

Problem Solving in Early Intervention

First Steps in Problem Solving

Contact your service coordinator (if your child is less than three years of age) or preschool early interventionist from your local Early Intervention (EI) Preschool Program (if your child is over three) whenever you have questions or concerns about early intervention. If your service coordinator or preschool early interventionist is unable to assist you,

they will refer you to the appropriate program administrator. A meeting time and place will be coordinated within seven days of your request. Any changes that result from the meeting should be listed on your Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)/Individualized Education Program (IEP), and should include an agreed upon start date.

What if I still have concerns?

Families receiving early intervention have four choices available to them if concerns persist. Any of these choices may be used by families at any time. They are:

1) Filing a Complaint

Parents may file a complaint if they believe the EI program hasn't followed proper steps in the Early Intervention process. The most common reasons for filing this kind of complaint are when there are long delays in evaluating a child or in providing early intervention services.

Complaints are filed with the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), which investigates the complaint within 60 days.

A plan to correct the problem identified will be in place within 30 days after the investigation. For more information you can ask your service coordinator or preschool early interventionist.

2) IFSP/IEP Facilitation

IFSP/IEP Facilitation is an option available to parents and early intervention staff when the parties agree that it would be valuable to have a neutral person—the facilitator—present at an IFSP/IEP meeting to assist in discussing issues or disagreements regarding the IFSP/IEP. Facilitation is a less formal mechanism for resolving disagreements than more formal proceedings such as due process. Facilitation is voluntary. Families can request a form from their service coordinator or preschool early interventionist or they can obtain a form from the Office for Dispute Resolution at <http://odr.pattan.net>.

3) Mediation

Parents may use mediation when there is a disagreement about services on the IFSP/IEP, such as the choice of a service, how often a service is provided, or where a service takes place.

In mediation, everyone agrees to work together with a mediator. This is a person trained to help people work out agreements, without taking sides. Mediators don't make "decisions."

Mediation is offered at no cost, is informal, and happens quickly. You can get more information about mediation by calling the Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR) at 1-800-222-3353 or by visiting their website at <http://odr.pattan.net>.

4) Due Process Hearing

Families may use the due process system anytime there are disagreements about early intervention services, such as the choice of a service, how often a service is provided, or where a service takes place.

Parents can request a due process hearing by asking their service coordinator or early interventionist to arrange for one, by calling the Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR) to request a form at 1-800-222-3353, or by visiting their website at <http://odr.pattan.net>. These are formal hearings at which all sides can present witnesses, including experts.

Problem solving procedures in Early Intervention are similar for families with infants, toddlers, and preschool age children. However there are some differences specific to due process procedures.

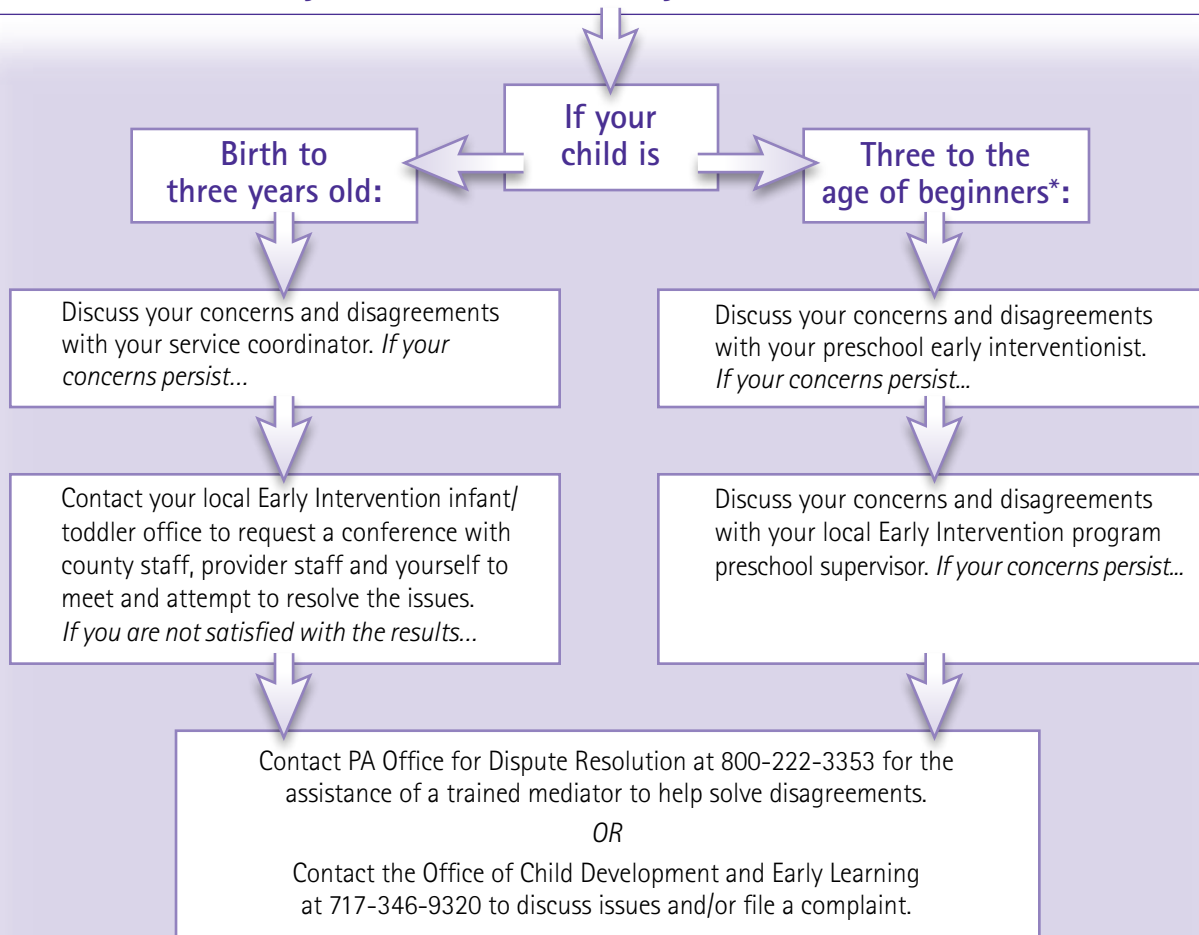
Families with infants and toddlers under three

If you request a hearing, the hearing officer will set a date and send out a notice to the family. If there is a problem with the date, the hearing can be rescheduled. Parents who have requested a due process hearing have a right to an independent multi-disciplinary evaluation (MDE) at no cost to the family if the parents disagree with the results of the evaluation obtained through the local Early Intervention program and it is needed to assist in the resolution of the disagreement. The hearing must be held, and a decision reached, within 30 days.

Families with preschool children age three to five

If you request a hearing, you and your preschool program representative will be required to meet to resolve disagreements locally through dispute resolution. There is a 30-day time frame for the dispute to be resolved locally. Both parties can agree to waive this in writing or they may agree to try mediation. If the preschool program does not hold a local dispute resolution meeting within 15 days, you as the parent may ask the Hearing Officer to move forward with the due process meeting. For more information contact your preschool early interventionist or call the Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR) at 1-800-222-3353.

What do you do if you are not satisfied with the Early Intervention services your child receives?



* Age of entrance into first grade

You may request a due process hearing or mediation conducted by the Office for Dispute Resolution at any time by: (a) contacting your service coordinator at the local Early Intervention infant/toddler county office if your child is under three years of age; (b) putting a request in writing to your Early Intervention program preschool supervisor if your child is three to the age of beginners; (c) calling the Office for Dispute Resolution at 800-222-3353; or (d) visiting their website at <http://odr.pattan.net>.

If you have any questions about which process to follow, call one of the phone numbers listed above.

Questions about problem solving in Early Intervention?

Call the Office of Child Development and Early Learning at 717-346-9320



Serving Children with Developmental Delays