

Early Childhood Intervention and Eligibility for Children with Visual Impairments



Resources



- [ECI Compliance Guide \(IDEA and TAC\)](#)
- [Health and Human Services Commission and Texas Education Agency Memorandum of Understanding \(HHSC and TEA MOU\) 2026](#)
- [Expanded Core Curriculum](#)
- [Student Attendance Accounting Handbook](#)
- [Texas Administrative Code](#)
- [Texas Education Code](#)

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI)



What is ECI and what is its role?



- State lead agency for birth to three
- Specialized training to evaluate and assess infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities



- Specialized training in development of Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP)



- Monitors IFSP services to ensure compliance
- Provides all birth to three services *except* DHH and VI

What role does the district have?

The local education agency's (LEA) role is to provide:

- a certified teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) and a certified orientation and mobility specialist (COMS) to serve children with visual impairments and their families
- a TVI, COMS, and a certified teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing (TODHH) to serve children who are deafblind and their families

Child Find and Referrals



Child Find: ECI

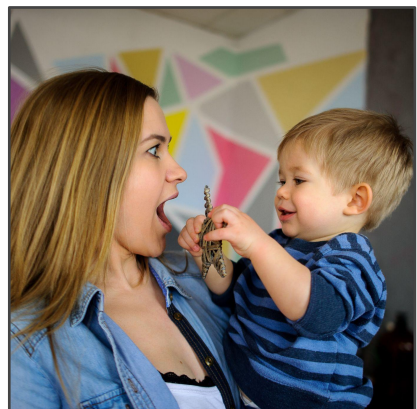


- ECI must locate, evaluate, and offer services to eligible children, ages birth to 3, and their families
- If the child is visually impaired, ECI must involve the TSVI and COMS from the local school district in the evaluation and service of the child and family

Child Find: LEA



- The LEA identifies a child who is under age 3 and may be eligible for ECI services
- The LEA has no more than 7 days to make a referral to ECI



ECI Referrals to the LEA



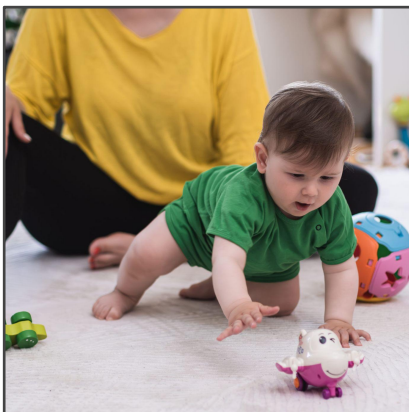
ECI has five business days to refer a child to the LEA if:

- a physician or registered nurse sends documentation that the child has a visual impairment
- there is an eye medical report showing the child is VI
- the child has a condition with a high probability of resulting in a visual impairment and a developmental delay



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LEA received the referral



- The TSVI and COMS prepare to complete age-appropriate versions of the:
 - FVE
 - LMA
 - O&M
- attend the initial IFSP

Assessment must be done even if the eye medical report has not been received by ECI

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What if the family hasn't seen an ophthalmologist/optometrist?



- ECI will help the family get connected with an eye specialist to find out their child's vision status
- TSVI and COMS can offer information and resources to help the family understand the importance of having their child's vision tested



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Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)



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IDEA Part B: Child with a Disability



IDEA Part B includes:

- Free appropriate public education (FAPE)
- Legal protections for students and families
- Established in 1975 for children ages 3 through 21



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IDEA Part B Eligibility

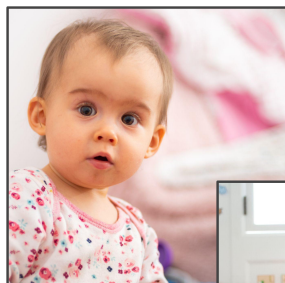


To be eligible for special education services in school, a child must:

- meet eligibility as a child with a disability in at least one of 13 disability categories
- have an educational or developmental need for specially designed instruction
- The district holds an IEP meeting and offers a plan designed for the individual student
- Services under IDEA Part B are child-focused

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IDEA Part C



IDEA Part C includes:

- Maximizing potential of infants and toddlers and minimizing the potential for developmental delays
- Recognizing critical brain development in the first 3 years of life
- Increasing capacity of the family to meet the needs of the child
- Reduce the need for special education services when children reach school age

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Part C Eligibility



Child has a:

- A. developmental delay in one or more of the following areas of development:
 - Cognitive
 - Physical (including hearing & vision)
 - Communication
 - Social or emotional
 - Adaptive or self-help
 - B. diagnosed physical or mental condition with a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay
- Early Childhood Intervention holds and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and offers services and supports to the child and family
 - Early intervention services are family-focused

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ECI and VI Eligibility in Texas



Texas Eligibility as VI (TEA requirements)

1. Developmental delay due in part to visual impairment



Texas Eligibility as VI (TEA requirements)

2. Diagnosed condition with high probability of visual impairment and developmental delay



[TAC §89.1040\(c\)\(3\)\(B\)](#)

Establishing VI Eligibility

To *establish* (not *determine*) eligibility for VI services we must have:

- eye medical report or form showing
 - uncorrectable visual impairment
 - if possible: visual field and acuity, diagnosis, prognosis
 - often, this level of detail cannot be obtained on a very young child
- FVE, LMA, and O&M reports
 - must be based on *age-appropriate* evaluation and data
- **Educational need is NOT a consideration for VI or O&M for children under age 3**

Establishing VI Eligibility

Services from the TSVI and COMS cannot begin until the eye medical report has been received and the FVE, LMA, and O&M evaluations have been completed.

Deafblind Eligibility



- Currently no disability code for deafblind in ECI
 - Child coded under primary disability
 - Ensure IFSP indicates child is deafblind
 - Include child on deafblind census
- **NOTE: ECI is in the process of adding deafblind to their categories of disability**

Timeline: New ECI Referral



45 calendar days from date ECI receives referral
until initial IFSP meeting for whole team

Timeline: New Referral to LEA Only (child already in ECI)



- TSVI and COMS set evaluation timeline
- Best practice: LEA evaluations take no more than 30 calendar days
 - ECI must get signed consent before the evaluations begin
- Inform ECI of evaluation timeline when referral is received
- ECI will scheduled periodic review IFSP to add LEA services

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)



Required IFSP participants



- Parents
- ECI service coordinator or case manager
- Second ECI provider who is a different discipline from the service coordinator
- TVI and COMS if child has suspected or confirmed VI or is deafblind
- TODHH if the child has suspected or confirmed hearing difference or is deafblind





ECI must provide the LEA with at minimum 10-calendar day written notification of all IFSP meetings for children identified as visually impaired

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What happens at an Initial or Annual IFSP meeting?



Discussion and documentation of:

- Child's birth history
- Child's current health and any updates to the medical history
- Child's hearing and vision in functional terms
- Child's nutrition status
- Identified needs

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What happens at an Initial or Annual IFSP meeting?



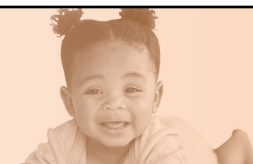
Discussion child and family routines and how child functions within those routines including

- Bathing, dressing, diapering, toileting
- Meal Times
- Playtime
- Bedtime and Nap Time
- Other daily routines and activities



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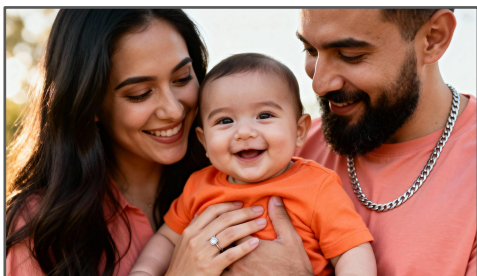
What happens at an Initial or Annual IFSP meeting?



Discussion about child and family resources and case management needs

ECI is a family-focused program. It...

- looks at needs and resources related to family's ability to enhance child's development
- provides family support or referrals to local and state agencies and programs



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Early Intervention Service Delivery



Services in Birth to 3



Services must be:

- appropriate for the needs of the child
- research-based
- provided at an individualized frequency and duration
- provided in the presence of the parent or caregiver and child
- provided as written on the IFSP

Coaching Families



Routines



Natural Environment



Parent-lead interactions



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Coaching Families



Coaching keeps the focus on empowering the family and caregivers so they can meet the needs of the child

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Services on the IFSP



- Services must be provided as they are written on the IFSP
- Services are written for a calendar year
- All services, including from a TSVI and COMS, must be provided year-round
- LEA is responsible for having a certified TSVI and COMS for summer services



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Thank you for being here



If you have any questions, please contact me!

Mari Hubig, M.Ed.
Birth to 8 Intervention Specialist
ESC Region 11
mhubig@esc11.net

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