



FIRST EARLY INTERVENTION

EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM GUIDELINES & OVERVIEW

**First Early Intervention Program
574 Main Street
South Weymouth, MA 02190
(781) 331-2533**

Welcome

The First Early Intervention Program of The Arc of the South Shore has been providing services to families with young children since the mid-1970's. While Early Intervention has changed greatly since that time, our commitment to families has not. We have remained a family-focused and community-based program that collaborates with families and other community resources to assist all family members to reach their full potential. Our staff are specialists in various areas of development but appreciate that you know your child best and are his/her best advocate.

Please do not hesitate to let us know what has worked well for your family, as well as changes that we could make to improve our services. Your feedback is greatly appreciated, and necessary to provide the highest quality of services to families with young children. You are also welcomed to share your thoughts on program development and policies.

The staff at the First EI Program looks forward to getting to know you and your family, and to making your experience in Early Intervention as helpful and positive as possible.

Welcome!

Mission & Values: The Arc of the South Shore

The Arc has carried out our mission and vision of helping people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as their parents and siblings, for more than 70 years.

Mission Statement

The Arc of the South Shore is committed to empowering families and individuals of all ages with disabilities to reach their fullest potential. We achieve this by providing high-quality individualized services and opportunities that foster independence, community inclusion, and advocacy.

Vision Statement

We will continue to be a provider of choice for supports to individuals and families in need of our services by building on seven decades of leadership, experience, and advocacy.

Core Values

People First | Community | Transparency | Self-Determination | Diversity | Respect

Our History

In the mid-20th century, parents had few choices for their children with intellectual or developmental disabilities. A group of South Shore parents felt that their options were completely unacceptable, so in May 1951 they founded The Arc of the South Shore. Their goal was to promote the welfare of exceptional children and their parents by providing educational programs, home training, recreational facilities, and specialized teacher training. They also wanted to encourage research and help create a better understanding among the general public of their children's unique circumstances and needs.

In 1967, the town of Weymouth transferred the deed of a parcel of land on Main Street to a nonprofit named the Jaycees Memorial School, Inc. for the purpose of building a school for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The memorial school opened in 1970 and served over 400 children a year. The school eventually became our First Early Intervention program.

Throughout its history, The Arc has been instrumental in supporting the rights of individuals with disabilities. In 1975, the agency supported a series of lawsuits that resulted in a landmark court order declaring that patients in mental hospitals have a fundamental right to refuse treatment with mind-altering drugs. This order created a widespread movement for deinstitutionalization, and with funding from the Commonwealth, The Arc expanded and opened its first group home and day services for adults seeking care.

By the end of the 1980s, The Arc became a multi-service agency. Since then, the agency has strategically developed opportunities that foster independence, community inclusion, and advocacy. It has also continuously expanded its programs and facilities, including the creation of a new Autism Resource Center in 2016 to fill a void in the care available to South Shore families and the completion of a nearly one-million-dollar renovation of its adult day center in North Weymouth in 2019.

In addition to its comprehensive programming, The Arc is affiliated with 700 state and local grassroots Arc chapters nationwide. Working collaboratively, this collective has expanded community-based services and championed policy changes that have advanced the rights of individuals with disabilities in education, employment, housing, and health care.

About Early Intervention

The First Early Intervention (EI) program is an integrated developmental service, offering both evaluation and therapeutic services to children from birth to three years of age who have developmental concerns due to biological, medical, or environmental factors. EI is a family centered program in which parents and caregivers actively participate.

Services are provided in everyday natural settings, including your home, childcare center, the home of a family member or childcare provider, in small integrated groups at our center, and in a range of other community settings. This team-based, collaborative model allows the child, family, caregivers, and EI professionals to work together to create increased opportunities for learning. A variety of parent support, educational services, and resource referrals are also provided.

Massachusetts Early Intervention uses research to guide our home visits. We provide our services in this way based upon three concepts:

- Infants and toddlers learn best through lots of practice during daily activities.
- Parents and caregivers have the greatest impact on their child's progress.
- The Early Intervention Specialist supports the family's relationship with the child

The Division of Early Intervention of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health has the responsibility for administering and overseeing the statewide system of Early Intervention services, for certifying programs and coordinating funding sources, and for carrying out monitoring and technical assistance activities. There are many certified community-based programs serving all cities and towns in the Commonwealth. Each Early Intervention program is certified to provide services for a specified group of cities and towns, called a catchment area. The First Program serves Braintree, Weymouth, Hingham, Hull, Norwell, Cohasset and Scituate.

The First Early Intervention Program is certified by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and includes in its practice the core values of DPH, which include individualization, respect, family-centeredness, community, team collaboration and lifelong learning. The First Program does not discriminate in providing services to children and families, or in hiring policies or other aspects of its administration based on race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, disability, marital status, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

The Individualized Family Service Plan “IFSP”

Once your child is found to be eligible for Early Intervention, the family and First Program staff create the Individualized Family Service Plan. It includes all the outcomes and services that will be part of the Early Intervention experience. The IFSP is updated at least once a year and reviewed every six months. Additions and changes can be made any time you and the program agree it is necessary.

The IFSP includes:

- Who your child is – including results of a standardized assessment, as well as how your child manages throughout the day.
- Your child’s daily routines, strengths and needs.
- Family concerns, priorities and resources.
- Outcomes you have identified for your child and family
- Which services are to be provided, how often, by whom, when and where.
- Who is designated as your service coordinator; and
- What steps will be taken to assist you and your child in the transition from Early Intervention.

Health and Safety

Allergies

It is important to inform EI staff about all allergies your child may have. Families are required to list all allergies when enrolling your child and upon any diagnosis change. This information is included in the medical form completed by the child's physician, and is filed in the child's First Program record.

If there are smokers or pets in your home, please discuss with First Program staff visiting your home about their possible smoke or pet allergies.

Illness in the Family

It is important for children, families, and staff to avoid exposure to illnesses of all kids. Families are encouraged to cancel the child's appointment if the child and/or close family member is home with an illness. The following are cause to cancel:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Initial onset of colds with sneezing, nasal discharge and cough
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Rash (other than mild diaper or heat rash)
- Exposure to communicable Diseases

Child Protection Mandate

The staff of the First Program are committed to the safety and well-being of all children. As providers of services to young children, staff are mandated to report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect to the Department of Children and Families. Families will always be informed in person or by telephone regarding any concerns about abuse and/or neglect.

Smoke-free Policy

Smoking is strictly prohibited within all First Early Intervention buildings, property and vehicles. This also includes offices, hallways, and restrooms, kitchens, meeting rooms, community areas, vans and buses. Smoking is also prohibited on building grounds, parking lots and playgrounds.

Please refrain from smoking just before and during a home visit.

Our health and safety guidelines are reviewed annually by a First Early Intervention Program medical consultant.

APPOINTMENTS AND ATTENDANCE

The First Early Intervention Program staff work in partnership with families and other caregivers, and their services work best when caregivers participate in all appointments with the child. Services are also most effective when they occur regularly. The Early Intervention Specialists who come to your home create time especially for you and your child. We ask that you also especially reserve this time, and not make other conflicting appointments. Although this can sometimes be difficult, your flexibility will be much appreciated. You can certainly negotiate with your Early Intervention Specialists if your schedule must change, and the Specialists will also try to be as flexible as possible, given their full schedules.

Cancellations

If you must cancel an appointment, please try to do so as soon as you can, 24 hours ahead if possible. Do not hesitate to call our number **(781) 331-2533** at any time to access voicemail for the Office Manager and/or the Early Intervention Specialists. All staff will be checking their voicemail messages throughout the days they are working for messages. Early cancellations are greatly appreciated.

Cancellations and “no shows” cannot be rescheduled unless the staff members have cancellations in their schedules.

EI Specialist Cancellations

If an Early Intervention Specialist member must cancel your appointment because of illness or emergency, the Specialist, or staff member, will call you as early as possible to let you know. . We will try to reschedule if possible.

All Early Intervention Specialists will make every effort to meet their appointments on time. As a home-based program, please allow a 10-minute grace period. The Specialist will alert the family directly if he/she will be later than 10 minutes.

Early Intervention Specialist Training/Professional Development

The First Program may need on occasion to cancel your appointment because of Program requirements and professional training for Early Intervention Specialists. Families will be given ample notice.

TRANSPORTATION

In the event that you do not have transportation to appointments at the First Program, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health will assist. DPH provides transportation through contracts with regional transit authorities and local transportation companies. Contact your Early Intervention Specialist for more information.

SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS

In the event of severe weather, please call our program at (781) 331-2533, for an update on home visits and group services provided.

Please note, the First Program does not follow the school closing guidelines.

Please cancel your appointment with your Early Intervention Specialist if there is no access to your home due to road conditions. Please call as early as possible to report conditions.

TURNING 3 YEARS OF AGE

Children may be eligible to receive Early Intervention services Intervention Program until the day before their third birthday.

Beginning with your initial development assessment, you and your team will be reviewing your child's needs and developing appropriate outcomes. A formal discussion, initiated by your team, will take place when your child reaches the age of 2 ½. This meeting will address your child's needs after the age of three (3). Your family and the team members will discuss various options including:

- Preschool services through your local school department
- Day care
- Nursery school
- Head Start
- Community groups and resources

Your team can assist you in determining which choice will be most appropriate. Team members will also visit programs with you, as well as attend planning meetings.

We want to provide as smooth a transition as possible for you and your child from the First Early Intervention Program to the next step.