

DATE: May 4, 2026

TO: Dear Valued Community Partners and Stakeholders

SUBJECT: California's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C (known as Early Start in California) Determination – Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023

The Department of Developmental Services (Department) would like to share important information regarding California's early intervention program under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C.

Overview

Each year, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) evaluates how well each state meets the requirements of IDEA, Part C.

There are four categories used by the DOE:

1. Meets Requirements
2. Needs Assistance
3. Needs Intervention
4. Needs Substantial Intervention.

For FFY 2023, California received a determination of Needs Intervention.

What this means

- This determination is based on data from July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024, as reviewed through the Results Driven Accountability process.
- The determination is based on 1) compliance indicators, such as timeliness of services and transition-related activities, and 2) performance indicators such as data accuracy, and child outcome data, that is, how well children are making developmental progress.
- The issues identified in the determination process included the completeness and quality of child outcomes data, administrative errors in the reporting of compliance indicators and outstanding findings of noncompliance.
- The Department is taking this determination seriously and is committed to working diligently to address the identified issues.

Next Steps

- Continue to strengthen statewide policies and procedures related to monitoring, data collection and reporting.
- Promote ongoing training and professional development for staff and local programs to ensure understanding of compliance and data quality standards.

- Enhance statewide tools and systems to enhance data accuracy, completeness and timelines.
- Engage with technical assistance providers and stakeholders to identify best practices and implement continuous improvements.
- Monitor progress and adjust strategies as needed to improve overall program performance.

Gratitude and Acknowledgement

We extend our sincere appreciation to parents and caregivers whose advocacy, dedication and partnership are at the heart of every child's success. Your involvement is vital, valued, and supports continuous efforts to improve and grow early intervention services.

Thank you to the regional centers, local educational agencies, early intervention service providers, and our community partners for the continued commitment to California's infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. California is currently serving more children and families than ever before. The growth in the number of families receiving early intervention services would not be possible without your hard work. We look forward to future collaboration on continued improvement to the Early Start system.

Thank you to the State staff in the Early Start program whose hard work behind the scenes is vital to improving systems, addressing data challenges, and supporting the growing infrastructure needed to support this system. Your ongoing efforts are building a stronger, more responsive Early Intervention system.

California remains firmly committed to providing timely, effective and family-centered early intervention services to every eligible child, while striving to improve the infrastructure that supports the work of this very important program.

We value your partnership in this effort, and we look forward to your ongoing support and collaboration as we work to strengthen our services and outcomes.

For additional information please contact Erin Brady, Assistant Deputy Director, Early Childhood and Youth Services Division, (916) 654-2977, or via email at erin.brady@dds.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Signed by

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