

EARLY INTERVENTION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION IN OREGON



Early Intervention (EI) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services are designed to enhance the physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development of children birth to 5 with diagnosed developmental delays and/or disabilities. These essential services are provided by the Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) program in Oregon through a network of local agencies contracted by the Oregon Department of Education. The program is federally mandated through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and provides free, individualized services for families to support healthy development in children.

Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education are Highly Effective
Oregon's EI/ECSE programming increases school

readiness, reduces the impact of disabilities and developmental delays on children, and prevents the need for future interventions when participating children receive recommended individualized services.

In 2015:

- More than 91 percent of all infants and toddlers who participated in EI services showed some improvement in their development.¹
- More than 60 percent of all infants and toddlers who participated in EI services demonstrated substantial growth at program exit, meaning they needed fewer ECSE and Special Education services in preschool and K-12.²
- More than 27 percent of preschool children participating in ECSE enter kindergarten without the need for Special Education.³

For Qualifying Children

Early Intervention
Birth to Age 3

Early Childhood Special Education
Age 3 to School Age

**IMPROVED
SCHOOL READINESS**

EI serves children **ages birth to 3** with diagnosed developmental delays and disabilities, or medical conditions likely to result in developmental delays. **ECSE** serves children **ages 3 to school age** with developmental delays and/or disabilities.

Today, nearly 22,000 children in Oregon receiving EI/ECSE services work with specialists such as speech language pathologists and therapists (occupational, physical, and behavioral) in home, child care, and preschool settings.



Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education are in Demand

The number of children determined eligible for EI/ECSE services has increased as Oregon has prioritized developmental screenings, leading to more referrals for services. As demand grows, funding must increase to meet the needs of more children. While EI/ECSE services are supported with a mix of state and federal funds, most children still receive less than the recommended levels of service.

Current data⁴ shows:

- Only 28 percent of children enrolled in EI received the recommended level of services.
- **Less than 2 percent** of children enrolled in ECSE with high needs **received the recommended level of services.**

- On average, children with high needs (visual or hearing impairment, non-verbal, limited mobility) only receive 8.7 hours of preschool per week, as opposed to the 15 hours per week recommended by service-level standards.
- **EI service levels decreased by an average of 70 percent** from 2004 to 2016. A child eligible for EI services currently receives two hours of service per month—less than one hour per week.

Inadequate service levels limit Oregon's ability to prepare children for kindergarten and success in school.

COST SAVINGS

In the 2014–2015 year, more than 21 percent of children exiting EI had caught up with their peers and did not require ECSE services. **EI alone saves the state nearly \$4 million annually** by reducing Special Education spending in kindergarten. By investing in EI and ECSE, **Oregon also experiences cost savings for children who will need fewer Special Education services** when they enter kindergarten.⁵

Children's Institute Recommendations for Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education in Oregon

Oregon should increase cost-effective investments that promote health and education during a child's earliest years. Increasing investments in EI/ECSE will help more kids get the assistance they need to be kindergarten-ready.

In 2017, we recommend the state:

- Ensure all children identified with disabilities and/or delays actually receive the recommended levels of service.
- Invest additional dollars to reach all children and families who qualify for Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education services.
- Explore new state and federal funding streams, including Medicaid, to strengthen and expand EI/ECSE services for children and families.



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Our mission is moving research to action by promoting cost-effective public and private investments in our youngest children birth through third grade.

CITATIONS AND CREDITS

- 1 Oregon Part C FY2014 State Performance Plan / Annual Performance Report.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Oregon Department of Education, EI/ECSE program data.
- 5 Ibid.

Pictures for this report were taken at Yoncalla Elementary School (front) and Earl Boyles Elementary School (back). *Photography by Heidi von Tagen.*