

ntervention is a program sponsored Massachusetts Department of Health (MDPH) which helps parents from birth to three to recognize and understand their child's particular developmental needs, and teaches them how to help their child grow.

Early Intervention team works with the family. Together they determine what type of intervention would be most beneficial, and put together an **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)**. The IFSP specifies the type of education, training and support services a family will receive to best help their child.

Specialized services for a child who is blind or has a combination of vision and hearing loss can be part of an IFSP.

Who are Specialty Providers?

Specialty providers are people with expertise in deafblindness, vision loss, hearing loss, and infant/toddler development who will work with your child and early intervention program. They can provide information about deafblindness, communication development, and various educational approaches and activities for language and communication development. Support from other families with children who have a vision and hearing loss is also available.

(ENT) conditions, provide clearance for hearing aid fittings, treat children with persistent middle ear problems, and provide medical or surgical interventions.

Audiologists are trained to diagnose hearing loss, evaluate hearing levels and abilities and recommend hearing aids and listening devices.

Teachers of the Deaf are trained to teach children who are deaf or hard of hearing using one or more specialized educational approaches.

Deafblind Specialists are trained in the field of deafblindness and multiple disabilities with emphasis on communication development and the impact of vision and hearing loss on learning and program development.

Speech/Language Pathologists are trained to evaluate and promote speech and language development. Some have specialized training and experience in working with children who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind.

Auditory Verbal Therapists are trained to develop spoken language primarily through the use of amplified residual hearing or cochlear implants.

Ophthalmologists provide medical assessment, monitor eye health, measure visual acuity and prescribe corrective lenses as appropriate. They are medical doctors who can prescribe medication and

provide services within such daily routines as play, feeding, communication, motor and learning tasks. They develop activities and adaptations to help your child use his/her vision as efficiently as possible. They can teach compensatory skills (like the use of touch) and can help you understand how the vision loss may affect your child's development. They may consult with other service providers such as doctors or therapists.

Optometrists measure visual acuity and provide general eye exams for vision skills, low vision assessments and prescriptions for low vision aids.

Orientation and Mobility Specialists assess the effects of visual impairments on a child's motor and movement skills. They help children develop the skills they need to move independently and safely within their daily environment.

What are the costs?

There is an Annual Cost Participation Fee for Early Intervention that is based on family size and income. It ranges from \$0 to \$250 per year. Early Intervention is supported by the Department of Public Health and health insurance companies.

Case management services through the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing are provided at no cost to families, as are technical assistance and consultation from the New England Center Deafblind Project.

If you think your child has become a vision and hearing loss



**Remember
Much of a child's
most important learning
takes place in the
first three years. If you have
questions about your**

months:

show interest in or stare at a light source
stare (focus on) a brightly colored object held 3 feet from face
crawl (follow) a slowly moving, brightly colored object left to right
react to loud or sudden sounds
coo and gurgle
begin to recognize familiar voices

months:

look at his/her hands or toys
follow the movement of an adult across the room
reach for toys or objects out of reach
recognize and respond to familiar objects
tilt his/her head toward a sound
respond to your voice by making sounds
understand common words such as "no" and "bye-bye"

months:

show interest in tiny objects
grasp objects across the room and move to obtain them
show interest in picture books
look at scribbles made with a crayon
respond to requests such as "come here" or "do you want more?"
recognize consonant sounds in babbling
recognize some words
follow simple directions

- boards and puzzles
- recognize and label familiar pictures
- point to smaller features on pictures
- have smoother eye-hand coordination (e.g., place objects in containers)
- use approximately 150-200 words
- combine 2 words into simple phrases
- point to body parts, common objects or people when they are named

What Are Signs of Vision and Hearing Problems?

Behaviors which may be signs of vision loss:

- Child presses his/her eyes with hands or toys
- Child frequently rubs eyes
- Child tilts head in an unusual position when looking at objects
- Child's eyes move in an unusual way

High-risk conditions associated with deafblindness:

- A suspected or diagnosed hearing and/or vision loss
- A risk of vision and hearing impairment due to a diagnosis of:
 - Trisomy 13 or Trisomy 18
 - Congenital Rubella (German Measles)
 - Meningitis
 - CHARGE syndrome
 - Complications of prematurity

loss due to:

Conditions of the ears, nose and throat such as:
Cleft lip and/or palate
Malformation of the ears

- Chronic ear infections combined with eye conditions such as:
 - Retinopathy of prematurity (ROP)
 - Glaucoma
 - Cataracts
 - Nystagmus
 - Visual field loss
 - Cortical visual impairment
 - Eyes turning inward or outward
- A risk of deafblindness due to family history of genetically linked vision and hearing impairments (e.g., Usher Syndrome)

If a specialist or physician has spoken with you about any of these conditions, or if you are concerned about how your child sees or hears, have your child's vision and hearing checked.

The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) provides information about specialized programs and services, advocacy and case management for children with vision loss and their families. Call the Children's Services Division 1-800-848-8867 (voice) or 1-800-392-6556 (TTY).
Website: www.state.ma.us/mcb

The Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) provides information about specialized services, language learning approaches, advocacy, and case management for deaf and hard of hearing children and their families. Call them at 1-800-882-1111 (voice) or 1-800-530-7570 (TTY).
Website: www.state.ma.us/mcdhh

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) can help you access the Early Intervention Program in your community. Call 1-800-905-8437 or 1-617-624-5070 or 1-617-624-5992 (TTY).
Website: www.state.ma.us/dph

The New England Center for Deafblindness Project (NEC) is a federally funded program offering training and consultation to families of children who are deafblind and to professionals. Call 1-800-972 (voice) and 1-617-924-5525 (TTY).
Website: www.necdbp.org