty Services are available to infants and toddlers enrolled in EI service (EIS) programs in Massachusetts who have been diagnosed with low-incidence conditions including autism spectrum disorder (ASD), blindness/vision impairment, deafness, hearing impairment, or deafblindness. These specialty services are provided by a clinician referred to as a Specialty Service Provider (SSP) who is specifically trained to serve a child with this low incidence disability.

Who are the Specialty Services Providers (SSPs)...

for ASD? In the EI system, there are SSP agencies that contract with the Department of Public Health (DPH) to provide Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention (EIBI) services to children enrolled in EI diagnosed with ASD. Each EIBI agency is contracted to provide these services to a specific catchment area(s) in the state. The EIS program refers the enrolled child diagnosed with ASD to the EIBI programs in their catchment area to provide these Specialty Services as part of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for that child.

for blindness/vision Loss? DPH contracts with Perkins School for the Blind to provide specialty services to children diagnosed with blindness or vision impairment enrolled in EI in Massachusetts. EIS programs refer enrolled children with blindness or vision impairment to Perkins to provide these Specialty Services as part of the IFSP for that child.

for deafness/hearing impairment? EIS programs sub-contract with organizations and/or individuals throughout the state that are qualified to provide Specialty Services to children diagnosed with deafness or hearing

impairment. EIS programs refer enrolled children with these diagnoses to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) programs or providers they have a subcontract with to provide these Specialty Services as part of the Individualized Family Service Plan for that child.

For children with complex medical needs or multiple disabilities? DPH contracts with six Medically Complex Care Consultation (MC3) Programs throughout the state. These programs are contracted to provide consultation services to a specific region in the state. These programs *do not* provide direct Specialty Services, they offer supplemental support (i.e., consultation) to EIS programs to build capacity across the Commonwealth for serving children with complex medical needs enrolled in EI.



What do SSPs do?

An SSP provides services in accordance with the child's IFSP that are individualized based on an assessment of that child's strengths and needs. The SSP must adhere to the same Part C early intervention rules and regulations as the EIS programs. The SSP is a part of the IFSP team and provides specialized services consented to by the family at the IFSP meeting for a child with a low incidence condition to help ensure that child makes progress towards their outcomes.

How do eligible EI families obtain Specialty Services?

The family's service coordinator (SC) shares information about the Specialty Services that are appropriate given the child's diagnosis and makes the referral with the family.

What is the Service Coordinator's role?

SCs should know which diagnoses for children enrolled in their program would make them eligible for a Specialty Service and understand the referral process for each of these conditions. The Starting Points documents on the EI Division website provide specific details about referrals for each type of Specialty Service and should be referenced regularly.

When making a referral to the SSP, the SC's role is to facilitate smooth communication, coordination, and oversight of the service delivery process. The SC must be aware of the process to avoid delays. Regardless of the child's diagnosis, referring to Specialty Services as early as possible is recommended so that families may fully benefit from these services.

The SC is responsible for ensuring the coordination and implementation of the IFSP, including that SSP services listed in the IFSP are occurring as indicated. Collaboration between the SC and SSP is enhanced by clear and frequent communication sharing of developmental and functional assessment information, group brainstorming, IFSP meetings, and working as a team.

Reflecting on Your Practice:

As you consider your work with families, take a moment to reflect on the following questions:

- How do you identify when a family may benefit from a Specialty Service?
- How do you collaborate with SSPs on IFSP outcomes?

- What training or support would help you better understand or integrate these services?
- How do you ensure families feel comfortable and informed about these services?

Resources:

- Massachusetts Department of Public Health – Early Intervention Operational Standards
- [Specialty Services in Early Intervention \(EI\)](#) on mass.gov website, including Starting Points checklists