

# Overview of Some Early Start/Special Education Terms

This overview is intended to be of help in understanding some terms related to Early Start programs and services. See "Title 17. California Code of Regulations, Division 2. Chapter 2. Early Intervention Services, Subchapter 1, Article 1, Section 52000. "Meanings of Words" for legal definitions.

When a term used in a definition is **highlighted in red** it means that the term is defined elsewhere in this overview.

**Developmental delays** are lags in a child's development in one or more developmental areas (i.e., cognitive, physical, language and speech, social or emotional, self-help skills).

**Developmental disabilities** are disabilities that occur before age 18, that are expected to continue throughout an individual's life, and that result in substantial difficulties in everyday life. Developmental disabilities include mental retardation (cognitive disabilities), autism spectrum disorders (ASD), cerebral palsy (CP), epilepsy and other conditions closely related to mental retardation or requiring similar services. Disabilities that are solely physical are not included.

**Low incidence disabilities** are disabilities that generally affect a very small proportion (less than 1%) of school-aged children in California. These disabilities are blindness or low vision, deafness or hard of hearing and severe physical (orthopedic) impairments.

**Early intervention** - Services designed to meet the developmental needs of a child (from birth through age 5 yrs) and to support the child's family in meeting the developmental needs of the child.

**Early Start** - The name of California's early intervention system, funded and regulated under Part C of the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** and the California Early Intervention Services Act.

**Special education** - Specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parent, to meet the unique needs of a child with disabilities. A child's local school district is responsible for making sure that appropriate services are provided to the child.

**Transition** - The formal process of moving a child from **early intervention** services to **special education** preschool services (if the child qualifies) and/or community-based education programs. Planning for transition begins 3 to 6 months before the child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Early intervention services end, and if the child is eligible, special education preschool services begin when the child turns 3 years old.

**IDEA or Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** is the federal law that mandates a free and appropriate education (FAPE) for children with disabilities. Eligible children can receive **early intervention** services under **Early Start** from birth to age 3. At age 3 eligible children **transition** to **special education** preschool services.

**IFSP or Individualized Family Service Plan** is a written plan for providing **early intervention** services to an eligible child (birth to 3 years old) and his/her family. An IFSP is written by a team that includes the child's parents and the **Regional Center**, school district, county office of education or other education agency depending on which agency is responsible for serving the child.

**IPP or Individual Program Plan** is a written plan for providing services and supports to a person (3 years old and older) with developmental disabilities. An IPP is written by a team from the **Regional Center** that includes the child's parents.

**IEP or Individualized Education Program** is a written statement that describes educational goals for a child (3-22 years old) and specifies the **special education** services and supports that a school district will provide to help the child meet those goals. An IEP is written by a team that includes a child's parents, teachers, service providers, school district and other education agencies.

**Regional of the East Bay (RCEB)** is one of 21 private, nonprofit corporations under contract with the California Department of Developmental Services to coordinate services for individuals with **developmental disabilities**. The Regional Center of the East Bay serves individuals in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties.

To refer children (0-3 years): (510) 383-1355 or 383-1327 (Spanish/English)

To contact Concord office: (925) 798-3001

**California Children Services (CCS)** is a statewide program that treats children with certain physical limitations and chronic health conditions or diseases. The Medical Therapy Program provides **physical and occupational therapy** to eligible children.

Contact number for Contra Costa County: (925) 313-6100

**Occupational therapy** focuses on developing fine motor skills (like writing), self-help skills and skills related to coordination and sensory-motor integration.

**Physical therapy** focuses on bones, joints, muscles and nerves and on developing strength and movement (gross motor skills).

**Speech therapy** focuses on developing communication skills that may include verbal language, sign language or use of communication devices.

**Orientation and mobility services** help students who are blind or have low vision learn how to orient to and move safely through environments at home, at school and in the community.