

AI Eligibility Guidance: Birth to Three

Supporting documents include the ECI Policy Manual (2007), Commissioner's Rules, AI/VI Memorandum of Understanding

Overview

Left undetected, infant/early childhood hearing loss can negatively impact speech and language acquisition, academic achievement, and social and emotional development. If detected, during the "critical period" for language development (birth – 3 years of life), these negative impacts can be diminished and even eliminated through early intervention.

Dramatic benefits including larger vocabulary and better receptive and expressive language have been associated with early identification and intervention for hearing loss initiated before 6 months of age. Therefore, it is recommended that children with hearing loss receive educational intervention at the earliest possible age in order to maximize their potential to master the intricacies of communication and language development.

To ensure early initiation of services, it is further recommended that IFSP teams work to expedite the receipt of audiological and medical data sufficient to confirm the presence of a hearing impairment or deafness and determine an appropriate intervention plan. The IFSP may include the need for more comprehensive audiological or medical information but the provision of early intervention services should not be delayed once the IFSP team has determined there is sufficient evaluation data to meet basic eligibility criteria.

National Resources

Year 2007 Position Statement: Principles and Guidelines for Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Programs, Joint Committee on Infant Hearing

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/120/4/898?ijkey=oj9BAleq21OIA&keytype=ref&siteid=aapjournals>

National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management (NCHAM)
www.infanthearing.org

State Resources

Department of State Health Services

www.dshs.state.tx.us/audio/

Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, Early Childhood Intervention

www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis/index/shtml

Region 10 Education Service Center, ESC State Leadership Office for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Birth - 5

www.region10.org/SpecialEducation/DHHState0_5.html

Texas Education Agency, IDEA Coordination – Deaf Services

www.tea.state.tx.us/deaf/parentinfant.html

Guidance Regarding AI Eligibility for Children Birth to Three

What information is needed to determine eligibility for children birth to three who have a hearing loss?

According to the DARS ECI Policy Manual <http://www.dars.state.tx.us/ECIS/policymanual/ch3.htm#3.2>, a child with a hearing loss is eligible for ECI services if the child is under three years of age and is authorized for services due to an auditory impairment as defined by the Texas Education Agency Rule 19 T.A.C. Section 89.1040 www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter089/ch089aa.html

Documentation needed to determine eligibility includes an **otological examination** performed by an otologist or by a licensed medical doctor, when an otologist is not reasonably available, an **audiological evaluation** performed by an audiologist, and a **communication assessment** performed by a certified deaf education early intervention provider.

According to ECI Policy, upon receipt of an audiological evaluation indicating a hearing loss, ECI must refer the child to an otologist for an otological examination and, additionally, must refer the child to the local education agency (LEA) for a communication assessment by a certified deaf education early intervention provider. There is no requirement that the otological evaluation be received before the LEA representative, as part of the interdisciplinary team that is determining eligibility, can complete the communication assessment. Documentation of both an audiological evaluation and an otological examination must be on file and included in the data reviewed by the interdisciplinary team when considering eligibility.

What is the purpose of an otological examination?

Related to eligibility, the purpose of the otological examination is to identify related physical conditions, to provide recommendations for medical/surgical treatment and to provide clearance for amplification when appropriate. There is no requirement that this report be in a specific format or obtained on a specific eligibility form. The Program for Amplification for Children of Texas (PACT) Report of Otological Examination, Medicaid's Physician's Examination Report or other similar medical report may be used for eligibility determination purposes. There is no requirement that the otologist indicate whether the hearing loss will severely impair processing linguistic information.

How do I document that an otologist is not reasonably available?

The child's record should indicate the reason an otologist was not reasonably available. These reasons may include a geographic area in which there are no otologists or otolaryngologists (ENTs), the inability to obtain the necessary Primary Care Physician (PCP) referral to the specialist, and/or a waiting list that would delay access to appropriate intervention at the earliest possible age.

What is the purpose of the audiological evaluation?

Related to eligibility, the purpose of the audiological evaluation is to confirm a hearing loss. A complete evaluation will assess the auditory system in each ear, assess hearing sensitivity across the speech frequency range, determine the type of hearing loss, and determine the need for amplification or other devices. A statement describing the implications of the hearing loss in a variety of circumstances, with or without recommended amplification should also be included. There is no requirement that the audiologist indicate whether the hearing loss will severely impair processing linguistic information.

How detailed or comprehensive must the evaluation and the description of implications of the hearing loss be to determine initial eligibility for children Birth to Three?

The initial audiological report used to determine eligibility must at minimum confirm the presence of a hearing loss and provide basic information related to type and amount of hearing loss. Frequency specific and aided information are not required to determine initial eligibility for this age group. Additional information on best practice recommendations for ongoing diagnostic audiological evaluations for infants and young children is available from the Texas Department of State Health Services (www.dshs.state.tx.us/audio/) and the Joint Committee on Infant Hearing (JCIH) YR 2007 Position Statement.

(<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/120/4/898?ijkey=oj9BAleq21OIA&keytype=ref&siteid=aapjournals>)

What is the decision-making process to determine eligibility and appropriate services for children with hearing loss?

The IFSP team considers all of the eligibility information including the audiological and otological reports, as well as the results of a communication evaluation (TEC 30.083 (a)(6) <http://tlo2.tlc.state.tx.us/statutes/ed.toc.htm>) and the child and family needs assessment. This information is reviewed in accordance with the definitions for deafness and hearing impairment

www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter089/ch089aa.html

Projections regarding the affect of the hearing loss on future educational performance for children birth to three are difficult to determine. For this reason the IFSP team is encouraged to consider if and how individual family and child needs may be appropriately addressed through the provision of AI services. Services may be considered for any child with a documented hearing loss including infants and toddlers with mild and unilateral hearing loss and those with auditory neuropathy dys-synchrony. As additional audiological, otological, communication and family needs information is obtained, the IFSP team may review eligibility and make recommendations for services in accordance with the additional data.

What is the purpose of the communication evaluation?

The purpose of the communication evaluation is to determine the communication needs of the infant or toddler. Appropriate communication evaluations for infants and toddlers may include observational or family/caregiver interview data. Information for this evaluation may be obtained by the certified teacher of the deaf as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Texas Education Agency and DARS/ECI. (1) While all communication methods should be addressed, specific recommendations regarding communication methods are not required and are often not appropriate for this age group.

What is the purpose of the child and family needs assessment? The child and family needs assessment is the process of assisting families to identify their concerns, priorities and resources. It is a family-directed identification of what the family needs to enable them to assist in the development of the child. The child's strengths and needs across all developmental areas are assessed in order to provide intervention that addresses the whole child and his/her ability to fully participate in the family's natural environments (i.e., home, child care, neighborhood, community playground, church, restaurants, grocery store, etc.)
<http://www.dars.state.tx.us/ECIS/policymanual/ch3.htm#3.2>