

**Developmental Educational Assistance Program  
Montana Milestones:  
Infant and Toddler Program**

# Parent Handbook

**A Guide to Montana Milestones Services for You and Your Child**



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# Credits

First Steps: A Parent Information Handbook  
Infant and Toddler Programs and Preschool Special Education  
A publication of Parents, Let's Unite For Kids 2007

Guide to Success:  
Navigating Montana's Developmental Disabilities Program  
A Guide To Understanding the Developmental Disability Services System  
A publication of Parents, Let's Unite For Kids 2010

The North Carolina Montana Milestones  
Parent Handbook  
A Guide to Montana Milestones Services for You and Your Child  
North Carolina Public Health 2007

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**Welcome to  
DEAP's Montana  
Milestones!**

# DEAP's Montana Milestones

Every family wants their child to grow and learn to their fullest potential. Having concerns about your child's development may be a new experience for you as a family and this can seem overwhelming. There will be new people to meet, new words and terms to understand, but you are not alone. It's important to remember that there are supports in place to help this be a positive experience for your child and family.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal education law that helps to reinforce the importance of early development and learning in young children. Part C of IDEA ensures that early intervention services and supports are available for infants and toddlers, birth to age three, with developmental delays or diagnosed conditions which have a high probability of causing delays and their families. In Montana, the Part C system of IDEA is called Montana Milestones, you may also hear or see it referred to as Part C or Early Intervention Services. Montana Milestones is a system of coordinated supports for families to help you meet the developmental needs of your child. The lead agency for Montana Milestones is The Developmental Disabilities Program in the Montana Department of Health and Human Services. Seven Child Family Service Providers across Montana that provide access to Montana Milestones services. This network of Child and Family Service Providers serve all counties of Montana. DEAP provides Infant and Toddler Program services in the following ten (10) Eastern Montana counties: Carter, Custer, Dawson, Fallon, Garfield, Powder River, Prairie, Rosebud, Treasure and Wibaux.

## What is the Purpose of the Parent Handbook?

The purpose of this handbook is to help you understand the role and philosophy of DEAP's Montana Milestones and the key steps you may take while in the program. This handbook will give you general information about your child and family rights under Montana Milestones.

Other families whose children have enrolled in Montana Milestones, and professionals who work with families, have developed this handbook to be a guide and resource for you. It's OK, and very important, that you feel free to ask questions along the way whenever there is something you don't understand.

The phrase "children with special needs" is used in this handbook to refer to children who have developmental delays or who have an established condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay. The words parents and families are used to mean anyone who is in charge of the care and well-being of a child. These can be natural or adoptive parents, guardians, single parents, grandparents, surrogate parents, foster parents, or other family members.

## Why is Early Intervention Important?

The first three years of life lay an important foundation for the health and development of all children. Starting intervention services early improves a child's ability to develop and learn. It may also prevent or decrease the need for special help later. It is the goal

of early intervention in Montana to open a window of opportunity for families to help their children with special needs develop to their full potential.

## **What are the Goals of Early Intervention?**

Early Intervention services are intended to support parents in their efforts to enhance the development of young children with special needs. Each family is different, just as no two children are the same. Therefore, your goals for participating in Early Intervention will be determined by your needs, interests, and personal circumstances. DEAP will be your partner in working toward goals you set for your child and family.

Each state is required by IDEA to have a system for collecting and reporting child and family outcomes to help communities determine the effectiveness of early intervention programs for the children and families served. In Montana, Family Support Specialists collect information about child and family outcomes through evaluation and assessment, observation, child caregiver reports, and parent input. Information about your child and family outcomes is kept confidential. It is not associated with or linked to any individual child or family when included in reports. It is given as summary data for monitoring.

The following outcomes are measured as part of monitoring the effectiveness of the Montana Milestones program.

***Children enrolled in Montana Milestones demonstrate improved:***

- Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships);
- acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication); and
- use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

***Families report that early intervention services have helped their families to:***

- know their rights;
- effectively communicate their children's needs; and
- help their children develop and learn.



## **What are the principles of Montana Milestones?**

Families know and understand the needs of their child better than anyone else. DEAP



values and considers the role of the family as a key to the success of early intervention. For this reason, the family needs to be a true partner with members of the early intervention team. Children are best supported within the community. Intervention activities that fit into your daily routine are more likely to give you the results you want for your child and family.

- *A child should be viewed as a child first, rather than a “special needs” child.*
- *Just as children and families grow and develop, supports and services should also change to meet their needs and choices.*
- *Early intervention is most beneficial when families are supported in meeting their child’s needs within the context of typical family activities and routines.*
- *Children with special needs are best served in settings that are used by all children.*
- *Family beliefs and values are important and are to be honored, as is the cultural (religious, ethnic, and racial) background of the family.*
- *Teamwork among families and service providers is important for planning early intervention supports and services.*

## **What have other families found to be helpful?**

Families can learn a lot from other families and professionals who have experience with the early intervention system. You may want to keep in mind the following helpful hints:

- Remember that you are your child’s first and best teacher and advocate, with the passion, dreams, and commitment to guide important decisions about your child and the supports and services he or she may need.
- Share what makes you proud of your child.
- Know what your child likes and dislikes.
- Have a clear idea of your goals for your child and family.
- Make a notebook of your child’s records and appointments. Keep track of questions or concerns you may have. Write down ideas and progress.

## **What other families have said about Early Intervention...**

*“They are always there for me.”  
“Any question I have is always answered promptly. The services have been a huge, huge help.”*

# What other resources may be useful to my family?

**First Steps: A Parent Information Handbook Infant and Toddler Programs and Preschool Special Education** The handbook describes the publicly supported services in Montana that are available for children, from birth through age six, who are experiencing developmental delays, disabling conditions, or who are “at risk” for developing them. First Steps can help you make the best use of the services for your child. This handbook is available at <http://www.pluk.org/pub.htm>.

## **Guide to Success: Navigating Montana’s Developmental Disabilities Program**

The Success Guide was written for and by parents and self-advocates to help you understand what DDP’s services are and how these services can work for you. This handbook is a publication of Parents, Lets Unite For Kids, Montana’s Parent Center, at <http://www.pluk.org>.

**Developmental Disabilities Program (DDP)**, is a program within the larger DPHHS agency. DDP administers, provides funding, processes payments, and monitors all the different services that are offered through DDP.

<http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/dsd/ddp/index.shtml>

## **Parents Let’s Unite for Kids (PLUK)**

PLUK is a network of over 30,000 families of children with special needs in Montana dedicated to providing training, information, and support at no cost to individuals of any age, their family members, and the dedicated educators, professionals, and others that serve them.

<http://www.pluk.org>



# Montana Milestones Step-by-Step

This is an overview of the steps your family may take while in the Montana Milestones

## First Steps: Getting Started



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# **First Steps: Getting Started in DEAP's Montana Milestones!**

## Getting Started in Montana Milestones

### What happens after my child referred to the Montana Milestones?

When your child is referred to Montana Milestones, DEAP's Early Intervention Director will start by giving you information about the program, explaining your child's and family's rights, including the right to an Individualized Family Service Plan within forty-five (45) calendar days from referral to the Montana Milestones.

The Early Intervention Director will talk with you about your concerns and priorities for your child. In addition, she or he will ask you about the resources and supports that you currently have available to your family.

During initial contacts with the Early Intervention Director and other Montana Milestones staff, you will be asked about your child and his or her development, daily routines, and medical history. You may also be asked for written consent for Montana Milestones to request pertinent information about your child from her

### What is a Family Support Specialist?

Your Family Support Specialist is your main contact in DEAP's Infant-Toddler Program.

Your Family Support Specialist can help you:

- Understand your rights under the Montana Infant-Toddler Program.
- Help you to identify ways that you can encourage your child's development during your family's daily activities.
- Decide about your child's needs, your choices for supports and services, and the ways of getting those services.
- Find supports and services as outlined in your family's Individualized Family Service Plan and assure the provision and quality of those services.
- Find answers to questions you have about your child.
- Talk with other specialists involved with your child and family.
- Decide what supports and information you want, how much you want, and how you want to receive them.
- Find resources which may be helpful for your child and family.
- Plan for changes in services by talking about options, visiting new programs, and making plans to prepare everyone for the change. This included planning for services when your child reaches age three.
- Help settle any disagreements you may have regarding services for your child.

doctor and others involved in her life.

## **How will I know if my child could benefit from enrollment in Montana Milestones?**

In order to determine whether your child is eligible for, and would benefit from, Montana Milestones supports and services, evaluations and assessments need to be completed. The information gathered will show us your child's current strengths as well as areas that may present challenges for your child and family. In addition to helping to determine eligibility, the initial evaluation and assessment process helps to gather important information needed to plan and implement appropriate supports and services for your child and family.

If you are not sure if you have concerns about your child's development at the time of referral, DEAP's Early Intervention Director will talk with you about your child's development and about your child's successes or challenges during daily routines. This discussion can help guide your decision about proceeding with an initial evaluation to determine eligibility.

## **What will happen during my child's initial evaluation?**

The initial Montana Milestones evaluation is individualized for each child and family. The evaluation is completed by a developmental specialist according to your child's needs. The number and types of specialists involved in the evaluation depend on your child's unique characteristics, needs, and your family's

concerns. However, at least two people from different specialty areas must be a part of the evaluation team. The team will also review, with your consent, available information about your child such as medical records or previous evaluations.

Your child's development will be assessed in several ways, including observation, parent interview, and evaluations from qualified developmental professionals. The Early Intervention Director will schedule the initial evaluation and will answer any questions you may have. Evaluation can be done in a variety of places and ways. It will most likely involve talking with you about your child, learning about your child by watching him or her play, and working with your child. Because you know your child best, you will play an important role in the evaluation process. The Early Intervention Director is responsible for making sure that your preferences and concerns guide the evaluation process.

It is important to tell the Early Intervention Director or your Family Support Specialist about your child. For example, tell the staff if your child is shy around new people, has a favorite activity, or is not feeling well. The staff will use this information to make your child feel more comfortable or reschedule for another time. During the evaluation, the staff will only see your child for a short period of time. Your child may not do something that he or she usually does. If

Evaluations are not tests that a child either passes or fails. They are a way of letting you know what your child does well and where he or she may need some help. Information from evaluations can help you choose the best types of supports and services for your child and family.

**The initial Infant-Toddler Program Evaluation and Assessment will consider:**

- Your family's concerns, resources, priorities, and routines.
- Your family's perceptions of your child's abilities and needs related to participation in everyday routines and activities.
- Your child's medical history and current health status.
- Your child's cognitive development (thinking and learning skills).
- Your child's physical development (moving, seeing, and hearing abilities).
- Your child's communication development (understanding and using sounds, gestures, and words).
- Your child's social-emotional development (responding to and developing relationships with other people).
- Your child's adaptive development (learning to take care of oneself, such as feeding and dressing).

this happens, tell the staff what your child does with you or others that is different

from what he or she did during the evaluation.

## **How will I know if my child is eligible?**

After the evaluations are complete and any existing and relevant records are reviewed, an eligibility determination meeting, referred to as a Review Panel is held. You can participate in the review panel meeting or you will be notified of the results of the review panel through a Parental Prior Notice letter that will either be mailed to you or hand delivered to you; you will be asked to sign that letter acknowledging your receipt of it. If your child is not eligible, or if you choose not to enroll in Montana Milestones, other resources may be offered and discussed during this time. Sometimes eligibility determination may need to be delayed if the information provided or obtained is not adequate for determining eligibility, in which case further information will be collected.







## Who is eligible to receive services from the Infant-Toddler Program?

Your child and family may receive Infant-Toddler Program supports and services if your child is younger than age 3 and your child meets criteria for one of the two eligibility categories described below.

### Category I. Developmental Delay

The Infant-Toddler Program considers a child to have a developmental delay if he or she demonstrates a 25% delay in two or more areas or a 50% delay in at least one area behind other children of the same age in one or more of the following areas:

- *Cognitive Development- thinking and learning skills*
- *Physical Development- moving, seeing, hearing and health*
- *Communication Development- understanding and using sounds, gestures, and words*
- *Social-Emotional Development- responding to and developing relationships with people*
- *Adaptive Development- taking care of oneself when doing things like feeding or dressing*

The stages that infants and toddlers go through are made up of different skills, such as walking and talking. These skills, or developmental milestones, usually happen by certain ages. Most children develop skills in a predictable order. They crawl before they walk, and they point before they use words to tell you what they want. However, it is important to remember that every child develops in his or her own style and at his or her own pace.

### Category II. Established Conditions

A child is considered to have an established condition if the child has a diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay. Examples include certain genetic disorders, neurological disorders, severe prematurity, vision impairment, hearing loss or autism.

**Note:** The above descriptions are summaries and not complete definitions of the eligibility categories. You can get more information by asking DEAP's Early Intervention Director or by contacting Montana's Child and Family Specialist: Wendy Studt at (406)444-5647 or [wstudt@mt.gov](mailto:wstudt@mt.gov)

## What other families have said about DEAP's Early Intervention Services....

*Question: What do you like about DEAP Services?*

*Answer: "The People!"*

*Answer: "The help coordinating all service. It can get very overwhelming. It's so nice to be able to just call our family support specialist & not 10 different people. She always knows or finds out if she doesn't."*

*Answer: "Personal attention to myself & my family. Knowledge base of specialists."*



*"DEAP provides good services and helps you understand your child better by helping. I enjoy talking with my family support specialist when I am feeling stressed."*

*"The resource has been helpful over the years as our needs have changed DEAP adapts to those changes as well."*

*"DEAP is always so helpful and dedicated to our family. DEAP is always so supportive, compassionate, and truly cares about our hopes and concerns."*

*"DEAP has helped our family so much! Our family support specialist and aides are so attentive, compassionate & respectful of our needs as a family & our child's needs individually. We are so thankful for all of them!"*

**Next Steps:  
DEAP'S Infant-  
Toddler Program  
Services and  
Supports**

Policy requires that the IFSP be developed and signed within 45 days of your child being referred to the Infant-Toddler Program. This ensures that your child and family receive timely early intervention support. A copy of the IFSP must be given to you after it is completed and signed and services must begin within 30 days of the IFSP being signed unless otherwise documented.

Enrollment in the Infant-Toddler Program is voluntary. Parents may choose to proceed at their own pace, stop eligibility determination, accept some services while refusing others, or withdraw from the program at any time.

## Next Steps:

### Montana Milestones Services and Supports

Starting a new program or service can be confusing at first, until you understand how it works and what you should expect. Once you know that your child is eligible for early intervention services and you have decided to participate in Montana Milestones, the next step is to develop a plan with your Family Support Specialist to address your child's and family's needs. This planning process will result in a written document called an Individualized Family Service Plan, or IFSP.

### What is an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)?

The IFSP is your family's written plan for Montana Milestones. It describes how you and your early intervention team will work together to address the needs identified for your child and family. The IFSP is based on information from your child's evaluation and from the concerns, resources, and priorities that you identified. Like a road map or travel itinerary, the IFSP shows where you are going (child and family outcomes or goals), how and when you might get there (services and projected

time lines), and who will be going with you for support (service providers, family, friends and/or other community supports). The initial IFSP meeting can take place immediately following eligibility determination, or at another time that is convenient for you and your IFSP team.

### Who will be involved in developing our family's IFSP?

You and your IFSP team, you and at least two other professionals who are familiar with your child, will work together to develop your plan and to agree on any services and supports that will best meet the needs of your child and fit in with your family's routines. The people who could be involved are:

- You (one or both parents, guardians, foster or surrogate parents)
- Your FSS
- Members of your evaluation team
- As appropriate, the providers of other early intervention services for you and your child
- Other family members if you choose
- An advocate or person outside of the family if you choose

## **What does my signature on the IFSP mean?**

You and your IFSP team will sign the plan. Your signature on the IFSP shows your participation, understanding, and consent to implement the plan. Should you disagree with all or part of the IFSP, you have the right to share your concerns and ask for changes. You may accept or decline any or all services suggested to you. You may also stop a service at any time.

## **What can my family do to prepare for the IFSP meeting?**

The IFSP meeting is your meeting, and it will focus on the needs of your child and family. Your Family Support Specialist will help you understand the process and will guide the IFSP team in developing the plan.

- You will be given written notice before the IFSP meeting is held. If you need more time to plan for the meeting, or if the meeting time does not suit your schedule, you may ask for the meeting to be held at another time.
- If you wish for anyone else to attend, ask that person to be there too, and let your FSS know.
- You can ask for and get a copy of your child's evaluation reports and any other written information before the meeting. If you would like to see a blank IFSP form before the meeting, ask your Family Support Specialist.
- You know your child best. Think about your child and your family's daily routines. What is working well for your

child and family? In what areas of development and in what daily routines are there challenges for your child? What people, places, or things motivate your child? Make a list of these things in preparation for the meeting.

## **What happens after the IFSP is written?**

Once the IFSP is developed, your Family Support Specialist will help you identify the community agencies that can provide the supports and services that have been identified for your child and family. The required Montana Milestones services outlined on the IFSP should begin within the projected time as determined by the IFSP (no later 30 days of signing the initial IFSP or IFSP review). Your Family Support Specialist will continue to work with you and the community providers to ensure that your child's needs are being met and that you are satisfied with all services being received.

## **What if I want to make changes to the IFSP?**

The IFSP is a document that is designed to change as the needs of your child and family change. Every six months the IFSP team, which includes your family, must review the plan and make any needed updates or changes. Additionally, you or any member of the IFSP team can, at any time, request the team to meet to consider changes to the IFSP by notifying your Family Support Specialist.

## **What services are available to my child and family?**

In Montana, appropriate early intervention services are determined through the IFSP

process. The IFSP team will decide the specific early intervention supports and services necessary to meet the unique needs of your child and family as identified through goals or outcomes on the IFSP. Federal regulations define early intervention services as services that are designed to meet the developmental needs of each eligible child and the needs of the family related to enhancing their child's development.

### **Required Services**

A variety of services and supports are available through the Montana Milestones. Some are required services. This means that the Montana Milestones must make them available if they are determined appropriate through the IFSP process and included on your IFSP. You have the right to choose your own service provider for these services.

### **Other Services**

Other services may be listed on your IFSP, but are not required by law to be provided by the Montana Milestones. Your Early

Intervention Service Coordinator may help you locate and access these services. Examples of other services that are sometimes suggested are:

- **Child care**
- **Genetic counseling**
- **Well-Child care**
- **WIC Program (Women, Infants, and Children)**

### **How will services be paid for?**

The following Montana Milestones services must be provided at no cost to your family:

- child identification and screening;
- developmental evaluations and assessments;
- service coordination;
- activities related to developing and reviewing the IFSP; and
- activities related to making sure that your rights are protected and respected.

If a child is eligible for the Montana Milestones, the child receives services in the program without cost to the family. However, if the child is eligible private health insurance, Medicaid, HMK, HMK-Plus

### ***Infant-Toddler Program required services include:***

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| -Assistive Technology Services & Devices  | -Nutrition Services               |
| -Audiology Services                       | - Occupational Therapy            |
| -Cued Language and Sign Language Services | -Physical Therapy                 |
| -Early Identification and Screening       | -Psychological Services           |
| - Evaluations and Assessments             | -Family Training, Counseling, and |
| - Service Coordination                    | -Social Work Services             |
| Home Visits                               | -Special Instruction              |
| -Health Services                          | -Speech-Language Therapy          |
| -Medical Services (only for Diagnosis and | -Transportation and Related Costs |
| Evaluation)                               | (necessary to receive early       |
| -Nursing Services                         | intervention services)            |
|   | -Vision Services                  |

funds from these programs or insurance benefits may be used first before Part C dollars pay for services in Montana Milestones, written family permission is always obtained prior to accessing any types of insurance. Part C is the payor of last resort and attempts to maximize funding by utilizing the lowest cost service/provider.

If you have questions, or disagree with the cost of any service, talk to your FSS or utilize DEAP's grievance procedure.

### **What if our family wants services that are not listed on the IFSP?**

The required early intervention services that are listed on your family's IFSP are those services agreed upon by the team and determined as needed to assist your child and family in achieving established IFSP outcomes or goals. The role of these early intervention services and service providers is to coach and support your family to enhance the development of your child.

There may be times when you would like additional services for your child and family that do not fit under the definition of early intervention services or are not agreed upon as needed by the IFSP team or are not evidence based. In this case, the Montana Milestones would not have any responsibility for providing or funding these services. These additional services can be listed in the "Medical and Other Services" section of the IFSP. It is valuable to list all the services being received by your child so the IFSP can serve as a comprehensive picture of your child's services.

You have the right to disagree with IFSP team decisions regarding these and all

matters. Please talk with your FSS and refer to your copy of the Parent's Rights Under IDEA Infant and Toddler Program (Part C) form for additional information about your rights to written prior notice, including mediation, and administrative due process hearings.

### **How and where are early intervention services provided?**

There are many ways to support your child's development. The Family Support Specialist will coach your family and, if appropriate, other people such as child care staff on ways to help your child learn and develop during his or her daily activities and routines. This way your child has the benefit of getting the help he or she needs every day rather than just when the "specialist" is working with your child. The therapists, teachers, or other early intervention specialists may work directly with your child to help him or her learn and practice new skills.

Services can be provided in different places. Children can be at home with their families or with other care providers when they receive services. Places in your community where your child can receive services might be a child care program, a playgroup, a park, or the library. All of these places are called natural environments. IDEA defines natural environments as "settings that are natural or normal for the child's age peers who have no disabilities."

## Why are natural environments important?

When early intervention services are embedded into your family's routines and activities, your child will have more opportunities throughout the day to practice and learn new skills and will be more likely to achieve desired outcomes. Federal law requires that to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the child, early intervention services must be provided in natural environments including the home and community settings in which children without disabilities participate. Therefore, services are to be provided in natural environments unless the IFSP team determines that your child's needs cannot be met there. In choosing services, it is important to think about those natural environments where your child learns best. When deciding about the location of services, you and your IFSP team should consider all of the natural environments in your community.





The concept of “natural environments” is not just about a location or place. When and how early interventions services are provided is also important. Receiving early intervention in natural environments for your child means...

- **Early intervention services are provided in a setting where your child and family normally spend your time, or would spend your time if you child did not have a disability or developmental delay.**
- **Using community resources as opportunities for your child’s learning and activities such as local parks, recreation programs, public libraries, bookmobiles, stores, friends or relatives homes, child care programs, churches and other places of worship, restaurants, playgrounds, nature trails, museums, or community events.**
- **Focusing on IFSP outcomes that are functional-related to your child’s participation in your family’s everyday routines and activities.**
- **Identifying ways to weave early intervention strategies and service into the context of your family’s routines and activities.**
- **Using familiar materials naturally available in your home and community to implement intervention strategies.**
- **Family Support Specialists assist you in providing your child with opportunities to practice skills throughout his or her daily life.**
- **Increasing the opportunity for your child to learn from other children close to his or her age.**

## **What other families have said about Early Intervention...**

*“DEAP provides support for families with children who have disabilities and allows help with services so parents don’t have to deal with everything on their own.”*

**Future Steps:  
Leaving DEAP's  
Montana  
Milestones**

# Future Steps:

## Leaving Montana Milestones

### How long will my child and family participate in Montana Milestones?

Montana Milestones serves eligible children from birth until their third birthday. Some children meet or achieve all of the goals on their Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and graduate from Montana Milestones before age three. Transition plans are required for children moving from early intervention beyond Montana Milestones at age three. For children who graduate and leave the Montana Milestones before age three, the IFSP team will help you determine your future steps through a transition planning process.

Transitions are natural events for all of us. Remember your first day of school or moving to a new home? What about the day you brought your new baby home? Successful transitions require planning ahead and working with others who can help.

### What is transition planning?

Your family may be content with the supports and services you and your child receive through the Montana Milestones. As your child approaches age three, it may be hard to think about a change or transition. Transition planning is an ongoing process and happens in many different ways, such as through informal discussion and scheduled meetings. Your Family Support Specialist will guide you through the transition planning process and will facilitate the development of a written

Transition Plan to be included in your family's IFSP.

#### Transition Planning activities include:

- Discussion and information gathering about options for future placement, services, and supports in your community;
- Help in preparing you and your child for changes in services; and
- Providing information about your child (such as evaluation and assessment reports, and IFSPs), with your written consent, to other service providers.

### Planning ahead...

The following questions can guide you during transition planning and in thinking about your child's unique strengths and needs.

#### **Future supports and services:**

- What goals do I continue to have for my child as he approaches age three?
- Does my child and family need community supports and services to help reach our goals?
- What community supports are services will best help our family reach these goals?
- What supports are services are available in my community for

- families with children ages three and four?

**Skills needed by the child:**

- Are there skills my child needs to learn to be successful, such as self-care needs, following directions, playing with others?
- Who will teach these skills to my child?
- What are the routines in which my child will naturally practice these skills?

**Changes in the setting/environment:**

- If my child will be transitioning to a new environment, are there changes that can be made in my child’s current environment that will reflect the new environment?
- Are there toys, books, equipment, or other objects to adapt or obtain which will be needed or used in the new environment, such as feeding utensils or special seating?

**Identifying and accessing community resources/family activities:**

- Are there community resources or activities that would support learning in the next environment, such as playing and working with others and/or riding a school bus?

**Contact people and information:**

- Who are the contact persons in the next program, for example the public school preschool program or the neighborhood childcare program?
- What information do I need to share with the next program about my child and his daily routines?
- Can I talk with families who have recently transitioned out of the DEAP Montana Milestones?

**What services are available after leaving the Montana Milestones?**

Each community in Montana is unique in the types of supports and services that may be available for children three and four.

Your Family Support Specialist will help you find options available in your community.

**Some of these options may include**

- Friends with young children
- Local parent support organizations
- Playgroups
- Private child care centers or preschools
- Head Start
- Library story hours
- Community recreation programs
- Private therapy services
- Local mental health facilities that provide case management and other services for child and adults with developmental disabilities and Mental Health Diagnosis

**Preschool Program Services (Part B)**

For children who meet the eligibility requirements, the public schools offer Preschool Program services for three and four year olds with special needs. Preschool Program services vary depending on the individual needs of your child.

If your child is potentially eligible for Preschool Program services, the Montana Milestones is required to send limited information (your child’s name, date of birth, and date of enrollment in early intervention, along with your family’s name, address, and phone number) to public school personnel responsible for child find as early as your child’s second birthday. Only the local school system can determine eligibility for the Preschool Program services.

## **When should transition planning begin?**

From age two to age three, there are important times when things should happen so your child's services and supports are not disrupted. Through the transition planning process, you and your Family Support Specialist will develop ways to make sure that your child's needs are being met and that the transition will be successful.

### **AGE 24-27 Months**

Around your child's second birthday, you and your FSS will begin working on a transition plan. Because transition happens over time, you and your IFSP team will discuss and project several activities that will be completed over the next year. Your transition plan should include important time frames for helping map out the transition, such as referrals, evaluations, and assessments, as well as individual transition planning conferences or meetings. The transition plan could include learning more about services in your community such as child care, preschool, special education services through the public school system, or Head Start. This is the time to ask questions about these other settings and programs, and you may want to visit them.

### **AGE 27-33 Months**

As early as 9 months prior to your child's third birthday but no later than 3 months (90 days) before your child's third birthday, a transition planning conference will be held between you, your Family Support Specialist, current service providers, and other who may be working with your child and family after you child turns three. If your child is potentially eligible for Preschool Program services, a representative from the public school system Preschool Program will be invited, with your permission. At this meeting, you will review your child's outcomes on the IFSP including transition planning activities, share information about your family's concerns and priorities, and talk about the range of service options that are available to your child and family. Depending on what services you are exploring for your child after age three, you may be asked that your child receive certain evaluations or assessments by school or other agency staff to help determine eligibility for these programs and services. During this time, you may want to visit potential school classrooms or other programs in your community.

### **AGE 34-36 Months**

If your child meets the eligibility criteria for Preschool Program services, you , the local public school system staff, and other who have knowledge about your child will develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to being on your child's third birthday. When possible your Family Support Specialist may also participate in the IEP development process and will continue to assist your family to ensure a smooth transition from the Montana Milestones to Preschool Program services.

If you are considering other community supports and services, your Family Support Specialist will continue to help your family explore the resources needed for your family to be successful after leaving the Infant-Toddler services.

On your child's third birthday, your child will age out of the Montana Milestones and is no longer eligible to receive supports and services through this program. This can be an exciting time of new beginnings for your child and family. Your transition from the Montana Milestones will give you a chance to learn and practice planning skills that you can use in the future. All transitions are more successful when families and service providers work through the process together.

# **Your Family's Rights**

# Your Family's Rights

## Under DEAP's Montana Milestones, you have the following rights:

- The right to a timely multidisciplinary evaluation and assessment, and the development of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) within forty-five (45) calendar days from referral to the Montana Milestones;
- If eligible under the Montana Milestones, the right to appropriate early intervention services for your child and family as addressed in an IFSP;
- The right to evaluation, assessment, development of IFSP, service coordination, and procedural safeguards at no cost;
- The right to refuse evaluations, assessments, and services;
- The right to be invited to and participate in all IFSP meetings;
- The right to receive written notice ten (10) calendar days before a change is proposed or refused in the identification, evaluation or placement of your child, or in the provision of services to your child or family;
- The right to receive services in your child's natural environment to the maximum extent appropriate;
- The right to have your personally identifiable information kept confidential;
- The right to review and, if appropriate, correct DEAP records;
- The right to mediation and/or due process hearing to resolve individual child complaints
  - More information regarding dispute resolution please reference [Part C Early Intervention Services Dispute Resolution Handbook 2013](#) as found

on the Montana Milestones page at Montana DPHHS

In addition to the general rights listed here, your family is entitled to be notified of specific procedural safeguards under the Montana Milestones. These procedural safeguards are your protection that you will be the key decision-maker and that early intervention agencies will follow required procedures. These safeguards include Parental Consent, Prior Notice, Examination of Records, Confidentiality of Information, Individual Child Complaint Resolution (including Mediation and Administrative Due Process Hearing), State Complaint Resolution, and Surrogate Parent Assignment. A brief description of each begins on the next page.

Your Family Support Specialist will review your rights when you begin the Montana Milestones and every year that your child is in the program. You will also be reminded of your rights at certain other times during your involvement with the Montana Milestones. Your rights begin as soon as your child is referred to the Montana Milestones and continue throughout your child's enrollment.

### **Parental Consent**

The DEAP needs your permission to take actions that affect your child. For example, you will be asked to give you consent in writing before we evaluate or provide services. Be sure you completely understand the suggested activities. By being involved, you can help the Montana Milestones plan services that match your family's preferences and needs. You can say no to some services and still get other services. If you decide

to try other services at a later date, you can give your consent then.

### **Written Prior Notice**

DEAP must give you ten (10) days to advance written notice and information about action affecting your child and family. You know your child the best. The information you share with us will ensure that the evaluations and services are right for you. The written notice or “paper work” assures that you get the details before any activity. The following examples include, but are not limited to, events for which you must receive written prior notice:

- Before evaluations or formal screenings are conducted;
- Before initial and annual Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meetings
- Before any changes to services listed on the IFSP occur or the beginning of new services;
- Before determining your child is no longer eligible for the program; and
- Before your child exits from the program.

### **Examination of Records**

The early intervention record is your family’s record. You can see anything in DEAP record about your child and family, except as excluded by law. If you do not understand the way records are written, the information in your child’s record will be explained to you. You are a team member and we want you to have the same information as the other team members. If you believe the information in your child’s record is inaccurate or misleading or violates the privacy or other rights of your child or family. You may request that DEAP or the DDP amend the information.

### **Confidentiality of Information**

The Montana Milestones values the information you and other service and health care providers have learned about your child. We can ask others for this information, but we need your written permission to get information about your child from other providers, the records that the Montana Milestones will develop will not be shared with anyone unless you give your written authorization, except as required by law.

### **Individual Child Complaint Resolution**

There may be times when you and your early intervention team cannot reach an agreement about services. The disagreement may be about such things as:

- Your child’s evaluation, or decisions about eligibility for services;
- The types of early intervention services included in your IFSP, who will provide the services, where the services are provided, or how often the services are provided; or

If this occurs, please talk with your Family Support Specialist. The DEAP Grievance Procedure for complaints about services states that a family tries to work out the difference with the person involved. If this does not resolve the problem, call DEAP and speak with that person’s supervisor. If there is still a problem, contact the executive director of DEAP. They will respond to your grievance in writing within fourteen days, and if not resolved at that time, will bring the grievance to the DEAP Board of Directors. Instead of following this grievance procedure or at any step in the procedure, you may request a fair hearing or mediation from the Developmental Disabilities Program. Detailed information about the grievance procedure, fair hearings, or mediation is available upon request.



## Mediation

When informal ways of sharing your concerns do not work, you may submit a written request for complaint resolution. Mediation will be offered as a voluntary first step. A trained, impartial mediator will facilitate problem-solving between you and the Montana Milestones. You may be able to reach an agreement that satisfies you both. If not, an administrative due process hearing can occur to resolve your complaint. Mediation will not slow down the hearing process.

## Due Process Hearing

If the mediation process does not result in an agreement, or you desire to begin with a due process hearing, this formal procedure begins with a written request from you. The hearing will assure that a knowledgeable and impartial person from outside the program hears your complaint and decides how to best resolve it.

## State (Formal) Complaint Procedure

This procedure is available for resolving any complaint that raises systematic issues concerning a violation of a requirement or regulations of Part C of the IDEA. In

Kathleen Kaiser, QIS  
114 N. 7th  
Miles City MT 59301  
(406) 232-2595 [KKaiser@mt.gov](mailto:KKaiser@mt.gov)

Wendy Studt, Child & Family Specialist  
DPHHS Building  
111 Sanders  
Helena, MT 59620  
(406) 444-2995 [wstudt@mt.gov](mailto:wstudt@mt.gov)

"Lets Chat About Early Intervention in Montana"  
video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?V=MxE-Iy6EVJI>

addition, a parent(s), surrogate parent(s), or legal guardian(s) may use this complaint procedure for an individual child complaint(s). If the complaint solely concerns an individual child's identification, evaluation, or placement of the child, or the provision of appropriate early intervention service(s) to the child and the child's family, they should be advised of the Individual Child Complaint resolution procedure as an option, more information is available upon request.

## Surrogate Parent Assignment

State and federal regulations require that a child has a right to have a surrogate parent represent them in Montana Milestones matters when a parent is not identified, cannot be located or the child is a ward of the state. A surrogate parent is appointed to protect the rights of the child under the Montana Milestones and has responsibilities in all Montana Milestones matters, including, but not limited to:

- Providing all needed consents such as consent for evaluation or service delivery and authorization for the release of information;
- Representation during evaluations and assessments, including being present and contributing;
- The development, implementation, and signing of the Individualized Family Service Plan (including six-month reviews, annual meetings, and any other times when changes are made);
- The ongoing provision of early intervention services; and
- Involvement in complaint resolution procedures

# **Parent Dictionary**

# Parent Dictionary:

## Montana Milestones Required Services

The language for these definitions is taken directly from the regulations of the federal law IDEA. Therefore, the wording may not be as family-friendly as the other parts of this handbook. Please talk with your Family Support Specialist if you need further information or explanation.

### Assistive Technology and Devices

An assistive technology device means any item, piece or equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of children with disabilities. Assistive technology service means a service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. Assistive technology services include:

- The evaluation of the needs of a child with a disability, including a functional evaluation of the child in the child's customary environment;
- Purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of assistive technology devices for children with disabilities;
- Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, or replacing assistive technology devices;
- Coordinating and using other therapies, interventions or services with assistive technology devices, such as those associated with existing education and rehabilitation plans and programs;
- Training or technical assistance for a child with disabilities or, if appropriate, that child's family, and
- Training or technical assistance for professionals (including individuals providing early intervention services) or other individuals who provide services to or are otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions or individuals with disabilities;

### Audiology Services

Audiological services include any services or equipment that may be needed to address a child's needs with relation to his or her auditory skills. Audiological services include:

- Identification of children with auditory impairment, using at-risk criteria and appropriate audiologic screening techniques;
- Determination of the range, nature, and degree of hearing loss and communication functions, by use of audiological evaluation procedures;
- Referral for medical and other services necessary for the habilitation or rehabilitation of children with auditory impairment;
- Provision of auditory training, aural rehabilitation, speech reading, signed language and cued language, listening device orientation and training, and other services;
- Provision of services for prevention of hearing loss; and

- Determination of the child’s need for individual amplification, including selecting, fitting, and dispensing appropriate listening and vibrotactile devices, and evaluating the effectiveness of those devices.

### **Cued Language and Sign Language Services**

Include teaching sign language, cued language, and auditory/oral language, providing oral transliteration services (such as amplification), and providing sign and cued language interpretation.

### **Early Identification and Screening**

The procedure used to ensure the identification, location and evaluation of all children with development delay or established conditions, regardless of the severity or type, who are in need of special education and related services. This includes public awareness and child find activities such as sharing information about the Montana Milestones with primary referral sources (e.g., physicians, child care providers).

### **Evaluation and Assessment**

**Evaluation** is a procedure to determine:

- A child’s level of functioning in each of the following developmental areas:
  - Cognitive development;
  - Physical development, including gross and fine motor function, vision, and hearing;
  - Communication development;
  - Social-emotional development; and
  - Adaptive development; and
- A medical perspective of the child’s development, including a review of pertinent records related to the child’s current health status and medical history.

**Assessment** is the ongoing procedure used throughout the period of a child’s eligibility in the Montana Milestones to determine:

- The child’s unique strengths and needs in each of the developmental areas and the services appropriate to meet those needs; and
- The resources, priorities, and concerns of the family and the supports and services necessary to enhance the family’s capacity to meet the developmental needs of their infant or toddler with a disability.

### **Family Training, Counseling and Home Visits**

Services provided, as appropriate, by family support specialists, social workers, psychologists, and other qualified personnel to assist the family of a child eligible under the Montana Milestones in understanding the special needs of the child and enhancing the child’s development.

## **Health Services**

Services necessary to enable a child to benefit from the other early intervention services under the Montana Milestones during the time that the child's receiving the other early intervention services:

### ***Health Services Include:***

- Clean intermittent catheterization, tracheotomy care, tube feeding, the changing of dressings or colostomy collection bags, and other health services; and
- Consultation by physicians with other service providers concerning the special health care needs of eligible children that will need to be addressed in the course of providing other early intervention services.

### ***Health services do not include:***

- Services that are surgical in nature (e.g., cleft palate surgery, surgery for club foot, or the shunting of hydrocephalus);
- Services that are purely medical in nature (e.g., hospitalization for management of congenital heart ailments, or the prescription of any medicine or drugs for any purpose);
- Devices necessary to control or treat a medical condition; or
- Medical-health services (e.g., immunizations, regular well-baby care) routinely recommended for all children.

## **Medical Services**

Services, only for diagnostic or evaluation purposes, provided by a licensed physician, to determine a child's developmental status and need for early intervention services.

## **Nursing Services**

Services necessary to enable a child to benefit from the other early intervention services under the Montana Milestones during the time that the child is receiving other early intervention services:

- Assessment of a child's health status for the purpose of providing nursing care, including the identification of patterns of human response to actual or potential health problems;
- Provision of nursing care to prevent health problems, restore or improve functioning and promote optimal health and development of the child; and
- Administration of medications, treatments, and regimens prescribed by a licensed physician.

## **Nutrition Services**

- Conducting individual assessments in: nutritional history and dietary intake; anthropometric, biochemical, and clinical variables; feeding skills and feeding problems, and food habits and food preferences;
- Developing and monitoring appropriate plans to address the nutritional needs of children eligible under the Montana Milestones, based on the individual assessment; and
- Making referrals to appropriate community resources to carry out nutritional goals.

## **Occupational Therapy**

Services to address the functional needs of a child related to adaptive development, adaptive behavior and play, and sensory, motor, and postural development. These services are designed to improve a child's functional ability to perform tasks in home, school, and community settings. These services include:

- Identification, assessment, and intervention;
- Adaptation of the environment, and selection, design, and fabrication of assistive and orthotic devices to facilitate development and promote the acquisition of functional skills; and
- Prevention or minimization of the impact of initial or future impairment, delay in development, or loss of functional ability.

## **Physical Therapy**

Services to address the promotion of sensorimotor function through enhancement of musculoskeletal status, neurobehavioral organization, perceptual and motor development, cardiopulmonary status, and effective environmental adaptation. These services include:

- Screening evaluation, and assessment of infants and toddlers to identify movement dysfunction;
- Obtaining, interpreting, and integrating information appropriate to program planning to prevent, alleviate or compensate for movement dysfunction and related functional problems; and
- Providing individual and group services or treatment to prevent, alleviate, or compensate for movement dysfunction and related functional problems.

## **Psychological Services**

- Administering psychological and developmental tests and other assessment procedures;
- Interpreting assessment results;
- Obtaining, integrating, and interpreting information about child behavior, and child and family conditions related to learning, mental health, and development; and
- Planning and managing a program of psychological services, including psychological counseling for children and parents, family counseling, consultation on child development, parent training, and education programs.

## **Service Coordination**

Activities carried out by a service coordinator and enable a child eligible for the Montana Milestones and the child's family to receive the rights, procedural safeguards, and provision of services under the Montana Milestones. Service coordination is an active and ongoing process, and each child eligible for the Montana Milestones must be provided with one service coordinator who is responsible for:

- Coordinating all services across the agency lines;
- Serving as a single point of contact in helping the parent to obtain the services and assistance they need;

- Assisting parents of eligible children in gaining access to the early intervention services and other services identified in the Individualized Family Service Plan;
- Coordinating the provision of early intervention services and other services (such as medical services for other than diagnostic and evaluation purposes) that the child needs or is being provided;
- Facilitating the timely delivery of available services;
- Coordinating the performance of evaluations and assessments;
- Facilitating and participating in the development, review and evaluation of Individualized Family Service Plan;
- Assisting families in identifying available service providers;
- Coordinating and monitoring the delivery of available services;
- Informing families of the availability of advocacy services;
- Coordinating with medical and health providers; and
- Facilitating the development of a transition plan to preschool services, if appropriate.

### **Social Work Services**

- Making home visits to evaluate a child's living conditions and patterns of parent-child interactions;
- Preparing a social or emotional developmental assessment of the child within the family context;
- Providing individual and family-group counseling with parents and other family members, and appropriate social skill-building activities with the child and parents;
- Working with those problems in a child's and family's living situation (home, community, and any center where early intervention services are provided) that affect the child's maximum utilization of early intervention services; and
- Identifying, mobilizing, and coordinating community resources and services to enable the child and family to receive maximum benefit from early intervention services.

### **Special Instruction**

- The design of learning environments and activities that promote the child's acquisitions of skills in a variety of developmental areas, including cognitive processes and social interactions;
- Curriculum planning, including the planned interaction of personnel, materials, and time and space, that leads to achieving the outcomes in the child's individualized family service plan;
- Providing families with information, skills, and support related to enhancing the skill development of the child; and
- Working with the child to enhance the child's development.

- Identification of children with communicative or oropharyngeal disorders and delays in development of communication skills, including the diagnosis and appraisal of specific disorders and delays in those skills;
- Referral for medical or other professional services necessary for the habilitation or rehabilitation of children with communicative or oropharyngeal disorders and delays in the development of communication skills; and
- Provision of services for the habilitation, rehabilitation, or prevention of communicative or oropharyngeal disorders and delays in the development of communication skills.

### **Transportation and Related Costs**

The cost of travel (e.g., mileage reimbursement, or travel by taxi, common carrier, or other means) and other costs (e.g., tolls and parking expenses) that are necessary to enable a child eligible under the Montana Milestones and the child's family to receive early intervention services.

### **Vision Services**

- Evaluations and assessment of visual functioning, including the diagnosis and appraisal of specific visual disorders, delays, and abilities;
- Referral for medical or other professional services necessary for the habilitation or rehabilitation of visual functioning disorders, or both; and
- Communication skills training, orientation and mobility training for all environments, visual training, independent living skills, and additional training necessary to activate visual motor abilities.



# References

Connecticut Birth to Three System. *A Family Handbook, Guide I- Referral & Eligibility Evaluation*, February 2005.

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Hurth, J.L. & Goff, P. *Assuring the family's role on the early intervention team: Explaining rights and safeguards* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Chapel Hill, NC: National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, June 2002.

The Missouri First Steps Program *Parent Handbook*, March 2003.

The Texas Early Childhood Intervention Program. *ECI Handbook. Welcome to the Texas Early Childhood Intervention Program!*, October 2006.

The Texas Early Childhood Intervention Program. *Beyond ECI. Moving on from the Texas Early Childhood Intervention Program!*, October 2004.

The North Carolina Montana Milestones, Parent Handbook, A Guide to Infant and Toddler Program Services for You and Your Child, May 2007

<http://nichcy.org/> Babies/Toddlers/Key Terms to Know in Early Intervention



Appendix 2

# Parent Contact Form

(Copy this sheet and use it to record notes about your phone calls)

<b>Topic:</b>
<b>Name or Person you talked to:</b>
<b>Phone Number:</b>
<b>Name of Agency:</b>
<b>Date you called:</b>
<b>What we talked about:</b>
<b>What needs to be done:</b>
<b>Other comments:</b>

## Information about the Early Childhood Outcomes:

The Montana Milestones. Early Intervention Program for children from birth to 36 months of age documents how early intervention and early childhood programs are making positive difference in the lives of children and families in Montana. Progress for all children in the Montana Milestones, Early Intervention Program for children from birth to 36 months of age is measured on three Child Outcomes.

Child Outcomes focus on skills and abilities that children use to be successful in everyday activities and routines and skills children need to be successful in future school settings. The three child outcomes are:

Children have positive social relationships.

- Build and maintain relationships with children and adults
- Regulate their emotions
- Understand and follow rules
- Communicate wants and needs effectively

Children acquire and use knowledge and skills (like early communication and literacy skills).

- Thinking, reasoning, remembering & problem solving
- Display an eagerness for learning
- Show imagination and creativity in play
- Understand and communicate thoughts and ideas

Children take appropriate action to meet their needs.

- Move from place to place participate in everyday activities and routines
- Meet their self-care needs (feeding, dressing, toileting, etc.)
- Use objects such as spoons, crayons, and switches as tools

Why is this information important?

- It tells how early intervention and early childhood programs make a difference for children and their families they support and serve.
- It give information that can be used to improve early intervention programs.
- It provides data used in the Annual Performance Report (APR) to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The APR is available to the general public and can be found on the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Montana Milestones website at <http://dphhs.mt.gov/dsd/developmentaldisabilities/PartC-EarlyInt/PartCReports>.

How is this information about my child's development gathered?

Information about your child is gathered by your child's Montana Milestones, Early Intervention provider agency, DEAP, from you and from other caregivers and professionals who work with your child regularly. Additional information is gathered from formal child assessment.

How can parents and families be involved?

You know your child best! You are a partner in helping to measure your child's progress. Share your observations of your child's skills in each of the child outcome areas with your Family Support Specialist. Describe how your child interacts with friends and family. Let your child's Family Support Specialist know examples of how your child participates in typical family routines and in the community activities. Tell them how your child meets their self-care needs at home.

Will my child be required to have any additional testing?

Information will be gathered from multiple sources that will help paint a picture of your child's everyday skills in a variety of environments, such as home, child care and in the community etc. Additional testing is not necessary, information used to determine your child's eligibility for services, develop your child's IFSP or reports from specialist your child works with can be used along with observations made by you and others who interact with your child.

Will my child's name be included in the data reported to the state of Montana and to OSEP?

No, only summary data will be gathered and reported to Montana's DPHHS and OSEP. Your name and your child's name will not be attached to the information that is reported.

### Global Family Outcomes:

- 1) Families understand their child's strengths, abilities, and special needs.
- 2) Families know their rights and advocate effectively for their child.
- 3) Families help their child develop and learn.
- 4) Families have support systems.
- 5) Families access desired services, programs, and activities in their community.