


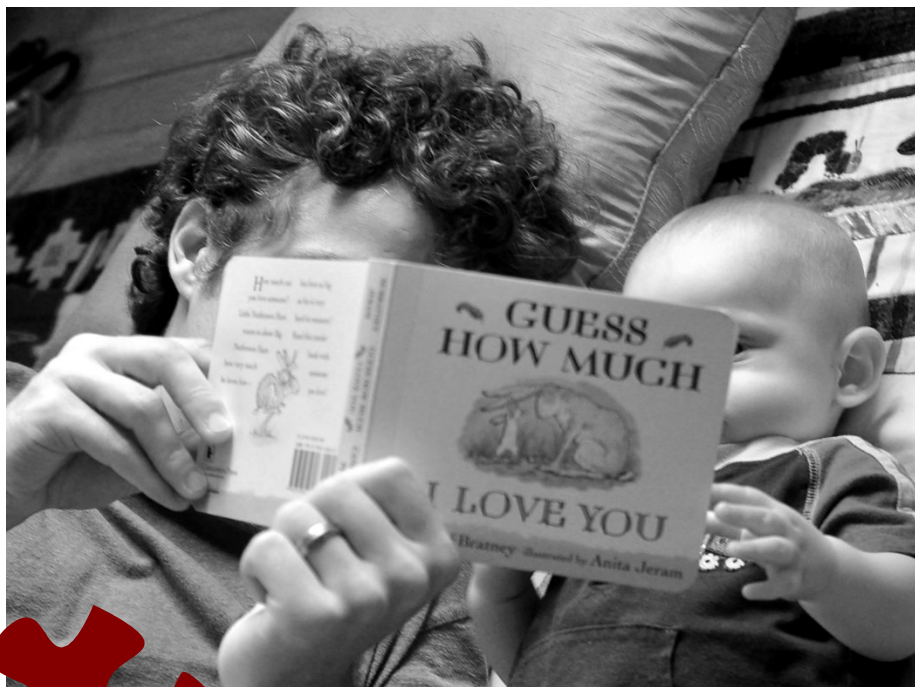


First Connections

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All families can enhance their child's learning and development with the necessary supports and resources.

First Connections

The Arkansas Part C Early Intervention Program for children with disabilities birth to three and their families



What is First Connections?

First Connections is the state-wide, comprehensive early intervention program in Arkansas under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Supports provided under First Connections are aligned with each family's unique situation, culture, language, resources and priorities.

Our Mission:

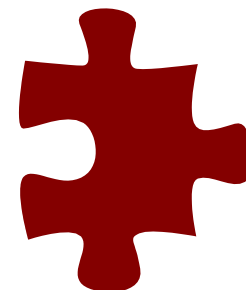
First Connections collaborates with families to facilitate the child's active participation in family and community activities. Early intervention is linked to specific family goals which support their child's development.

What is EI?

Early intervention (EI) is a process of planned activities and strategies concerned with promoting the basic, "brand new skills" babies typically develop during the first three years of life, such as:

- ✦ *physical* (reaching, rolling, crawling, and walking)
- ✦ *cognitive* (thinking, learning, solving problems)
- ✦ *communication* (talking, listening, understanding)
- ✦ *social/emotional* (playing, feeling secure and happy)
- ✦ *self-help* (eating, dressing).

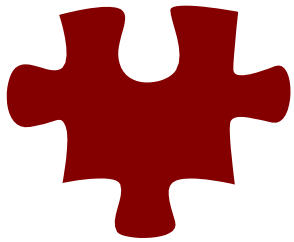
Early intervention is designed to meet the needs of infants and toddlers who have a developmental delay or disability while offering education/training to help parents understand their child's developmental abilities in order to promote their child's development.



First Connections supports families . . .



First Connections builds upon the strengths of the family to help their children develop positive social-emotional skills, acquire knowledge and skills and use appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.



The family and their IFSP team collaboratively plans and writes strategies/activities, services, and supports to enhance their child's participation and learning in natural environments and every day activities, using the child's and family's strengths to overcome challenges and to accomplish goals that reflect family priorities for their child's development.

The role of the family in early intervention:

Families are a child's first teacher. Families take an active role in early intervention as part of their child's team along with a service coordinator and other early intervention professionals to learn about their child's unique strengths, abilities, and needs to promote their child's development through naturally occurring learning opportunities.



Active family/caregiver participation in the early intervention process is critical to a child's development with support and training from qualified early intervention service providers.

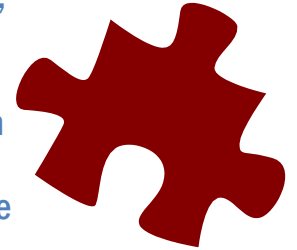


What are “natural environments?”

IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) Part C defines “natural environments” as settings and routines that are natural or typical for a same-aged infant or toddler without a disability. This would include places where children live, learn, and play, such as, home, daycare, grandmother's house, and the park.

Natural environments are more than a place. Providing services in natural environments involves providing children with multiple opportunities to practice skills throughout the day as they communicate what they want, see, do, and enjoy during common everyday activities with familiar people in familiar circumstances.

All children, no matter what their physical, cognitive, or emotional level of development, need meaningful opportunities to develop skills, establish a sense of self, and lay a foundation for life-long learning. All children learning together fosters the potential of every child; children with disabilities have the right to play and learn alongside children without disabilities.



Infants and toddlers learn best in their natural environment through every day experiences and interactions with familiar people in familiar contexts with typically developing peers.

