

March 2011



# The Early Intervention Service

The Ministry of Education, Special Education's Early Intervention Service provides specialist support for children who have a developmental or learning delay, a disability or a behaviour or communication difficulty that significantly impacts their ability to participate and learn at home or in an early childhood education setting. The service is available for children from birth until they start school/kura.

This support comes in the form of teams that work together alongside the child, their family/whānau and you as educators, both in the home and within early childhood education settings. We support children to learn alongside their peers in early childhood education centres.

The team has a strong focus on play-based assessment and intervention linking with Te Whāriki – the Early Childhood Curriculum.

## How to apply

Educators and health professionals can refer a child with the parent/s' agreement or the parent/s are welcome to approach Special Education directly. You can phone your local Special Education office (under 'Education' in the blue pages of the phone book) and fill in a referral form.

When you refer a child to the Early Intervention Service it's helpful if you're able to provide information about the child's development and learning and send us a plan of what you're currently doing.

This might be in the form of observations or assessment material that describes anything that has already been tried and proven helpful.

## Who can receive this support

The service is funded to provide extra support for children with significant learning and developmental needs, including behaviour, until they start school. This is around four percent of the children under five years old. The length of time a child receives support depends on their needs. Sometimes health providers will be

the first people to be involved with a child and their family/whānau and might work with Special Education to provide holistic support.

### Who will work with a child

Depending on the child's needs, specialist support might include one or more of the following:

- ▶ speech-language therapists
- ▶ early intervention teachers
- ▶ psychologists
- ▶ advisers on deaf children
- ▶ kaitakawaenga (Māori cultural advisors).

If needed, Early Intervention teams work closely with specialists from the Ministry of Health, such as neuro-developmental therapists, audiologists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

### What happens next

Once a child has been referred to us, Early Intervention staff will make contact with the family/whānau and referrer to gather further information. This initial information will determine what sort of service we will be able to offer and when we can start.

If a more comprehensive assessment is needed, it might require a few sessions as the specialist will gather as much information as possible about how the child participates and learns in their most natural settings eg, at home and in their early childhood education centre. Once again, any information or observations that you're able to provide will be valuable for the assessment process.

We will provide a report to the child's parent/s, and others with the parent/s' permission, following any comprehensive assessment.

In most cases, you, the parent/s and the rest of the team will then meet to develop an Individual Plan using information from the assessment report. The Individual Plan will identify goals and strategies to support the child within the centre programme and Te Whāriki and/or at home.

Usually the plan is reviewed at least twice a year.

### The Incredible Years programme for teachers of younger children

Incredible Years is a programme for early intervention and primary teachers. The programme helps reduce challenging behaviours in children and increases their social and self-control skills. If you have children with challenging behaviour in your early childhood setting, the Incredible Years Teacher programme will:

- ▶ provide you with strategies to help improve the way things are managed in your early childhood setting
- ▶ help you promote pro-social behaviour in children
- ▶ help you reduce a child's aggression and non-cooperation with their peers and teachers.

Teachers who have been through the programme speak highly of the positive long-term changes that have resulted. Contact Special Education to learn more about the Incredible Years programme.

## For more information

If you're unclear about any part of our service or have questions about the help a child receives, please talk with staff at your local Special Education office, or call the Special Education information line on 0800 622 222.

You can get more detailed special education information, including *A Quick Guide to extra support*, under the educator section of our website: [www.minedu.govt.nz](http://www.minedu.govt.nz), or on Te Kete Ipurangi a website that provides educational material for teachers and schools: [www.tki.org.nz](http://www.tki.org.nz).



## New Zealand Government

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