



## CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH SPECIAL NEEDS BABIES CAN'T WAIT

Division of Health Promotion  
Maternal & Child Health Section  
Child Health Office

### **Why is early intervention important?**

Babies develop very quickly. Half of their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth takes place in the first few years of life. These early years are the critical foundation for later learning.

Each year in Georgia, more than 10,000 babies are born with, or later develop, conditions that affect typical growth and learning. Without early help, even conditions that are mild in the beginning can become more severe as a child grows older. With early intervention, a child who is developing slowly has a greater chance of reaching his or her developmental potential. Studies show that for every \$1 spent on early intervention, \$7 can be saved on additional services that might otherwise be needed later in the child's life.

Early intervention services reduce the need for special services later in life by helping children with developmental delays reach their maximum developmental potential. Institutionalization of young children with disabilities has decreased significantly since federal law established early intervention programs in 1986.

### **What is the purpose of the program?**

To enhance the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their child in order to ensure that each young child with significant developmental delays achieves his or her maximum developmental potential.

### **What is Babies Can't Wait?**

The Babies Can't Wait (BCW) early intervention process begins with a complete evaluation and assessment of the child's development. If the child has a significant developmental delay or disability, the next step is to identify the child's developmental strengths and needs and the family's priorities and goals for their child. Appropriate services needed to support these goals are identified and are provided in a manner that supports parents and other primary caregivers in using typical daily activities and routines to increase everyday learning opportunities for each child.

### **How many people are helped by the program?**

Georgia's Babies Can't Wait early intervention system has served Georgia's children and families since 1987. 12,123 children and families were served in FFY 2011.

### **What does the program do?**

- Every child and family receives evaluation, assessments, and service coordination at no cost in order to develop and implement a plan to meet (1) the child's developmental needs, and (2) the family's needs related to improving their child's development.
- The individualized family service plans identify early intervention services such as assistive technology, therapies, or special instruction that are necessary to support progress toward each individual child's goals. These services are provided where the child lives, learns, and plays.
- Services are provided in a manner that supports and coaches parents and other primary caregivers in using activities throughout the child and family's daily routines that will increase learning opportunities for each child.
- Service coordinators help families obtain the services and supports identified in their plans by accessing Babies Can't Wait team members and other community resources. Most services are provided through contracts with private providers who participate on local Babies Can't Wait teams.
- As a part of transition, families are informed about programs and services available to them after their child leaves Babies Can't Wait. Additionally a transition meeting is coordinated with local school system representatives for children who may be eligible for school system services at age 3. The transition meeting is held at least 90 days prior to the third birthday.
- The program is assisted by a governor-appointed State Interagency Coordinating Council, which consists of legislators, state agency representatives, public and private providers, and families.

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## **Who is eligible?**

Children, from birth to their third birthday, regardless of income, may be eligible for BCW in one of two ways:

1. Children are automatically eligible if they are diagnosed with certain mental or physical conditions which are known to lead to developmental delay, including but not limited to: Down Syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, and/or autism; or
2. Children who are determined to be experiencing significant delays in any aspect of their development upon evaluation/assessment also may be eligible.

## **Where are services located?**

Statewide.

## **Outcome measures**

Increase the percentage of Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) developmental outcomes that are met by children enrolled in BCW.

## **Legislative authority:**

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) Part C (federal), OCGA 31-1-3

## **How to contact Babies Can't Wait**

Anyone who suspects that a child may be delayed in his/her development can visit <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/bcw/> or call toll-free 1-800-229-2038 or, in Atlanta, 770-451-5484 to find the closest BCW office. Parents also may ask to speak to another parent whose child has a similar disability. For additional information, call Babies Can't Wait at:

State Office: (404) 657-2762; Toll Free: 1 (888) 651-8224

For Local Directory Call Parent to Parent: 1 (800) 229-2038