



Body, Mind & Spirit

An Introduction to Bay Area Rehabilitation Center's ECI Program

Bay Area Rehabilitation Center hosts an Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program that is home-based and serves children from birth to their third birthday. Texas ECI qualifies children in four ways: developmental delay, medical diagnosis, hearing/vision impairments, or atypical development. Anyone can refer any child, and services are completely voluntary. When we receive a referral for a child in our service area, we contact the family to ask if they are interested in hearing more about ECI and receiving an evaluation at no cost to them.

A State of Texas licensed therapist and early intervention specialist travel to the home and

conduct a thorough and structured evaluation of the child that covers all areas of development. If the child qualifies for entry into the program by way of medical diagnosis, we will focus our assessment on the parent concerns. Once the evaluation is completed, we immediately let the parent or caregiver know if the child qualifies for services.

Texas has a list of medical diagnoses that automatically qualify a child for ECI services. That list can be found at <https://diagsearch.hhsc.state.tx.us>. If a child has hearing loss, hearing aids, or is visually impaired, they can also automatically qualify for ECI services. To assist in the hearing and/or vision review, the evaluation team invites

a teacher of the auditory or visually impaired to participate in the initial evaluation to determine service needs. If a child has neither a qualifying medical diagnosis nor a hearing or visual impairment, but has atypical behaviors or development, the therapist can often qualify the child for ECI services. Many of the children that qualify this way are showing signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder, but have not yet been diagnosed. Newborns that are having difficulty taking a bottle often also qualify this way.

While ECI is not a free service, it is provided at a very low cost and all insurance types are accepted. Texas has established a sliding scale for families that takes into account family size, as well as family expenses such as day care, medical bills, and insurance deductibles to name a few. The sliding scale sets the maximum amount a family can be charged each month. Many families pay less than that amount because their insurance covers some or all of the services. Children with Texas Medicaid are fully covered for all services.

Bay Area Rehabilitation Center ECI offers home-based physical, occupational, and speech therapies, as well as nutrition services, visual and auditory impairment services, developmental services, and case management. Every family in the ECI program has an assigned case manager who walks the family through each step of the process. When the child is getting ready to age out of ECI, the case manager also helps the family transition to the next step for that child, be it to special education, private therapy, or perhaps no further intervention is needed.

ECI services are required to be routine-based and focused on helping the child adapt to their natural environment. This means we see children where they naturally spend their day: day care, a grandparent's house, or at their home. We are also known for meeting families out in the community, such as at a park or even up at the playground at Bay Area Rehabilitation Center. Whatever location works best for the child is where we meet.

ECI services are not appropriate for every family. There is a time and participation commitment that, for many reasons, parents are unable to manage. Some families prefer for their child to be seen in a clinic setting, or they prefer a home health model where parental involvement is not required. Early intervention is most effective when parents or caregivers are actively involved in the visits in order to understand how to use the



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same techniques when the providers are not there.

Bay Area Rehabilitation Center ECI providers are able to work with families' busy schedules, seeing families outside of the typical clinic hours. It is not uncommon for a therapist to be at breakfast or dinner with a family for feeding therapy for the child. We offer early morning and late afternoon/early evening appointments to make early intervention possible for all who need it.

To make a referral, call (281) 838-4477 and let our friendly staff know that you want to refer a child to ECI. For more information about Bay Area Rehabilitation Center's ECI, and other program(s), please visit our website at www.bayarearehab.org.

Chasey Reed-Boston has served as Program Director for Bay Area Rehabilitation's ECI program for the past six years. She earned her Bachelor and Master degrees from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia and is currently completing her doctoral dissertation focusing on productivity requirements in Texas healthcare settings and their impact on service quality. Chasey is married with two adult children, a host of "adopted" young adults, and an aging and opinionated German Shepherd named Oscar. ♦

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