



Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program

Early Intervention Services for
Infants and Toddlers With Delays
and Disabilities in Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program supports the growth and development of children under the age of 3 years who have delays or disabilities. It is an early intervention program that helps children improve early learning skills that they may be behind in.

In this booklet, you will learn about:

1. Early intervention in Wisconsin (what is provided and how)
2. Natural environment (getting services in your family's home and community)
3. Team members (having a full team of professional service providers)



1. Early Intervention

First, what is early intervention?

Early intervention includes services and supports for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities and their families. It is a special education program that supports a child's development using trained and qualified staff. In Wisconsin, the name for early intervention is the Birth to 3 Program.

What is the goal of early intervention?

The goal of early intervention is to support improvement in the child's development and help them learn new skills to get off to a strong start.

Why is early intervention important?

The earlier you identify concerns about a child's development, the sooner you can help the child grow, learn, and develop.

How can the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program help my family and child?

The Birth to 3 Program connects your family with a team of professionals. This team provides early intervention, including supports and services to help with the child's development needs.

As parents and caregivers, you know the child best. The program puts the child's relationship with your family first. This is important because every moment you spend feeding, teaching, and nurturing them creates ways to help them learn, grow, and develop.

What supports and services are available?

Families in the Birth to 3 Program receive supports and services including:

Based on your family's and child's needs, other services may include:

- Service coordination
- Special education
- Speech therapy
- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Family training, counseling, and home visits
- Social work services
- Assistive technology
- Related health services

View the Services at a Glance resource at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/p-03011.htm to learn more about available services.

What do services look like in early intervention?

The supports and services provided through the Birth to 3 Program help the child learn, move, communicate, interact and relate with others, and learn to eat, dress, and take actions to meet their needs.

Services often occur in the form of play-based or fun activities. Your family's and child's interests and daily activities are used to develop a plan that fits your family. The plan lays out how and when services will occur. Here are examples of what supports and services can look like:

- **Special education** connects all areas of development by engaging the child in activities that support their learning based on the child's strengths and needs. This includes helping them grow, learn, play, and get along with others. For example, a special educator teaches the child how to use objects to learn cause and effect by pushing a button on a toy and hearing a sound. They also assess the environment with you to see how the child can engage in an activity, like puzzle play or mealtime. A special educator can also change daily activities like sorting socks from the laundry to create an opportunity to learn about grouping things that look the same.
- **Occupational therapy** helps the child build new skills and regulate their senses by practicing and adjusting day-to-day activities. These new skills will help them play, move, and interact with the world around them. For example, an occupational therapist helps the child learn to play with and use a variety of toys and objects (like a spoon) independently.

- **Physical therapy** helps support the child's physical and muscle development. This helps them move, play, and participate in day-to-day activities. For example, a physical therapist helps the child learn how to move from one room of the house to another to get to what they want and where they need to be.
- **Speech and language therapy** helps the child understand and use language. This helps the child use words and gestures to say what they want and need. For example, a speech therapist helps the child look at a book and point out pictures and objects or ask for more during meals.

Each professional on the team can provide your family with the help needed to support the child's growth and development. A service coordinator organizes these services and supports with your family to meet your needs.

The Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program brings you, as parents and caregivers, into this learning process. The team coaches you on what you can do so you can continue to help the child learn during your family's everyday activities and daily routines when providers are not there.



2. Natural Environment

Next, what is a natural environment?

The Birth to 3 Program uses the term “natural environments” to mean places that your family and child normally spend time. This includes your family’s home, community, and other places you go in your day-to-day life (for example, the child’s day care center or the park). Natural environments are not only places but also include the people, activities, toys, and other objects that are part of the child’s everyday life.

Why provide supports in the natural environment?

Providing services in natural environments works because children learn while:

- In familiar places.
- Engaged with familiar people
- Using their own toys and familiar objects based on their interests.

This is because it takes time for children to get used to new places and figure out new objects. Sticking with what’s familiar means they’re ready to learn right away—they don’t need to get comfortable or used to the situation first.

How does it work?

By finding ways to provide services in your family’s natural environment, the child and your family can practice learned skills throughout your day, not just when the provider is there.

While the child is doing activities they like or are interested in, you and the provider support them as they build new skills, learn new things, and explore how their own actions make things happen.





3. The Team

Last, what is a team?

A team is made of family members, service providers, and others. The team meets with the family and with each other on a regular basis to share information and learn from each other.

Who are the Birth to 3 Program team members?

The Birth to 3 Program team is made up of your family and service providers. Service providers can include a special education teacher; occupational, physical, and speech therapist; and other professionals. One of these service providers will be the person who visits your home most often. They are called the “primary service provider.”

You are a central part of the early intervention team. The team provides services and shares ideas and ways to help the child’s development. Your team will ask you about your hopes and desired outcomes, or goals, to create a plan for supports and services that fit your family.



The Birth to 3 Program is available in every county in Wisconsin.

Contact information for county Birth to 3 Programs can be accessed by calling Well Badger at 800-642-7837 or visiting the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program webpage at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/birthto3/family/index.htm.



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