



ECI Working with Community Providers



Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) provides services to families who have infants or toddlers with qualifying disabilities or developmental delays. Most ECI services are provided at home; however, services can be provided in other settings. An important outcome of ECI is that families receiving services feel they know how to support their children's development both at home and in their communities. Community settings can include day care, early education programs, library activities or simply playing in the neighborhood park or playground.

ECI services are intended to support the child and family, along with community providers, so the child can fully participate in the community experience. What this looks like will be different for every child because every child has different needs. The plan to participate should be addressed on a regular basis and individualized to meet the needs of the child and the expectations of the family. It is important to consider community activities when planning for your child. Learning new skills in other settings help children:

- learn skills that are useful for everyday life,
- interact with other children, who model the desired skills,
- practice new skills,
- experience a sense of belonging,
- develop social skills,
- be motivated to try new things, and
- gain confidence in their abilities.

Parents may ask that some of their ECI services be provided in their child's day care class. ECI services in this setting are focused on coordinating learning activities with the teacher to ensure the ECI child is fully participating in class activities. This may mean adapting the activity, changing the physical environment to meet the needs of the child, or supporting peer relationships in the classroom.

ECI may also work with the day care provider to understand how to structure tasks in smaller developmental steps to reveal the child's skill level. This allows parents and teachers to set realistic expectations for the child. As a result, they are better able to recognize and applaud

Texas Parent to Parent

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the child's accomplishments. The ECI provider's role is not to replace communication between the family and the child care provider, but to offer strategies that support the child's development both at home and in the child care setting.

Some families may want their child to participate in other community activities such as story time at the library, a parent/child class, or nursery/child care activities at their church. In some cases, families may not be sure what is available to them in their communities. ECI and the family can work together to explore options and identify what will meet their needs.

What can you do to help the ECI provider find ways for your child to participate in the community?

1. Identify what experiences you think will benefit your child. If you are not sure, be open to exploring.
2. Identify activities the ECI child likes. This list will help the ECI provider know what might be a natural fit.
3. Identify the child's strengths. An activity that focuses on your child's strengths will be more successful.
4. Think about some of the challenges that may come up. What ideas do you have about minimizing the challenges to your child's participation?
5. Be honest about your worries.
6. Be confident in your ability to know your child and to share that information with others.

What should you be prepared to share with the community provider?

1. Your goals and expectations for your child.
2. Your knowledge and expertise about your child.
3. Strategies that work best for your child.
4. How best to communicate with you.
5. In a child care class, a copy of the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP). Enlist child care providers in supporting your child's goals.
6. Issues that you observe and ideas about what would be an improvement.
7. Your child's specific needs. What is it you expect from this experience?

To find a local ECI program in your area, call the DARS Inquiries Line at 1-800-628-5115 or search for a program at www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis/searchprogram.asp

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