

## WHAT IS FIRST CONNECTIONS?

First Connections offers early intervention to families of eligible children under the age of three who are missing milestones and may have a developmental delay or disability. Early intervention supports early learning and skill development, which is important because a child's brain develops the most in the first three years of life!

A family with a child who has developmental delays and is missing milestones may be eligible for no-cost early intervention services in their home, daycare, or other setting outside of a clinic. The goal is to offer supports and help teach children functional skills, so they grow into healthy, active adults. In some cases, early intervention can successfully address the issue before the child needs special education services or accommodations in school, allowing the child to “catch up” with his or her peers who do not have delays.



**WONDERING IF YOUR CHILD IS  
MEETING DEVELOPMENTAL  
MILESTONES OR WANT TO  
LEARN MORE?**



**CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:**

**[firstconnectionsar.org](http://firstconnectionsar.org)**



**First  
Connections**



**HELPING CHILDREN WITH  
DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS  
LEARN AND GROW WHERE  
THEY LIVE & PLAY!**

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Children are eligible from **birth** up until their **third** birthday. To be eligible, a child must have a significant delay in one of five developmental areas or a medical diagnosis that is likely to lead to a delay or disability such as Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, or a congenital heart condition. The five areas include:

- **Physical:** This is how we use our small muscles (fine motor) and large muscles (gross motor) to do things like sitting up or rolling over, picking things up, walking, and using fingers and hands. It also includes the ability to see and hear.
- **Cognitive:** This is the ability to think, learn, and solve problems. It's how kids explore the world around them with their eyes, ears, and hands. In babies, this looks like curiosity. In toddlers, it also includes things like learning to count, naming colors, and mimicking behavior.
- **Communication:** This is the ability to use and understand language. For babies it includes cooing or babbling. In older kids, it includes understanding what is said and using words in ways others can understand.
- **Social or Emotional:** This is the ability to relate to other people. That includes being able to express and control emotions. In babies, it means smiling at others and making sounds to communicate. In toddlers and preschoolers, it means being able to ask for help, show and express feelings, and get along with others.
- **Adaptive Skills:** This is the ability to do or participate in daily activities like eating, getting dressed, brushing teeth, and taking a bath.

## WHAT IS A SIGNIFICANT DELAY?

It is a delay of 25 percent of the child's age in one of the listed areas of development. Your child's level of delay will be determined using a developmental evaluation from a provider in the community chosen by the family. A child may have a delay in only one area or more than one.

## HOW DO I APPLY?

The first step is a referral to First Connections. **Anyone who has concerns about a child's early learning or development may make a referral.** Anyone really does mean anyone – a parent, grandparent, pediatrician, or daycare worker – if one notices that a child may be missing milestones or has not passed a hearing or vision screening. Early support is key to helping children learn and develop on schedule.

Referrals can be made by phone at **1-800-643-8258** or online at: **firstconnectionsar.org**

After the referral, a service coordinator will call the family to answer questions, learn more about concerns and goals for the child, and start the process for an evaluation to measure the child's strengths and needs. The results of the evaluation will be discussed with parents at a meeting to decide if the child is eligible.

## WHAT IS "EARLY INTERVENTION"?

Early intervention supports an eligible child's early learning and skill development so they can be active participants in activities at home, childcare, and other places in the community. Parents and other caregiver also gain tools to help their child learn and develop.

Services in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), based on what is needed to reach functional goals, may include (but not be limited to):

- **Physical therapy**
- **Occupational therapy**
- **Speech therapy**
- **Developmental therapy**
- **Behavioral services**
- **Nursing or medical services**
- **Vision services**
- **Sign Language services**

Your child's progress and your family's plan will be reviewed with you quarterly; services may change as progress is made or as new goals are added to the plan.



## WHERE ARE SERVICES PROVIDED?

Young children learn best in the places they know and around people they are comfortable with. That's why early intervention is provided in **"natural environments"** – the activities occurring where the child has already been living, growing, and playing. Some examples might include at home, at the park, at a playground, a daycare center, or a relative's home.

## HOW MUCH DOES EARLY INTERVENTION COST?

First Connections provides early intervention at **no cost to eligible families**. For those families who have insurance, eligible services may be billed to your private insurance or Medicaid coverage, unless it would impact lifetime service benefits. Co-pays and deductibles related to early intervention services would all be paid by the program. A program service coordinator can walk you through those details, and you would have to give your permission for all services beforehand.