

## **1000: HISTORY AND OVERVIEW**

In 1986, the “Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities Program”, which focused on infants and toddlers (birth to age three) as well as their families was added to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to:

- enhance the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities, to minimize their potential for developmental delays and to recognize the significant brain development that occurs during the child’s first three years;
- enhance the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their infants and toddlers with disabilities.

In 1989, Oklahoma established the Oklahoma Early Intervention Act to provide for early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families in accordance with Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Implementation of this legislation required the development of a comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary and interagency system of services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families in Oklahoma. As a result of the Oklahoma Early Intervention Act the SoonerStart Early Intervention Program was created.

### **The SoonerStart Mission Statement**

***SoonerStart provides individualized, family-centered early intervention services to empower families to support and advocate for their children with developmental needs.***

### **SoonerStart 8 Key Principles**

1. Early intervention services for children and families are most effective when agencies and organizations work together to provide services based on family needs.
2. Infants and toddlers learn best through everyday experiences and interactions with familiar people in familiar contexts.
3. All families, with the necessary supports and resources, can enhance their children’s and family’s learning and development.
4. The primary role of the service provider in early intervention is to work with and support family members and caregivers in children’s lives.
5. The early intervention process, from initial contacts through transition, must be dynamic and individualized to reflect the child’s and family’s preferences, learning styles and cultural beliefs.
6. IFSP outcomes must be functional and based on children’s and families’ needs and family identified priorities.
7. The family’s priorities, needs and interests are addressed most appropriately by a primary provider who represents and receives team and community support.
8. Interventions with young children and family members must be based on explicit principles, validated practices, best available research, and relevant laws and regulations.

### **What is SoonerStart?**

SoonerStart is a program designed to help parents, other caregivers and children (birth to 36 months) with developmental delays gain the knowledge and confidence they need to be successful in life. Through visits with SoonerStart Early Intervention professionals, the family receives information, support, guidance and consultation about improving the child and family's quality of life. It is a program that can be provided in the home, childcare center, the park or other natural settings in the community.

- It is a collaboration among a child's parents, caregivers, childcare providers, SoonerStart Early Intervention professionals and others.
- It is a process that helps the adults in a child's life learn to help the child develop.
- It has been proven to make a family's quality of life better and help adults be more confident in their caregiving abilities.
- It is service provided to the entire family-not just the child.

### **Who is Eligible?**

Infants and toddlers birth to 36 months of age who have developmental delays or have a physical or mental condition (such as Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, etc.) which will most likely result in a developmental delay.

### **What is a developmental delay?**

For SoonerStart Early Intervention program eligibility, the term "developmental delay" refers to children of the chronological age group birth to 36 months who:

1. Exhibit a delay in their developmental age compared to their chronological age of fifty percent or score two standard deviations below the mean in one of the following areas or in a subdomain of one of the following areas: cognitive, physical, communication, social or emotional or adaptive development; or
2. Exhibit a delay in their developmental age compared to their chronological age of twenty-five percent or score one and one-half standard deviations below the mean in two or more of the following areas or in a subdomain of two or more of the following areas: cognitive, physical, communication, social or emotional or adaptive development; or
3. Have a diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in delay.