

North Carolina Infant-Toddler Program Policy

Screenings, Evaluations, and Assessments

Introduction

The Infant-Toddler Program (ITP) shall ensure implementation of timely administrative procedures for determining a child's eligibility for Part C services and development of an Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) through screenings (if applicable), initial evaluation, initial assessments (of the child and family), and the initial IFSP meeting, subject to parent consent.

45-day Timeline

1. Within 45 days after the ITP receives a referral of a child, the screening (if applicable), initial evaluation, initial assessments of the child and family, and the initial IFSP meeting for that child must be completed (45-day timeline).
2. The 45-day timeline described above does not apply for any period when:
 - a. the child or parent is unavailable to complete the screening (if applicable), the initial evaluation, the initial assessments of the child and family, or the initial IFSP meeting due to exceptional family circumstances that are documented in the child's early intervention records; or
 - b. the parent has not provided consent for the screening (if applicable), the initial evaluation, or the initial assessment of the child, despite documented, repeated attempts by the ITP to obtain parental consent.
3. In the event the circumstances described in section 2 above exist, the ITP shall:
 - a. document in the child's early intervention records the exceptional family circumstances or repeated attempts by the ITP or EIS provider to obtain parental consent;
 - b. complete the screening (if applicable), the initial evaluation, the initial assessments of the child and family, and the initial IFSP meeting as soon as possible after the documented exceptional family circumstances no longer exist or parental consent is obtained; and
 - c. develop and implement an interim IFSP, to the extent appropriate, with parent consent.

Screening

The ITP shall implement procedures to screen children under the age of three who have been referred to the Part C program to determine whether they are suspected of having a disability including:

1. Provide the parent notice of intent to screen the child to identify whether the child is suspected of having a disability and include in that notice a description of the parent's right to request an evaluation at any time during the screening process.
2. Obtain parental consent before conducting the screening procedures.

3. Conduct an evaluation and assessment of the child if the screening or other available information indicates that the child is suspected of having a disability.
4. Notify the parent if the screening or other available information indicates that the child is not suspected of having a disability, including describing the parent's right to request an evaluation.
5. Conduct an evaluation of the child if the parent requests and consents to an evaluation even if the ITP has determined that the child is not suspected of having a disability.
6. Define screening procedures as activities carried out by, or under the supervision of the ITP agency including the administration of appropriate instruments by personnel trained to administer those instruments.

Evaluation

The ITP shall ensure that, subject to obtaining parental consent, each child under the age of three who is referred for evaluation or early intervention services and suspected of having a disability, receives a timely, comprehensive multidisciplinary evaluation. The ITP shall implement evaluation procedures including the following:

1. An evaluation is not required if eligibility is established through a review of a child's medical and other records, and those records indicate that the child's level of functioning in one or more of the following developmental areas (cognitive, physical, vision and hearing, communication, social and emotional, adaptive) constitutes a developmental delay or that the child otherwise meets the ITP criteria of an *infant or toddler with a disability*.
2. A multidisciplinary evaluation requires the involvement of two or more separate disciplines or professions and may include one individual who is qualified in more than one discipline or profession.
3. An initial evaluation is the child's evaluation to determine his or her initial eligibility for Part C services.
4. An evaluation includes the procedures used by qualified personnel to determine a child's initial and continuing eligibility for Part C services, consistent with the ITP definition of *infant or toddler with a disability*.
5. Qualified personnel means personnel who have met State approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the areas in which the individuals are conducting evaluations or assessments or providing early intervention services.
6. Qualified personnel must use informed clinical opinion as an independent basis to establish a child's eligibility when other instruments do not establish eligibility; however, in no event may informed clinical opinion be used to negate the results of evaluation.
7. An evaluation must be conducted by qualified personnel, in a nondiscriminatory manner, and selected and administered so as not to be racially or culturally discriminatory.
8. An evaluation must be conducted in the language or mode of communication normally used by the child, if determined developmentally appropriate for the child by qualified personnel conducting the evaluation.

9. In conducting an evaluation, no single procedure may be used as the sole criterion for determining a child's eligibility under Part C of IDEA. Procedures must include:
 - a. administering an evaluation instrument;
 - b. taking the child's history (including interviewing the parent);
 - c. identifying the child's level of functioning in each of the following developmental areas – cognitive, physical, vision and hearing, communication, social and emotional, adaptive;
 - d. gathering information from other sources such as family members, other care-givers, medical providers, social workers, and educators, if necessary, to understand the full scope of the child's unique strengths and needs;
 - e. reviewing medical, educational, or other records; and
 - f. ensuring no single procedure is used as the sole criterion for determining a child's eligibility.
10. If based on the evaluation conducted under this policy, the ITP determines that a child is not eligible under Part C of IDEA, the ITP must provide the parent with prior written notice required in these policies and include in the notice information about the parent's right to dispute the eligibility determination through dispute resolution mechanisms under these policies, such as requesting a due process hearing or mediation or filing a state complaint.

Assessment

The ITP shall ensure that each child under the age of three who is determined eligible for Part C early intervention services as an *infant or toddler with a disability*, regardless of how eligibility is determined, receives:

1. A multidisciplinary assessment of the unique strengths and needs of that infant or toddler and the identification of services appropriate to meet those needs, subject to parent consent.
2. A family-directed assessment of the resources, priorities, and concerns of the family and the identification of the supports and services necessary to enhance the family's capacity to meet the developmental needs of that infant or toddler.
3. The option of these assessments occurring simultaneously with the evaluation, provided that the requirements of the section above pertaining to evaluation are met.
4. An *initial* assessment defined as the assessment of the child and the family conducted prior to the first IFSP meeting and within the 45-day timeline described above.
5. An assessment defined as the ongoing procedures used by qualified personnel to identify the child's unique strengths and needs and the early intervention services appropriate to meet those needs throughout the period of the child's eligibility for Part C services.
6. An assessment conducted by qualified personnel, in a nondiscriminatory manner, and selected and administered so as not to be racially or culturally discriminatory.
7. An assessment conducted in the language normally used by the child if determined developmentally appropriate for the child by qualified personnel conducting the assessment.

8. An assessment that includes:
 - a. a review of the results of the evaluation conducted under the section described above;
 - b. personal observations of the child; and
 - c. the identification of the child's needs in each of the following developmental areas - cognitive, physical, vision and hearing, communication, social and emotional, adaptive.
9. A family-directed assessment conducted by qualified personnel that must:
 - a. be voluntary on the part of each family member participating in the assessment;
 - b. be based on information obtained through an assessment tool and also through an interview with those family members who elect to participate in the assessment;
 - c. include the family's description of its resources, priorities, and concerns related to enhancing the child's development;
 - d. be conducted within the 45-day timeline described above if the parent concurs and even if other family members are unavailable; and
 - e. be conducted in the language or model of communication normally used by the family member being assessed unless clearly not feasible to do so.