

Early Intervention and Pediatric Outpatient Clinics: Working Together to Meet the Needs of Infants and Toddlers in Our Community

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When children under the age of three are in need of extra support service, the question arises as to what is the best environment or setting to receive these services. Should you pursue outpatient therapy at a pediatric clinic, should you contact The Early Intervention Program, or should you do both? There are good therapists in both systems. A good pediatric therapist, regardless of the setting, will be skilled



in the nuances of typical and atypical development and will give consideration to family values and routines as part of the therapy process. A good therapist will also make suggestions on how to facilitate the child's development based on your values, routine and resources.

However, there are differences within these two systems. This article will attempt to highlight the advantages, as well as the differences, of both systems.

Illinois' Early Intervention Program

The mission of the Illinois Early Intervention Program is to assure that families who have infants and toddlers, birth to three, with diagnosed disabilities, developmental delays or substantial risk of significant delays receive resources and supports that assist them in maximizing their child's development, while respecting the diversity of families and communities. A referral to The Early Intervention Program is initiated by contacting the local Child and Family Connections (CFC) office, which is the Department of Human Services (DHS) local regional intake entity responsible for insuring that all referrals to the Early Intervention Program receive a timely response and are handled in a professional and family-centered manner. The focus of the Early Intervention Program is to encourage the

To find the local CFC office serving your area, please visit:
www.wiu.edu/ProviderConnections/links/CFCList.html

active participation of families in the therapeutic process by embedding intervention strategies into family routines. It is the parents who provide the real early intervention by creatively adapting their child care methods to facilitate the development of their child, while balancing the needs of the rest of their family.

Advantages of Illinois' Early Intervention Program

- **Therapy typically takes place in the home or daycare center** which tends to be not only convenient, but it also facilitates the incorporation of therapeutic recommendations into your daily routine utilizing the toys, furniture, and/or other items naturally occurring in your home.
- **Evaluations include a multidisciplinary team format**, or that of individual service providers of different disciplines. Therapy however is often transdisciplinary, where a team member may work on all goals written on the child's plan of care.
- **Developmental Therapy:** Children who qualify receive developmental therapy (in addition to other identified therapies), which is usually not covered by insurance and therefore often not available in outpatient pediatric Clinics.
- **Service Coordination:** Each child referred to early intervention is assigned a service coordinator who helps to manage their case. This person is a valuable resource and assists parents with navigating through the early intervention process and will coordinate with you and your team of therapists on your behalf. The service coordinator assists the parent with the transition process from early intervention to early childhood (preschool) when the child turns three years old.

Limitations of Illinois' Early Intervention Program

- **Qualifying for services:** A child must have a qualifying medical diagnosis or must have at least a 30% delay in one developmental area (developmental areas are gross motor, fine motor, cognitive, language, social and self-help) to qualify for services.
- **Timing and initiation of therapy services:** It sometimes takes up to a month or longer for therapy services to be initiated, particularly in disciplines where there is a shortage of qualified providers such as occupational therapists, physical therapists and speech-language pathologists.
- **A family fee may be required:** Monthly family fee contribution may be required and is based on the family's income using a sliding scale.

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Pediatric Outpatient Clinics

Most pediatric outpatient clinics bill your medical insurance and therefore operate from medical model of service delivery. In most instances, medical insurance will pay for a therapy evaluation, regardless if it is for physical therapy (PT), occupational therapy (OT), or speech therapy (ST). Coverage for actual therapy services beyond that varies greatly depending on your insurance plan and the specific service being recommended. Because medical insurance is intended to provide coverage for a medical need, the medical need for therapy service must be clearly documented in the evaluation provided by the therapist. For those without therapy coverage, or with very limited therapy coverage, discounts or a reduced fee are usually offered for those paying at the time of service.



Advantages of Pediatric Outpatient Therapy

- **Short Wait Time:** There is usually little to no wait for services to be initiated. Therapy evaluations and treatment can usually be scheduled within one week of receiving the initial call or inquiry.
- **Eligibility:** Eligibility is based on having an identified need that can be met through participation in therapy and not based on a percentage of delay. Clinic therapy is an ideal option for those children with a mild, but treatable, condition which does not qualify for early intervention service.
- **Variety of Equipment:** Children seen for therapy within the clinic generally have access to a greater variety of equipment and supplies not readily available within most homes. Examples include the use of suspended equipment and specialized swings, walkers, or scooters.
- **Teaming Facilitated:** When your child receives therapy in more than one discipline at a clinic, therapists have greater access to each other to discuss immediate concerns and questions. Multidisciplinary teaming between the child's treating therapists occurs frequently because the child's therapists are all on-site together.

Limitations of Pediatric Outpatient Therapy

- **Eligibility:** Services are provided based on therapy insurance coverage for a medical need or for those who have the ability to pay for services. Clinics vary in their payment options, but many offer reduced rates for payment at time of service. Some have sliding fees based on income.

Pediatric outpatient clinics can vary greatly one from another; therefore parents are encouraged to contact the clinic they are considering to find out their philosophy of care and any important policies that may impact you such as payment, cancellation, or scheduling policies. It is also recommended that you visit any clinic you are considering to be sure it is the right fit for you and your child.

Early Intervention and Outpatient Clinics Working Together

Local CFC offices often work together with pediatric outpatient clinics to meet the needs of children in the community. CFCs often utilize the services of pediatric outpatient clinics that employ early intervention credentialed therapists to provide services in the child's natural environment (usually the home). Occasionally, clinic-based services can be approved by The Early Intervention Program when a therapy provider for the child cannot be scheduled in a timely manner. There are also situations where parents wish to pursue additional therapy services for their child beyond what has been approved by The Early Intervention Program. If this is approved by your physician and determined to be in the best interest for your child, early intervention therapists and clinic therapists will team together to coordinate therapeutic interventions.



SOVEREIGN PEDIATRIC THERAPY'S MISSION STATEMENT

To provide children with the highest quality therapy for achieving independence while empowering parents to further enhance their child's function. This is achieved by utilizing a holistic, eclectic, individual-based approach.

* Special thanks to CFC #15 for their review and contribution to this News Brief.

* Information regarding the Illinois' Early Intervention Program was also gathered from the Illinois Department of Human Services Website www.dhs.state.il.us.

Is Sovereign Pediatric the right clinic for you? Please call any of our offices and schedule a visit with one of our staff who will be happy to answer any of your questions.



Want to share this News Brief with your co-workers or friends? Visit our website at www.sovrehab.com and click the Pediatric Clinics tab at the top of our home page. See the informational topics available and click the links for past issues of News Brief.

Do you have questions or concerns regarding your child's development? Sovereign Pediatric Therapy offers free screenings. Call any office to schedule an appointment.



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