

Problem Solving in Early Intervention

First Steps in Problem Solving

Questions or concerns about Early Intervention (EI) programs and services should first be addressed by contacting your service coordinator (infant/toddler EI program) or your EI representative (preschool EI program). You are encouraged to meet with staff at your EI program as a first step in resolving concerns.

This is likely to result in a more timely resolution. Any change that results from the meeting will be documented on the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP). If you ask for a meeting to talk about your concerns, the meeting must be held within seven days of your request.

What if parents still have concerns?

You have five choices available to you if concerns persist. Any of these choices may be used at any time.

1) Contact the Bureau of Early Intervention Services

You may contact the Bureau of Early Intervention Services (BEIS) by calling 717-346-9320. BEIS can assist in resolving the concern before a more formal written complaint is filed.

A BEIS Advisor will contact your child's EI program to determine if there can be an immediate resolution. If no immediate resolution is available, you can file a written complaint.

2) File a Written Complaint

You may file a written complaint to resolve concerns if you believe the EI program hasn't followed proper steps in the EI process.

BEIS will investigate the complaint within 60 days.

If a concern is identified, a plan of correction will be developed within 30 days after the investigation.

3) IFSP/IEP Facilitation

You may ask for IFSP/IEP facilitation, a voluntary process that can be used when parents and EI staff agree that a neutral person would help to achieve a successful IFSP/IEP meeting. This is a less formal way to resolve disagreements than more formal proceedings such as due process. **You can get more information from your service coordinator or preschool EI representative or by contacting the Office for Dispute Resolution at 1-800-222-3353 or www.odr-pa.org.**

4) Mediation

You may use mediation when there is a disagreement about a child's evaluation or services on the IFSP/IEP, such as the choice of a service, how often a service is provided, or where a service takes place. In mediation, everyone agrees to work together with a mediator, a person trained to help resolve concerns without taking sides. Mediators don't make "decisions," but help parties come to an agreement. Mediation is offered at no cost, is informal, and happens quickly.

You can get more information about mediation by contacting the Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR) at www.odr-pa.org or 1-800-222-3353.

5) Due Process Hearing

You may request a due process hearing, a more formal process for resolving disagreements about EI services, such as the choice of a service, how often a service is provided, or where a service takes place. These are formal hearings at which all sides can present witnesses, including experts.

There are some differences in due process for families with infants and toddlers, and those with preschool age children.

Parents with infants and toddlers under three years of age

You may request a hearing and the hearing officer will set a date and send a notice to you. If there is a problem with the date, the hearing can be rescheduled. The hearing must be held, and a decision reached, within 30 days.

Parents with preschool children three to five years of age

If you request a hearing, you and your preschool EI representative will be required to meet before a hearing takes place to resolve disagreements at the local level through a resolution meeting. Both parties can agree to waive the resolution meeting in writing or they may agree to try mediation. If the preschool program does not hold a local resolution meeting within 15 calendar days, you may ask the hearing officer to move forward with the due process hearing. The hearing must be held, and a decision reached within 45 days. **For more information on due process hearings, you can contact your preschool EI representative or call the Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR) at 1-800-222-3353 or visit www.odr-pa.org.**

*An EI representative could be your EI teacher, therapist, or service coordinator.

What can you do if you are not satisfied with the Early Intervention services your child receives?

Discuss concerns and disagreements with your service coordinator or preschool Early Intervention representative.

Discuss concerns and disagreements with the local Early Intervention program supervisor.

Contact PA Office for Dispute Resolution at 800-222-3353 for the assistance of a trained mediator to help solve disagreements or request a due process hearing.

OR

Contact the Bureau of Early Intervention Services 717-346-9320 to discuss issues and/or file a complaint.

Questions about problem solving in Early Intervention?

Call 717-346-9320 or Email the Bureau of Early Intervention Services at RA-ocdintervention@pa.gov

