



Frequently Asked Questions for Physicians: Getting Started with Babies Can't Wait

What does the Law say?

The Babies Can't Wait (BCW) Program is Georgia's Part C Early Intervention Program under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), the same law that governs special education services for children in public school systems. Part C establishes a comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary, interagency system of early intervention supports for infants and toddlers with disabilities from birth to age 3 and their families. In Georgia, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) Division of Public Health administers Babies Can't Wait.

IDEA requires state systems to establish "a comprehensive child find system ... that provides for participation by primary referral sources" {IDEA 2004 Section 635(a)(5)} as well as a "timely, comprehensive multidisciplinary evaluation of the functioning of each infant or toddler with a disability in the state and a family-directed identification of the needs of each family of such an infant or toddler" {IDEA 2004 Section 635(a)(3)}.

Who is eligible for Babies Can't Wait?

Children ages 0-36 months with developmental delays, developmental disabilities, and/or certain diagnosed disabling conditions that have a high probability of resulting in delays are eligible to receive early intervention services. To request a complete listing of the diagnosed conditions that result in "automatic" eligibility for Babies Can't Wait, contact the State or any local Babies Can't Wait office.

Who can make referrals to Babies Can't Wait?

Anyone can make a referral to Babies Can't Wait, including but not limited to social workers, physicians, parents, childcare providers, teachers, and other pediatric clinicians.

Why should I make a referral to Babies Can't Wait?

Research has shown that infants and toddlers with developmental delays, developmental disabilities, and/or diagnosed disabling conditions that have a high probability of resulting in delays benefit from the services offered through each state's early intervention system. Furthermore, families consistently report that other supports offered through the system (e.g., respite, awareness of community resources, etc.) enable them to better meet the developmental needs of their children.

How do I make a referral to Babies Can't Wait?

Children 1st is the system point of entry for all Public Health programs for young children in Georgia. Referrals to Babies Can't Wait are made by completing the Children 1st Screening and Referral Form and mailing, faxing, or emailing the completed form to the Children 1st Coordinator in the district which serves the county in which the child resides. Referrals may also be made by telephone. A list of the Children 1st district offices and contact information may be accessed at:

<http://health.state.ga.us/pdfs/familyhealth/childrenfirst/c1st.districtcoordinators.05.pdf>

How can I find out about what happens to children who I refer to Babies Can't Wait?

BCW policy requires that the local BCW offices must acknowledge receipt of each referral, in writing, within three (3) working days of receiving the referral. Each child who is evaluated and determined to be eligible for Babies Can't Wait will have an individualized family service plan (IFSP). The IFSP focuses on the child and the family, underscoring the importance of the family in enhancing a child's development. Babies Can't Wait policy requires that each child and family's service coordinator, with written parental consent, provide copies of evaluation reports, eligibility documentation and the IFSP to the child's pediatrician or primary care physician within 15 working days of the evaluation, eligibility determination and/or IFSP meeting.

Why is written parental consent required for Babies Can't Wait to share information with physicians and with other programs and services?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of "student education records". The law applies to all entities that receive funds under

an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education, which includes early intervention programs such as Babies Can't Wait. As a result of FERPA requirements, Babies Can't Wait must have written permission from the parent in order to release any information from a child's Babies Can't Wait record to physicians, child care providers, and other agencies or programs, both within and outside of DHR.

What information will Babies Can't Wait request from me?

Physician(s) may be contacted by Babies Can't Wait for information about patients who have been referred for early intervention. Babies Can't Wait personnel will want to know if you have any concerns about a child's medical condition(s), development and progress toward developmental milestones, medications and any health implications that may be relevant to the child and family's participation in early intervention. To the extent that you are able, you may also provide information and participate in the evaluation process and/or the development of the IFSP.

How long does it take to get services started after a referral is made?

Within 45 days from the receipt of a referral, Babies Can't Wait shall complete the intake, evaluation and assessment activities, determine eligibility and convene a meeting to develop the initial IFSP.

What can I and the families of my patients expect after I make a referral to Babies Can't Wait?

Families who are referred will be contacted by a representative of Babies Can't Wait within a few days following the referral. A date and time will be scheduled for an initial intake appointment. During that initial meeting, families share information about their priorities for their child and are provided information about Babies Can't Wait as well as other resources and support services that may be of interest to them. In addition, families are asked to provide written consent for evaluation and to request and share information with key individuals (including physicians) involved in their child's care. A developmental screening may be completed at that time (if eligibility is in question). Following completion of the intake appointment, the multidisciplinary evaluation and assessment is scheduled at a time that is convenient for the family. If the child is found eligible for services by a multidisciplinary evaluation and assessment team (which includes the family), an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) will be developed with the family. As the child's physician or primary care provider, you are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the child's and family's early intervention experience, beginning with referral and continuing through determination of eligibility, IFSP development, service delivery and transition out of BCW at age three.

What is the evaluation and assessment process?

Evaluation and assessment activities are conducted by a minimum of two professionals from two different early intervention disciplines such as early childhood education, early childhood special education, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech-language pathology, nursing and/or nutrition. Evaluation and assessment activities include a review of pertinent records related to the child's current health status and medical history, identification of the family's priorities, and evaluation of the child's level of functioning in the areas of cognitive development, physical development (including vision and hearing), communication development, social/emotional development and adaptive development.

What is an IFSP?

An IFSP, or Individualized Family Service Plan, is a written plan that identifies the major outcomes expected to be achieved for the child and family, as well as a statement of the specific early intervention supports and services necessary to meet the unique needs of the child and family to achieve the identified outcomes. Families work with a multidisciplinary team of early intervention professionals to play an active role in the development of the IFSP. Each child's IFSP must be reviewed every 6 months, or more frequently as necessary, and a new plan is developed annually.

What is service coordination and how is it beneficial for families who I refer to Babies Can't Wait?

Service coordination is an active, ongoing process that involves assisting parents of eligible children in gaining access to the early intervention services and other supports identified in the individualized family service plan; coordinating the provision of early intervention services and other services (such as medical services for other than diagnostic and evaluation purposes) that the child needs or is being provided; facilitating the timely delivery of available services; and continuously seeking the appropriate services and situations necessary to

benefit the development of each child being served for the duration of the child's eligibility. Specific service coordination activities include coordinating the performance of evaluations and assessments; facilitating and participating in the development, review, and evaluation of individualized family service plans; assisting families in identifying available service providers; coordinating and monitoring the delivery of available services; informing families of the availability of advocacy services; coordinating with medical and health providers; and facilitating the development of a transition plan to preschool services, if appropriate. (34CFR 303.23)

Who provides services within Babies Can't Wait?

Early intervention services are provided by public and private providers, representing various disciplines including, but not limited to audiologists, counselors, educators, nurses, nutritionists/dietitians, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, and/or psychologists. Professionals within all disciplines must meet the educational, licensure, and professional examination requirements established by the state of Georgia.

Is there a cost to families for Babies Can't Wait services?

Child find, evaluation and assessment activities, the development and monitoring of the individualized family service plan, service coordination, transition planning and support, and assurances of procedural safeguards/family rights are provided at no cost to all families in Babies Can't Wait. Babies Can't Wait has a system of family cost participation in which families may be asked to contribute to the cost of the ongoing early intervention services. The percentage for which they would be responsible is determined based upon family size, family income, and other extraordinary costs related to the care of their child. The Babies Can't Wait service coordinator will assist in this determination for each family. Families may be responsible for 0% to 100% of the cost of services; private insurance, Medicaid, other insurance coverage, and Babies Can't Wait may also assist in covering the remainder of the costs.

What happens if a child is not eligible for Babies Can't Wait?

Children who are determined to be ineligible for Babies Can't Wait, and who were referred to BCW through Children 1st will be referred back to Children 1st. Children 1st may then assist the child and family in linkage/referral to local medical and/or prevention-based programs and services available to meet identified needs.

What happens as children turn three years old? What does Babies Can't Wait do to assist at that time?

When a child is between 27 and 30 months of age, the Babies Can't Wait service coordinator will initiate transition planning with his/her family. A transition plan is developed, as part of the IFSP, and a transition conference will be scheduled with parental consent. The purpose of the transition conference is to provide each family an opportunity to learn about and discuss potential options that may be available when their child turns three. Options may include, but are not limited to preschool special education services, private preschool or child care, Head Start, private therapy services, and/or other community programs. Preschool special education representatives from local school systems are required, under the IDEA, to participate in transition planning conferences with parent consent.

What if I have more questions?

Contact your local Babies Can't Wait Early Intervention Coordinator, BCW Parent Educator, or the State Babies Can't Wait office at 404-657-2726 or toll free at 888-651-8224. Or visit the Babies Can't Wait webpage periodically for updated information: <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/bcw/>