

## **Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) Programs Testimony for March 29, 2021 Ways and Means Committee**

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**Re:** Background information and context for Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education programs.

**Date:** March 26, 2021

**Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education is special education for young children before they enter kindergarten.**

For birth to 3 year old children it is called **early intervention or EI.**

For 3-5 year old children it is called **early childhood special education or ECSE.**

In Oregon services are **seamless** to maximize the benefit to children and families and to create the most efficiency. It is called EI/ECSE

**Children are eligible for EI/ECSE services based on a**

- documented developmental delay;
- documented disability; or
- documented condition likely to result in developmental delay (only under age 3)

All children in EI/ECSE services are “at risk” for poorer outcomes in school and life

**EI/ECSE services are mandated by state and federal law just like school age special education.**

- Every child who qualifies is entitled to receive free services
- EI/ECSE is NOT allowed to have a waitlist
- Children must be determined eligible and served within strict timelines- 45 days for EI age children and 60 days for ECSE age.
- Services are provided EVERYWHERE in Oregon through 9 regional contractors (ESDs, one local school district and UO) and are overseen by the Oregon Department of Education, Student Services Office along with school age special education services.

**What types of services are provided?**

- Speech and language therapy
- Behavior and social skills training
- Autism skills training
- Specialized instruction and curriculum and activity modifications and adaptations

- Specialized equipment, materials and visuals
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy

### **Where are services provided?**

Services are individualized to meet each child's needs and provided:

- At home- Parent consultation and support and/or
- In Community Preschool with consultation & support and/or
- In Specialized Preschool through direct instruction and/or
- In individual sessions with a speech therapist or other specialist

### **Who provides services?**

- Highly qualified professionals – the same requirements as school districts have for special education teaching and related services.
- TSPC licensed or authorized early intervention/early childhood special educators

### **How do children get into EI/ECSE services?**

- EI/ECSE is required to conduct rigorous child find with local school districts
- Anyone can refer to EI / ECSE services
- The majority of referrals come from parents, physicians, community preschools and Head Start programs and public health and home visiting programs
- Universal developmental screening by pediatricians has increased the number of referrals to EI/ECSE and the numbers of children served

### **Services make a huge difference**

- Increases school readiness
- Increases potential for success in school and life
- Prevents the need for more costly education in the future
- Supports parents and caregivers to raise children with special needs- 2 generation

### **Funding and Growth**

- Growth from year to year has averaged 2 to 5 % a year. This year we have seen a dip in growth due to the pandemic- just as all other early learning programs and K-12 schools have seen.
- Programs are now or will be in-person after spring break. We expect to see enrollment grow and continue to grow over the next years due to the learning and developmental loss many children are experiencing.
- EI/ECSE is a critical part of a comprehensive early childhood SYSTEM that ensures children have access to inclusive preschool/early learning, child care, and family support services. EI/ECSE supports children in these programs to be successful.

- Until last biennium, funding for EI/ECSE had not kept pace with the growth in the number of eligible children served and service levels to children were declining each year.
- Last session the Legislature made significant progress towards building back funding to enable programs to provide adequate service levels. This was done through an increase in the general fund Grant in Aid allocation AND revenue from the Student Success Act Investment Fund.
- When EI/ECSE is fully funded, we can serve all eligible children with the recommended level of service supported by research and support more children in inclusive settings with their peers

**We urge the Ways and Means Committee to support the Governor's 2021-2023 recommended amount for EI/ECSE programs in the Grant in Aid budget AND in the Student Investment Act fund allocation.**