

## **Early Intervention for Children with Disabilities Works, Report Finds**

Findings among many included in annual report to Congress on special education

Children with disabilities who receive early intervention services show significant developmental progress and families report increased confidence in their ability to deal with their child, according to the Department of Education's 24th annual report to Congress on the condition of special education.

The report, "To Assure the Free Appropriate Public Education of All Children with Disabilities," cites several sources, including the department's ongoing National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study (NEILS). NEILS tracks 3,338 infants and toddlers with disabilities who received early intervention services. The report found that a year into services, a significantly high percentage of the children had reached milestones in areas of motor skills, self-help, communication and cognition.

Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires states to provide early intervention services to children with disabilities from birth through age 2. Early intervention can include speech and hearing services, family training and counseling, home visits, diagnostic medical services, occupational or physical therapy, social and psychological services and service coordination. More than 268,000 children receive early intervention services.

"This is yet another confirmation that the earlier we identify children with disabilities and provide highly effective evidence-based interventions, the better chance they have of reaching their full potential," said Robert Pasternack, assistant secretary for special education and rehabilitative services.

The annual report to Congress has become a benchmark in conveying the progress being made in serving America's 6.5 million children with disabilities. The report is available at [www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep/2002](http://www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep/2002).

President Bush has requested \$9.5 billion in grants to states for special education in his FY 2004 budget request -- the highest level of federal educational support ever for children with disabilities and a \$3.2 billion or 50 percent increase since he took office.

Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, now known as IDEA, in 1975. The law guarantees the entitlement of a "free appropriate public education" to the nation's children and youth with disabilities.

### **What do parents say about early Intervention Services?**

"Monte spent the first few months of his life in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU), recovering from surgeries. We were pretty overwhelmed by his many

surgeries. We'd hardly been home 24 hours when Provo Early education (PEEP) therapists began coming; teaching us new skills, listening to our concerns, and helping Monte to develop and grow in wonderful ways."

" Early Intervention has been such a great program for Austin. He gets so excited every time his therapists come or when we have playgroup. It is so much fun to see him learning and growing. Thank you early Intervention."