



Parent Advocacy Network

Empowering families, professionals,
and others interested in the well-being
and education of children and youth

In this fact sheet:

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● **Initial evaluations**

● **Annual and Exit Evaluations**

● **Best Practices for Telehealth in Early Intervention**

{and more}

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SPAN FACT SHEET

Provision of Early Intervention Services during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Early Intervention and Covid-19

Families can find out what is available to their child in early intervention during the Covid outbreak.

Can early intervention (EI) Services be delivered remotely?

The US Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has indicated that *“the [early intervention] lead agency must ensure the continuity of services by, for example, providing services in an alternate location, by using different EIS providers or through alternate means, such as consultative services to the parent.”* (OSEP, 3/12/2020). The NJ Department of Health has defined “alternate means” as using telecommunications and telehealth with family consent. The NJ Early Intervention System (NJEIS) has determined that services can be provided to families through the use of technology platforms such as What’s App, Skype, Zoom, Go to Meeting, FaceTime, and phone calls or teleconference. These are all billable expenses. NJEIS providers may communicate by email or text, which is not a billable expense.

What about IFSP (individualized family service plan), FIM (family information meeting), or TPC (transitional planning conference) meetings?

NJEIS has determined that technology platforms such as those mentioned above may be used for meetings. These platforms can be used for “all meetings and all participants.”

Initial Evaluations

Please note that the NJEIS has not yet made this determination as the “evaluation for eligibility, as virtual evaluations present unique challenges for clinical purposes.” Currently, although referrals are still being entered into the database, delays are to be expected. Documentation of delays due to the pandemic are required.

Annual and Exit Evaluations

The NJEIS policy regarding both annual and exit evaluations are on hold. Currently, continued eligibility will be based on clinical information such as progress notes and outside evaluations. Exit meetings are not being held.

Best Practices for Telehealth in Early Intervention

NJEIS has developed tips for best practices in providing services through telehealth.

Document

- Communications between all team members, including families
- Acknowledgement that the child will be receiving telehealth services
- The Service Coordinator is responsible for documentation requirements.

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Telehealth procedures

- Allowable services: family training, occupational therapy, social work services, speech therapy, developmental intervention
- FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) compliant and cannot be recorded

Telehealth Technology

- Use encryption for security
- Communicate regularly regarding appointment dates/times
- Ensure equipment is fully charged
- Discuss picture clarity and volume
- Close all other programs during telehealth sessions

Delivering Services

- Determine who will be present with the child
- Provide necessary materials
- Eliminate distractions (e.g. quiet room, phone off)

Guidance from the telehealth provider

- Review goals
- Give families strategies to reach goals
- Summarize session
- Answer questions from families
- Let families know how to access telehealth records

Transition to Preschool

The U.S. Department of Education has requested that Congress approve her authority to provide a waiver of timelines for transition from early intervention to preschool. The waiver would also allow early intervention funds to be used to pay for services for a child after their 3rd birthday if the child cannot be evaluated for eligibility for preschool special education services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In some states, families pay for some early intervention services but not for special education services so it is unclear whether families would have to pay for EI services provided after their child turns 3. Families can contact their Service Coordinator for early intervention and/or SPAN Parent Advocacy Network at (800)654-SPAN for more information.

For updates in NJ Early Intervention, go to:

www.nj.gov/health/fhs/eis/

Make-up/Compensatory Services

Under usual circumstances, the early intervention system (EIS) has procedures in place to make-up services. Under current policy, providers are required to offer a 'Rescheduled' or a 'Make-Up' early intervention service to a family when the missed or disrupted service is due to a system reason, including practitioner.

The EIS will be updating their policy #14 on make-up services which will be found at www.nj.gov/health/fhs/eis/providers/policies-procedures/.

Learn more:

Federal regulations governing early intervention are Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The NJ application for Part C can be found at [https://www.nj.gov/health/fhs/eis/documents/NJEIS%20Part%20C-Application-2018%20\(002\).pdf](https://www.nj.gov/health/fhs/eis/documents/NJEIS%20Part%20C-Application-2018%20(002).pdf).



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