

Wisconsin's Birth to 3 Program

Determining Eligibility for Children with Hearing Loss

The process for determining eligibility for early intervention is the basis for determining eligibility for children with hearing loss. A child is eligible for early intervention services under the Birth to 3 Program if the evaluation conducted by the early intervention team determines that the child is developmentally delayed or that the child has a diagnosed physical or mental condition which will likely result in developmental delay. A determination of high probability that a child's diagnosed condition will result in a developmental delay must be based upon the team's informed clinical opinion supported by a physician's report documenting the condition. High probability implies that a clearly established case has been made for a developmental delay.

Early intervention team members. Any early intervention team performing an evaluation must include a service coordinator and at least one member who has expertise in the assessment of both typical and atypical development and expertise in child development and program planning. Parents should be involved throughout the evaluation process. Members of the early intervention teams must be from two different disciplines in the areas of the child's suspected needs.

Therefore, for a child with a diagnosed hearing loss, one or more members of the early intervention team must be able to interpret audiological reports and understand the developmental impact of hearing loss.

Eligibility for a child with diagnosed hearing loss. The regulations for the Birth to 3 Program do not base eligibility on specific types or degree of hearing loss. There is no required decibel loss nor are children with unilateral hearing loss excluded.

Once a child with a diagnosed hearing loss is referred, the early intervention team needs to determine whether the child's hearing loss is likely to result in a developmental delay. The team needs to consider factors such as the type and degree of the hearing loss, the presence of other conditions, and the potential effects of the hearing loss on the development of the child. The team should make use of the scientific evidence about the long-term developmental consequences of hearing loss in infants and toddlers. A child with a hearing loss does not need to demonstrate a developmental delay to be eligible for the Birth to 3 Program.

If the early intervention team determines that the child's hearing loss is not predicted to result in developmental delay, they must offer to reconsider the child's eligibility within 6 months. The early intervention team should also provide information about, and offer to refer the family to, community services that may benefit the child and family.