

Oklahoma State Department of Health – SoonerStart Early Intervention Program

SoonerStart is Oklahoma’s Early Intervention Program for infants and toddlers (birth to 36 months) with developmental delays and/or disabilities. Through structured early intervention visits from SoonerStart professionals, families receive direct services, information, guidance and consultation about improving their child’s early learning outcomes. By statute, SoonerStart is an interagency program with the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) designated as lead agency and the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) designated as the principle provider agency. State and federal funding is directed to the OSDE.

History:

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 Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA), now known as Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA-C) 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; and
- enhance the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their infants and toddlers with disabilities.

In 1989 the Oklahoma Early Intervention Act [Okla. Stat. title 70, Sections 13-121-13-129 (2001), as amended] was passed to provide for early intervention services to infants and toddlers with delays and/or disabilities and their families in accordance with the IDEA-C and the ***SoonerStart Early Intervention Program*** was established.

Eligibility Criteria:

Infants and toddlers ages birth to 36 months who have a developmental delay or who have a disability are eligible. Developmental delay is defined by state statute to mean: children who 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 sub-domain-cognitive, physical, communication, social/emotional or adaptive development; or 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 areas. Children may also be eligible if they have a diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in a delay.

Services:

Through visits with SoonerStart’s highly qualified professionals, the family receives direct services, modeling, information, guidance, and consultation about improving child outcomes related to preparing for school. These family-centered services are tailored to meet the child and family’s individual needs through the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Services are provided by qualified professionals such as: speech/language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, child development specialists, nurses, psychological clinicians, social workers, auditory or vision specialists, and resource coordinators.

Participant Characteristics:

For State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2014, SoonerStart reported a total of 4,034 children being served on an IFSP, with 12,899 children budgeted in the interagency funding plan to receive screening/evaluation, resource coordination and early intervention services. Over 105,000 early intervention visits were made during this fiscal year to provide mandated services.

Outcomes:

SoonerStart is required to develop an Annual Performance Report (APR) in accordance with the detailed procedures prescribed by the Office of Special Education Programs, United States Department of Education (USDE). The eight indicators reported for FY 2014 were:

Indicator 1: Timely Services- 98% of SoonerStart services were provided within 15 working days from the date of parent consent.

Indicator 2: Natural Environment- 95% of all infants and toddlers with an IFSP received early intervention services in their natural environment, such as the home or child care.

Indicator 3: Early Childhood Outcomes

Outcome A: Positive social-emotional skills-78% of children made progress in social-emotional skills by the time they exited the SoonerStart program.

Outcome B: Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills- 83% of children made progress in acquisition and use of knowledge and skills upon exit.

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Outcome C: Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs-84% of children made progress in use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs by the time they exited the SoonerStart program.

Indicator 4: Family Outcomes- 96% of families stated they knew their rights, 91% of families reported early intervention services helped them effectively communicate their children's needs and 95% of families reported services helped their children develop and learn.

Indicator 5&6: Child Find (Birth to Three)- 4,034 infants and toddlers, birth to three (cumulative), were served with an IFSP- 2.56% of Oklahoma's population of children birth to three.

Indicator 7: 45-day timeline- 93% of eligible infants and toddlers were evaluated and provided an IFSP within 45 days of referral.

Indicator 8: Transition-98% of children exiting the early intervention program at age 3 received transition steps and services on their IFSP.

Current Funding (SFY16):

State- \$14,611,837

Federal IDEA-B/C- \$5,703,256

Projected Medicaid- \$2,391,263

Total- \$22,706,356