



Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education

Supporting Children with Developmental Delays and Disabilities

Special education services for children birth to age 5 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.

Early Intervention (EI) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services are designed to enhance the physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development of children with diagnosed developmental delays and/or disabilities. Service providers help children build skills and strengthen a parent's and family's capacity to nurture their child's development.

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

EI/ECSE services increase school readiness, reduce the impact of disabilities and developmental delays on children, and prevent the need for future interventions, when participating children receive recommended individualized services.

In 2016:¹

- **More than 27 percent** of preschool children who participated in ECSE entered kindergarten without the need for Special Education.²
- **96 percent** of all infants and toddlers who participated in EI services showed some improvement in their development.³
- **64 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-12.⁴
- **93 percent** of families who participated in EI report that the services help them effectively communicate their children's needs.⁵
- **95 percent** of families who participated in EI report that the services help them support their child's development.⁶

For Qualifying Children:



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

Today, nearly 13,000 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

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 far less than the recommended levels of service.

Current data shows:⁷

- **Only 34 percent** of children enrolled in EI received the recommended service levels, which include specialized consultation services with caregivers once per week.
- **Only 14 percent** of children enrolled in ECSE with moderate needs (delays in 3–4 areas of development) received recommended service levels, which include 12 hours per week of preschool, specialized consultation once per week, and parent education once per month.
- **Less than 3 percent** of children enrolled in ECSE with high needs (delays in most or all areas of development) received the recommended service levels, which include 15 hours per week of preschool, specialized consultation once per week, and parent education once per month.

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



\$ Cost Savings \$

EI alone annually saves the state nearly \$4 million by reducing Special Education spending in kindergarten.

In 2014–2015, more than 21 percent of children exiting EI had caught up with their peers and did not require ECSE services.⁸

By investing in EI and ECSE, **Oregon also experiences cost savings for children who will need fewer Special Education services** when they enter kindergarten.⁹

Policy Recommendations

Increasing investments in the EI/ECSE program is critical to ensure young children with developmental delays and disabilities do not get left behind, and get the assistance they need to be ready for school. We recommend the state:

Invest additional dollars to ensure Oregon reaches all children and families who qualify for EI/ECSE services, and serves them with recommended levels of service.

Explore new state and federal funding streams, including Medicaid, to strengthen and expand EI/ECSE services for children and families.

Strengthen state and local efforts to improve the referral and service pipeline that includes developmental screening, referral, assessment, eligibility determination, appropriate placement, and services.

We have work to do. Join us! childinst.org/get-involved



1411 SW Morrison St., Ste. 205, Portland, Oregon 97205 | 503.219.9034
childinst.org | info@childinst.org

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 Most recent data available.
- 2 Oregon Part B FY2016 State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report.
- 3 Oregon Part C FY2016 State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Oregon Department of Education, 2018 EI/ECSE program data.
- 8 Oregon Department of Education, most recent data available.
- 9 Ibid.

Photos were taken at Early Childhood CARES in Eugene, Oregon. Photography by Adam Wickham.