

# How to Access **Early Start** **(0-3 years)** Services through Far Northern Regional Center



## Why might your child need Early Start services through Far Northern?

If your child is under 3 years of age and has a **developmental delay** or a **disability** or is **at risk** of a delay.

**Developmental delays** are common. As many as 1 in 6 children has a delay. Children develop different skills at different times. If a child is not doing things that most children can do at a certain age, they may have a developmental delay. Developmental delays can occur in one or more of the following areas:



**Cognitive**  
thinking & learning



**Adaptive**  
Skills that help everyday living



**Expressive Communication**  
talking & expressing self



**Receptive Communication**  
understanding language



**Physical & Motor Development**  
walking, moving,  
seeing and hearing



**Social & Emotional**  
feeling, expressing,  
interacting with others



A developmental delay can also be a sign of a developmental **disability**.

The following conditions are considered to be a developmental disability:

- Autism
- Cerebral palsy
- Epilepsy
- Intellectual disability
- Other conditions that require treatment similar to a person with intellectual disability

**At risk** conditions may include children who:

- Were born very early (less than 32 weeks gestation) and/or had very low birth weight
- Had extensive health problems or had long hospitalizations
- Had a prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol
- Experienced significant birth injury
- Experienced neglect or abuse

First 5 Plumas has free developmental check-up tools available online for children 0-5 years: [Developmental Milestones](#) &/or [Social Emotional Skills](#)

## How will your child benefit from Early Start?

Over 50 years of medical and educational research, show that family-centered interventions during the first three years of a child's life can make a profound difference in a child's future. The earlier children with or at risk of disabilities receive assistance and the sooner their families receive support towards their children's development, the farther they will go in life.

### Early Start helps your child be the best version of themselves!



Early Start can provide a wide range of services and supports (not just infant development through the school district).

The services you and your child get depend on the needs of your child.

### Some common services that have been provided:

- assistive technology
- audiology
- behavior intervention
- family training & home visits
- feeding therapy
- health services
- nutrition services
- occupational therapy
- physical therapy
- service coordination with help accessing generic community services (i.e. public health, nursing, medical equipment, diapers, formula, counseling, psychological services, etc.)
- sign language and cued language services
- social work services
- specialized instruction (infant development services)
- speech and language services
- transportation if needed to access agreed upon services
- vision services

## I think my child has a developmental delay or disability. What do I do?

### Local support is available to help you at any point in the process.

#### Family Empowerment Center

(530) 283-2735

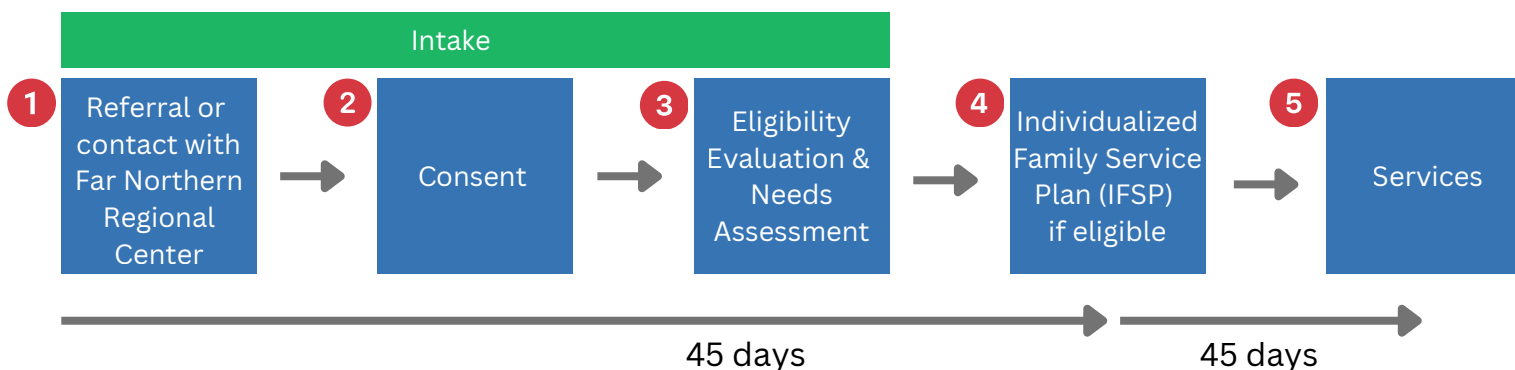
[fec@plumasruralservices.org](mailto:fec@plumasruralservices.org)

#### First 5 Plumas

(530) 334-0679 call or text

[aliciakerr@countyofplumas.com](mailto:aliciakerr@countyofplumas.com)

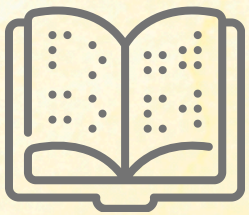
## Timeline to determine if your child is eligible....



# 1

**Call the Far Northern Regional Center (530) 332-1529 intake line or submit an online intake referral form.**

Do not call the Early Intervention specialist with the school district. Although Far Northern Regional does contract with Plumas Unified to provide infant development services, in most cases the school district does not determine eligibility for Early Start. If your child was enrolled in Early Start in another state or another county, not being served by Far Northern Regional Center, you will need to begin at Step 1.



**Low incidence disabilities are conditions such as visual impairments/blindness, hearing impairments/deafness, and orthopedic impairments (e.g., caused by cerebral palsy, paralysis, or spinal cord injury).**

- If your child has a low incidence disability, regardless of whether you think your child has a developmental delay or an at risk condition, you should complete step one by contacting Far Northern Regional Center.
- The regional center should assess your child for delays and work with the local school district to ensure your child's needs, related to their low incidence disability, are met.
- If your child doesn't qualify for Early Start services due to a developmental delay or risk of a delay, the school district will be responsible for your child's educational needs related to their disability from birth to 21 years.

# 2

## **Consent**

You (or the person who can legally make educational decisions for a child, if a parent is not available) must sign a consent form that says you agree to have your child evaluated.

# 3

## **Eligibility Evaluations and Needs Assessment**

- Once consent is obtained, your child will be evaluated to determine if they are eligible for Early Start services.
- Assessments are performed in five areas of development:

☒ Cognitive   ☒ Physical   ☒ Communication   ☒ Social/emotional   ☒ Adaptive

*To be eligible, there needs to be a delay of at least 25% in one of these five areas and/or there is a medical condition that places your child at high risk for a developmental disability.*

- The Regional Center will likely ask for a copy of your child's medical records, or request a release so they can seek the records from the provider.
- If your child already has a diagnosis and has been evaluated recently, the Regional Center may opt to rely on existing documentation rather than perform its own evaluations for eligibility purposes. They will generally still conduct evaluations to establish recommended services and frequency of services.



- The assessment will involve taking information from family, friends, providers, and anyone who knows your child and family well. If you have a family member or child care provider who cares for your child, be sure to include their input.
- During an evaluation, a child development expert may:
  - Play with your child as part of the assessment to identify his/her abilities
  - Observe you playing and interacting with your child
  - Ask you questions about your child, your family, and the pregnancy and birth.
- The outcomes of the assessment will be compared to other children of the same age who do not have developmental delays or disabilities.
- If your child did not qualify and you still have concerns, be sure to follow up with the Family Empowerment Center (530) 283-2735 [fec@plumasruralservices.org](mailto:fec@plumasruralservices.org)
- Connect with the First 5 Family Service Coordinator for help supporting your child's development (530) 334-0679 call or text
- Disagreements about Early Start Services and Support can be addressed by filling out a complaint form online.

## 4

### Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

- If your child is eligible for Early Start services, you and your Service Coordinator will develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).
- The IFSP is a process and a plan. The end result will be a document that describes your child's needs, goals, and objectives, as well as the services and supports your child requires to achieve those goals and objectives.
- Early Start services operate on a year round basis. If service providers working with your child only work the school year, arrangements can be made to provide no break in services.
- Typically an IFSP meeting will be attended only by the parent(s) and the service coordinator, as well as the child, where appropriate.
- It is not necessary to bring anybody else with you to the IFSP meeting. However, if you prefer not to attend alone, you can bring an advocate, a service provider, or a family member, child care provider, or friend who knows your child well. The meeting can be held at the Regional Center, or the service coordinator can come to your home or another place that is convenient for you.
- The IFSP always needs your written consent.

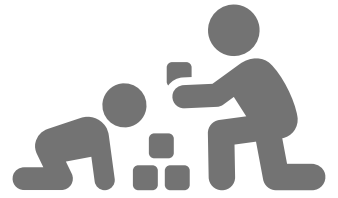
Visit Undivided for more information on [what to expect at your first IFSP](#)  
& Pacer's [information sheet on IFSP's](#)

## 5

### Services

- Once the IFSP is developed, the Early Start services will start within 45 days.
- The services should occur in "natural environments". These are familiar places like your home or other community settings.

- This final step, being provided services, should take place within 45 days after the IFSP meeting and 90 days after putting the first phone call into the Far Northern Regional Center (step 1).



# 6

## Looking Forward

- Your child's IFSP will be reviewed every 3 months until they turn 3.
- Before turning 3, with your consent, the Regional Center will determine if your child qualifies for lifelong services through the Lanterman Act or for provisional eligibility of the Lanterman Act through age four. This transition process will begin when your child is 2 years and 6 months old. Refer to the document "[Your Child Receiving Early Start Services is Turning 3](#)"
- The Regional Center is required to send a referral to the school district when your child is 2 year 9 months. Your consent is not required for this referral. If you have questions about this process, discuss it with your child's Regional Center Service Coordinator.

## Additional Resources

- [CDC's Developmental Milestones](#)
- Free Developmental Screening Tools [Milestones for Age & Social-Emotional Skills](#), First 5 Plumas
- [Far Northern Regional Center](#) the local provider of Early Start
- [Early Start Handbook](#), Department of Developmental Services
- [Early Start FAQs](#), Department of Developmental Services
- [Early Start Family Resource Center](#) A free local service providing one on one support through the Early Start process
- [Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund](#)
- [Undivided](#) a privately developed site to support your advocacy
- [Disability Rights California](#)



**One System, All Children: Better Together**  
Access ♦ Participation ♦ Supports



**We love to support families!**  
Text or call (530)334-0679 with any questions  
[aliciakerr@countyofplumas.com](mailto:aliciakerr@countyofplumas.com)  
[www.first5plumas.org](http://www.first5plumas.org)