



PETE CERVINKA
ACTING DIRECTOR

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency
Department of Developmental Services

1215 O Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

www.dds.ca.gov



GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

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TO: REGIONAL CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: RATE REFORM IMPLEMENTATION FOR EARLY START AND INFANT DEVELOPMENT

As part of continued rate reform [implementation](#), this letter provides direction regarding the following areas:

- Early Start Specialized Therapeutic Services (service code 116)
- Infant Development Program (service code 805)

Beginning January 1, 2025, the service descriptions in this directive apply to all vendors of these services, along with the associated service and subcode combinations, rate models and billing units. This directive also may pertain to vendors currently providing these services under different service codes. Providers continue to be responsible for the requirements stated in Welfare and Institutions Code and Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR). However, this directive supersedes any conflict regarding service descriptions and rate-setting in those other sources.

Regional centers and service providers shall follow this directive to affirm which updated service description and any staffing requirements most closely match the services actually being delivered. The regional center shall verify the rate for each service and subcode combination in the rate workbook. Reimbursement for services beginning January 1, 2025, will be claimed using the provider's current service code with an updated rate, unless the form described below is completed prior to that date.

By March 31, 2025, the Rate Reform Service Acknowledgement Form shall be completed by the regional center and service provider to acknowledge the service description, requirements that will need to be met, subcode combination(s), and the rate(s) established by the rate model. Please see Attachment A for the form and instructions, which includes attaching the rate workbook to the completed form. The rates for each type of service by regional center can be found [here](#). Providers with existing rates that are above 90 percent of the rate model for the service description to which they will align will maintain their existing rates (held harmless) until June 30, 2026. Providers with rates between 90 percent and 100 percent of the rate model will have the opportunity to earn 100 percent of the rate model through the [Quality Incentive Program](#). Otherwise, upon completion of the Rate Reform Service Acknowledgement Form, the new service and subcode combination and rate will be used.

Individuals receiving services should not experience differences in how their services are delivered, where they are delivered from, and who they work with as a result of this directive.

Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) must identify the type and the amount of service needed. Therefore, some IFSPs will need to be updated to properly identify the type of service being delivered. If the only change is service delivery by a different level of staff, or use of a new service and subcode combinations and their rates, the IFSP does not need to be updated. These IFSP updates should be done at the next scheduled IFSP meeting, after which the regional center must update service authorizations. These updates must occur no later than December 31, 2025. In these cases, billing for services to individuals pending an IFSP update will continue under the current service code with an updated rate. Billing for services to individuals that do not need an IFSP update will use the new service and subcode combination and their rate.

Vendors and service providers operating as an agency must provide services and bill based on the staffing qualifications of the employees providing the direct services. The services may be provided using independent service code and subcode combinations under one vendorization.

Early Start Specialized Therapeutic Services (service code 116)

Service Description

Assessments or services provided by an individual or group of individuals of a specialized service for infants and toddlers, birth to 36 months. Services may be provided by either a professional or a supervised assistant, and delivered either in the individual's home/community, or in a clinic setting. Providers must possess the license, certification and/or credential as required by the State of California to practice in the field being offered and have at least one year of experience working with individuals with developmental disabilities.

Providers continue to be responsible for the requirements described in Attachment B.

New Components

- *Services:* Vendors and service providers operating as an agency that provide a specialized service are now included.
- *Billing:* Providers will bill services hourly based on service delivered by either the Professional or supervised Assistant, location of service, and the ratio of employee to supported individuals. Rates are assigned in two categories – Professional and Assistant. Please see Attachment C for the subcodes and rate category assignments established for each combination.

Infant Development Program (service code 805)

Service Description

Services provided to children under five years old by a coordinated program consisting of either: (a) Early Intervention Specialist, Early Intervention Assistant, and/or Early Intervention Technician; or (b) any combination of specialized services as described in Attachment B. The coordinated program shall focus on family engagement and

coaching as part of the services provided. This includes interagency consultation and training with other involved professionals.

Services may be provided by an Early Intervention Specialist, Early Intervention Assistant, Early Intervention Technician, a professional and/or supervised assistant and delivered either in the individual's home/community, or in a center/facility setting. Providers must possess the license, certification and/or credential as required by the State of California to practice in the field being offered, and have at least one year of experience working with individuals with developmental disabilities. Equivalent education and experience from another state satisfies these requirements.

- **Early Intervention Specialist** is a qualified professional that provides core IFSP services, supervises Early Intervention Assistant(s) and Early Intervention Technician(s), and may have an administrative role. Providers must possess a minimum of a bachelor's degree in early childhood development, education, or related field, or equivalent professional experience. One year of professional experience in early intervention may be considered equivalent to one year of secondary education, with four years considered equivalent to a bachelor's degree.
 - The Department of Developmental Services (Department) in the future may revisit with stakeholders whether additional qualifications or credentials should be required.
- **Early Intervention Assistant** is a qualified paraprofessional that provides core IFSP services under the supervision of an Early Intervention Specialist or licensed therapist. Providers must possess a minimum of either: (a) an associate degree plus a Community College Early Intervention Assistant Certificate, or (b) an associate degree in child development or related field plus equivalent of an associate teacher California Child Development permit (12 units) plus coursework to meet Early Intervention Assistant competencies, including supervised fieldwork in early intervention. One year of professional experience in early intervention may be considered equivalent to one year of secondary education, with two years considered equivalent to an associate's degree. Equivalent education and experience from another state satisfies these requirements.
- **Early Intervention Technician** is a qualified paraprofessional that provides core IFSP services under the supervision of an Early Intervention Specialist or licensed therapist. Providers must possess a minimum of a high school diploma plus at least one year of experience of supervised fieldwork in early intervention or 12 units of coursework in child development or related field.

Infant development programs shall meet the requirements, standards, and qualifications in Title 17 of the CCR, Article 2 for [Standards for All Community-Based Day Programs](#), Article 4 for [Additional Standards for Infant Development Programs](#), as well as the new components listed below.

New Components

- *Services:* Early Intervention Specialist, Early Intervention Assistant, and Early Intervention Technician now are included as core providers of IFSP services.
- *Billing:* Providers will bill services hourly based on which professional is providing the service, location of service, and the ratio of employee to supported individuals. Please see Attachment C for the subcodes established for each combination.

Next Steps

Regional centers and service providers shall follow this directive to affirm which updated service description most closely matches the services actually being delivered, and follow the procedures described in this directive. If a provider's service does not fit into any of the updated service descriptions, or a provider or its staff do not meet the requirements of any of the updated service descriptions, the regional center and service provider shall refer to the exemption process described in the Department's October 30, 2024 [letter](#).

This letter should be shared with involved regional center personnel and the provider network. If providers, individuals and/or their families have questions regarding this letter, they should contact their regional center. Questions from regional centers should be directed to ratesquestions@dds.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Signed by:

DANA SIMON
Deputy Director

Attachments

cc: Regional Center Administrators
Regional Center Directors of Consumer Services
Regional Center Community Services Directors
Association of Regional Center Agencies
Pete Cervinka, Department of Developmental Services
Carla Castañeda, Department of Developmental Services
Michi Gates, Department of Developmental Services