

THE MAGIC OF

Integrated Early Intervention:

The Amazing Years of Birth to 3

by LANCE QUEER - Founder & President



No two children develop at the same rate, but experts do agree there are “normal” signs of development. Because babies do not come with an owner’s manual, it may sometimes be difficult to determine what is typical in child development. If you have concerns regarding your child's development (e.g., rolling, sitting, crawling, walking, strengthening, muscle tone, thinking skills, cause and affect, attention to tasks, hyper-sensitivities, sensory issues, reaching, grasping, interactions with others, dressing, toileting, feeding, swallowing, talking, listening, understanding, hearing, and seeing), take heed ... free help is available. Early intervention is a Federal Entitlement Program available to any child, under the age of three, that is at least 25% delayed in any one or more of the five major areas of development.

Throughout the past 50 years, there has been much research and statistical analysis conducted that proves that early intervention works and that the first three years are a critical time for learning. Children are able to learn at amazing rates as they soak up everything around them in their environment. For children with disabilities or delays, these early years are critical for a number of reasons. First, the earlier a child is identified as having a developmental delay or disability, the greater the likelihood that he or she will benefit from intervention strategies. Second, the family benefits from the support given to them through the intervention process. Third, schools and communities benefit from a decrease in costs because more children come to school ready to learn.

One recent 2 ½-year-long study, entitled “The Science of Early Childhood Development,” was conducted by a group of 17 leading professionals with backgrounds in neuroscience, psychology, child development, economics, education, pediatrics, psychiatry, and public policy. In this study, the researchers reviewed what was known about the nature of early child development and the influence of early experiences on children’s health and well-being. The following are some of the key findings from the study:

- Your relationship with your child is the foundation of his or her healthy development.



- Your child's development depends on both the traits he or she was born with (nature), and what he or she experiences (nurture).
- All areas of development (e.g., social, emotional, intellectual, language, motor) are linked. Each depends on, and influences, the others. What children experience, including how their parents respond to them, shapes their development as they adapt to the world.

All the findings over the years can be generally summarized in three words: **STIMULATE, STIMULATE AGAIN, STIMULATE UNTIL.**

Professionals from many different fields support the healthy development of young children. The model of early intervention recognizes that parents are the experts on their child, they know their child the best, and, because they are the child's first and most important teacher, they are the most comfortable with their child. For these reasons, early intervention offers a unique opportunity to facilitate parent participation and partnership in the intervention process. It is very much a team approach, where all involved come together in a unified man-

ner. Early interventionists share their extensive knowledge and experience with the family and/or caregivers by provide them with techniques and ideas to implement. The families then incorporate these practices into their day-to-day activities with the child. This training method has the greatest effect on the child.

Early interventionists must become aware of each family's priorities, concerns, and resources in order to establish goals and design appropriate interventions for the child. A family-centered approach to providing services to children and families depends upon a trusting and respectful relationship between early interventionists and the family.

Integrated Early Intervention, with more than 400 years of combined experience in the field, is one of many providers of early intervention services in Western Pennsylvania. It offers support to families of children through highly trained professional therapists and pediatric specialists. If you have any questions about your child's development from birth to three years, please call Integrated Care Corporation at 1-888-645-LOVE (toll free). ▲

