The [Birth to 3 Program](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/health-care-coverage/health-care-coverage/birth-3-program) provides early intervention services to infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities throughout Wisconsin. This program is authorized under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C for Infants and Toddlers. The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), is the federal administering agency. Wisconsin’s county agencies operate the Birth to 3 Program at the local community level. Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) staff provide ongoing technical assistance and conduct county program oversight, monitoring and enforcement activities.

The Birth to 3 Program provides early intervention services to assist each child to reach their developmental outcomes. Early intervention services include support to the child’s family in meeting their own child’s unique developmental needs. For some children, the provision of developmental services may overcome their delays. For others, the delays may be lessened.

About 18,000 Wisconsin children are served by the Birth to 3 Program annually. Funding sources include the federal, state and county governments. There is a sliding scale parental cost-share system for families at or above 300% Federal Poverty Level. The maximum family cost-share payment is $150 per month.

When a referral source, such as a physician, identifies children who may be eligible for services, they must be referred to the appropriate county Birth to 3 Program within two working days of identification [(ForwardHealth Topic #788)](https://www.forwardhealth.wi.gov/WIPortal/Subsystem/KW/Display.aspx?ia=1&amp;p=1&amp;sa=8&amp;s=6&amp;c=141&amp;nt=Requirements%20for%20Providers&amp;adv=Y). After a referral is received, the Birth to 3 Program conducts an initial evaluation and assessment, followed by the development of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for children that qualify for the program.

**Children under age 3 who qualify include:**

* **Those with specific diagnoses known to be associated with significant developmental delays (e.g., Trisomy 21)**
* **Those with a 25% delay in one or more areas of development**

A [Referral to Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program form](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/f0/f00688.pdf) is available from DHS. Infants and toddlers who are substantiated victims of abuse or neglect must, by statute, be referred by child welfare to the Birth to 3 Program.

The Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program utilizes an evidence-based set of practices that incorporates coaching, teaming and natural learning environments with the goal of increasing the ability of parents and other family members/caregivers to support their child’s learning and development. This allows opportunities for the child to learn on a daily, round-the-clock basis rather than only during early intervention visits.

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The Birth to 3 Program follows these principles laid out by the Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments, OSEP Community of Practice: Part C Settings (2008).

**11**

* Infants and toddlers learn best through every day experiences and interactions with familiar people in familiar contexts.
* All families, with necessary supports and resources, can enhance their children’s learning and development.
* The primary role of the service provider in early intervention is to work with and support family members and caregivers in children’s lives.
* The early intervention process, from initial contacts through transition, must be dynamic and individualized to reflect the child’s and family members’ preferences, learning styles and cultural beliefs.
* The IFSP outcomes are functional and based on children’s and families’ needs and family identified priorities.
* Family priorities, needs and interests are addressed most appropriately by a primary coach who represents and receives team and community support.
* Interventions with young children and family members must be based on explicit principles, validated practices, best available research and relevant laws and regulations.