



## ECI Supports Your Child's Participation in Community Activities



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/playground.

ECI services are intended to support children and families, along with community providers, so children can fully participate in the community experience. The type of support that is provided is individualized to meet the needs of the child and the expectations of the family. Discussions about any community activities your child is involved in should occur on a regular basis.

It is important to consider community activities when planning for your child. Learning new skills in other settings helps 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 his/her abilities.

Parents may ask that some of their ECI services be provided in their child's day care or early education class. ECI services in this setting are focused on coordinating learning activities with the child care provider or teacher in order to support the ECI child's active participation in 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 child care provider or teacher to demonstrate how to structure tasks in smaller developmental steps to show learning. This allows parents and care givers to set realistic expectations. As a result, they are better able to recognize and applaud all 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 place of worship. 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.

## Texas Parent to Parent

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**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 ideas.
2. Identify activities your child likes. This list will help the ECI provider know what might be a natural fit.
3. Identify your child's strengths. An activity that focuses on your child's strengths is more likely to be successful.
4. Think about some of the challenges that may come up. What ideas do you have about minimizing the challenges to participation?
5. Be honest about what you worry about if your child participates in community activities.
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. If the community activity is a child care class, provide the staff with a copy of the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) - enlist them in supporting your child's goals.
6. Issues that you observe and ideas about what would be better.
7. Your child's specific needs. What is it you expect from this experience?

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) is a division of the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). ECI programs provide services to families with children, birth to 36 months with developmental delays and disabilities. For more information about DARS/ECI, call 1-800-628-5115 or visit [www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis](http://www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis)

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