New 2011 Regulations for Early Intervention

Center for Persons With Disabilities

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"Oct 8, 2011 marked 25 years since President Reagan signed into effect Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) allowing services for children under 3. That's a huge milestone!" said CPD's Early Intervention Coordinator Marla Nef. "And now we have new regulations that will go into effect Oct 28th on updates to this law."

It's been a long time - 1999 - since new regulations for the Infant and Toddlers program have been published. On October 21, 2011, the U.S. Department of Education announced the release of the 2011 newly revised regulations for early intervention.

These new regulations focus on measuring and improving outcomes for the approximately 350,000 infants and toddlers with disabilities served by the Part C program in the U.S., with the goal of ensuring that these children are ready for preschool and kindergarten.

"As everyone who works in education understands, one of the most important things we can offer children is a high-quality early learning experience that prepares them for kindergarten," Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stated. "This is true for all children - but it's especially important for infants and toddlers with disabilities to have access to high-quality early intervention services that prepare them to successfully transition to preschool and kindergarten."

"Early intervention works!" So states Kareem Dale, Special Assistant to the President for Disability Policy. He emphasized how critical it is for our nation's future that children with disabilities enter school ready to succeed in "integrated and inclusive classrooms."

Nef agrees. "Children under 3 make progress at a more rapid rate than older children and can make gains that may decrease the amount and intensity of services they will need later in life. Anyone who wonders if their child or a child they know may be delayed developmentally, is encouraged to give us a call. There's help available and people don't have to wait to see if their concern goes away."

The Up to 3 Early Intervention program that Nef coordinates at the CPD has been serving infants and toddlers and their families since 1989. They currently serve 310 children who have identified developmental delays or disabilities and their families. The excellent staff includes service coordinators/family educators, speech/language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, nurses, a Spanish Liaison, a social worker, an autism specialist, and numerous class/preschool teachers.

With such highly qualified staff, this early intervention program makes a great impact on the lives of the children and families that they serve, giving them the boost that they need to move on and continue to progress.

"We've been waiting for the guidance of the regulations for a long time," remarked Sue Olsen, Director of the Up to 3 program. "Overall, there is very little change, but the new regulations do provide clarification and guidance. The Utah Department of Health, Baby Watch Early
Intervention (BWEI) will be addressing the regulations with State policies. The BWEI will hold public hearings to take public comment related to the new policies. We encourage parents and other agencies involved with early intervention to participate in the comment period."