

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 early interventionist* (preschool EI program). Parents and EI programs are encouraged to utilize the resolution process at the local level as a first step in resolving the concerns

since their familiarity with the concerns is likely to result in a more timely resolution. Within seven days of a parent's request, a meeting time and place will be coordinated. Any change that results from the meeting will be documented on the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP).

What if parents still have concerns?

Children and families receiving early intervention have five choices available to them if concerns persist. Any of these choices may be used by parents at any time. They are:

1) Bureau of Early Intervention Services Complaint Investigation

Parents may contact their Bureau of Early Intervention Services (BEIS) advisor by calling 717-346-9320, to assist them in solving the concern before a written complaint to BEIS is filed.

The BEIS Advisor will contact the child's EI program to determine if there can be an immediate resolution. If no immediate resolution is available, the parents have the option of filing a written complaint.

2) Filing a Complaint

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

Complaints are filed with BEIS which investigates 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

Parents may use IFSP/IEP facilitation, which is a voluntary process that can be used when parents and EI staff agree that the presence of a neutral person would help facilitate communication for a successful IFSP/IEP meeting. Facilitation is a less formal mechanism for resolving disagreements than more formal proceedings such as due process. **Parents can request a form from their service coordinator or preschool early interventionist* or they can obtain a form from the Office for Dispute Resolution at www.odr-pa.org or at 1-800-222-3353.**

4) Mediation

Parents may use mediation when there is a disagreement about 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 assist in coming to a resolution

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.

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

5) Due Process Hearing

Parents 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.

Problem solving procedures in EI are similar for families with infants, toddlers, and preschool age children. However there are some differences specific to due process procedures.

Parents with infants and toddlers under three years of age

Parents may request a hearing and the hearing officer will set a date and send out a notice to them. 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 are three to five years of age

Parents may request a hearing and the parent(s) and preschool program representative will be required to meet before a hearing takes place to resolve disagreements at the local level through a resolution meeting. There is a time frame for the concern to be resolved. 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, the parent 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, contact the preschool early interventionist* or call the Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR) at 1-800-222-3353 or visit www.odr-pa.org.**

*An early interventionist could be your early intervention teacher, therapist, or service coordinator.

What can parents do if they are not satisfied with the early intervention services their child receives?

Discuss concerns and disagreements with their service coordinator or preschool early interventionist. *If concerns persist...*

Discuss concerns and disagreements with the local early intervention program supervisor. *If concerns persist...*

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

