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**Q:** When a child is displaying a slight delay, I often tell parents to wait a while to see what happens. Is it a good idea to wait and see if the child will catch up later?

**A:** Most of the time when a child is exhibiting a slight delay, it is a better idea to go ahead and make the referral for an evaluation. If no delay is found, the family will be reassured, and the professionals conducting the evaluation will offer the family information on their strengths and some suggestions on how to impact their child's healthy development. Remember that if the child does have a delay, the earlier services begin, the better the results.

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**Q:** Sometimes a child may not be displaying a delay, but I am quite concerned about their home environment. (poverty, substance use in the home, physical abuse or neglect, etc) Should I refer children when my concerns are more about environmental risks?

**A:** Absolutely. New Mexico is one of very few states that serve young children who are at "environmental" risk. We know that stressors experienced by the family can directly impact the development of an infant or toddler. So, even if the child is not experiencing a delay, they may be at risk; therefore, a referral would be a good idea.

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**Q:** Does early intervention somehow label a child as "retarded"?

**A:** Children are enrolled in early intervention for a variety of eligibilities. While some children may go on to have mental retardation, many children are served due to speech delay, vision or hearing loss, or other physical impairments and are referred to as having a developmental delay rather than mental retardation. If a child with a developmental delay receives early intervention, it can often reduce the severity of a delay or disability so that special education in the school system is not necessary.

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**Q:** How do I tell a parent that I have concerns about their child and that I am referring for developmental evaluation?

**A:** This is often a concern for referral sources. While the idea of early intervention services being necessary can be intimidating and overwhelming to caregivers, most would appreciate hearing your opinion. Of course, your approach will be important in how the parents react to this referral. Explain to the family that if a delay is noted, the earlier services begin the better the outcomes. Remember you are not making a referral for early intervention; you are just making a referral for a developmental evaluation. Based on the results of that evaluation, services may or may not be recommended, and the family can choose whether to enroll in the FIT Program or not.

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**Q:** What should I discuss with the parent or guardian when I'm ready to make a referral?

- A:**
- The areas of the child's development about which you are concerned
  - The potential benefits of early intervention services and supports
  - A range of early intervention services and supports (incl. developmental instruction, speech, physical and occupational therapy etc.) are available to enhance the family's ability to meet their child's developmental needs
  - That early intervention is provided in the family home, childcare and other community settings in which the child typically spends their day.

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**Q:** What do I do if a parent is concerned but I don't share that concern?

**A:** Parents know their child best, and if they are concerned, they should be taken seriously. Help them with a referral.

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**Q:** Should I refer a child even if I'm not sure it's appropriate?

**A:** The fact that you are considering a referral makes it appropriate. Once referred, our providers will make the determination of whether services are appropriate for the child and family.

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**Q:** Do I have to do a developmental screening before making a referral?

**A:** It's not necessary to do a developmental screening. However, if you have done one, it would be helpful to include the results of the screening when you make the referral.

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**Q:** When I make a referral, does the child automatically receive services?

**A:** Not necessarily. Upon referral, the child will be evaluated to determine the appropriateness of early intervention services. If eligible, then the child will receive EI services to meet the specific outcomes I goal in their plan (IFSP).

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**Q:** When I make a referral, can I specify which agency I want to provide EI services?

**A:** In smaller communities there may be only one service provider agency from which to choose. However, in larger communities with more than one provider, simply make the referral to the provider you wish.

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**Q:** Can I specify which services a child should receive, when I make the referral?

**A:** It is not necessary. Upon evaluation of the child, the evaluation team will make recommendations to be included in the individual family's service plan (IFSP). During the development of the IFSP, the specific services will be decided upon, including their frequency and intensity. With the parents' permission, you may be a part of the IFSP team if you wish.

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**Q:** What services are offered by early intervention and what does this cost the family?

**A:** The list of services offered can be in this section, titled, "FIT Program Services." All FIT services are offered free to the family.

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**Q:** Are services available in my community and how accessible are they for families? For example, will EI providers go to the family's home?

**A:** EI services are offered throughout New Mexico with at least one provider agency in each county. Most often, services are provided either in the family's home or in a location that is most "natural" for the child. So, if the child is accustomed to spending days at a childcare center, the services would likely be provided at the childcare center.

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**Q:** Will EI providers also work with the parents as well as the child

**A:** Early Intervention services are designed to work with both the child and the child's family. Young children's learning occurs within the context of their family, so caregivers are actively involved in all aspects of service delivery. Early Intervention can enhance the ability of parents to meet their child's developmental needs.

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**Q:** Are services available in the family's native language?

**A:** Every attempt is made to hire bilingual staff. Sometimes, however, it may be necessary to use an interpreter. But the family's native language will be used during the provision of early intervention supports and services.

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**Q:** How long will services last?

**A:** Of course, the length of service depends largely on the developmental needs of the child. However, children transition into the preschool special education program in the school year when the child turns three. If not eligible for Special Education at age three, the early intervention provider agency will assist with transition to Head Start or other community preschool if possible.

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**Q:** Can a family change EI providers once services have begun?

**A:** In the Metropolitan areas of New Mexico, there are a number of service providers from which to choose, and families can change providers if they wish. However, in smaller communities, there may be no other choices. If a family is not happy with the services they are receiving, though, there are steps that can be taken to resolve their concerns. These steps are called procedural safeguards and are explained both verbally and in writing to all families upon enrollment in the FIT Program.

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**Q:** Where can I get more information?

**A:** Visit our website [www.FITProgram.org](http://www.FITProgram.org) or call us toll free 1-877-696-1472

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