

Approximately 2,500 Infants and Toddlers Expected to Lose Early Intervention Services

Approximately 2,500 or half of all infants and toddlers currently enrolled in EarlySteps are expected to lose their services when new eligibility criteria are applied beginning May 1, 2012. EarlySteps is implementing a revised, more restrictive eligibility criteria to newly referred and currently enrolled children due to a revenue shortfall.

EarlySteps is Louisiana's early intervention system administered by the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD). Currently infants and toddlers aged birth to three years (36 months) who have an Established Medical Condition likely to result in a developmental delay, or who have Developmental Delays (suspected developmental delay in at least one area of development), are eligible for services.

Current EarlySteps eligibility criteria for infants and toddlers identified with Developmental Delay require that they be at least 1.5 standard deviations (SD) below the mean on the Battelle Developmental Inventory, 2nd edition (BDI-2) in one of the following developmental areas or specified sub-domains: cognitive development; physical development (fine motor and gross motor sub-domains); communication development (receptive language and expressive language sub-domains); social or emotional development; and adaptive skills development (also known as self-help or daily living skills).

The new eligibility will require children qualifying according to the Developmental Delay criteria to have a suspected developmental delay in **two domains** and the use of sub-domains to qualify no longer applies. There are **no changes to the eligibility criteria for Established Medical Conditions**.

Every child currently enrolled in EarlySteps will have a redetermination of eligibility between now and October 1, 2012 at their next plan review (six-month or annual). Children who do **not** meet the new eligibility criteria will be terminated from the program.

[Click here](#) to read more information on the revised eligibility criteria and the redetermination process.

Family Cost Participation

The Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) had considered implementing Family Cost Participation for EarlySteps but has decided not to implement this change at this time. Many families and advocates submitted comments to OCDD expressing their opposition to Family Cost Participation during the EarlySteps public comment period and are very gratified that this will not be implemented. The DD Council felt strongly that Family Cost Participation would have served as a barrier to families' ability to participate in EarlySteps and appreciates DHH's decision not to go forward with this plan.

The Council also opposed the changes in eligibility criteria, as did many families who submitted public comments. It is unfortunate that the funding for this program is not available as it is the Council's position and well documented that for every dollar spent on early intervention, multiple dollars are saved in the future. The Council pledges to work with DHH and other policy makers to identify the needed dollars to fully fund EarlySteps in the future.

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