

Early Intervention Toolkit

A calm, practical starting point for families who have questions about their young child's communication development.

What is early intervention?

Early intervention supports babies and young children who may need help developing skills such as communication, learning, movement, social-emotional skills, or daily living skills. Families are an important part of the team, and services are designed around the child's needs and family priorities.

When Might a Family Consider Support?

- Your child is using few or no words or is not progressing with new communication skills.
- Your child has difficulty understanding directions or everyday language.
- Your child is not using gestures, pointing, showing, or other ways to communicate as expected for their developmental stage.
- Your child has difficulty participating in back-and-forth interaction or social communication.
- Your child's speech is difficult to understand for their age.
- Your child has lost communication skills they previously had.
- You have a concern — even if you are not sure whether it is significant.

What Can an SLP Help With?

A pediatric SLP may evaluate and support receptive language, expressive language, speech sound development, phonology, play and social communication, early gestures, functional communication, AAC, fluency, and caregiver strategies.

Family-Centered Early Intervention

Effective support should fit the child and the family — not require the family to rearrange life around therapy.

What Does Family-Centered Support Look Like?

Topic	Helpful guidance
Your priorities matter	Therapy should connect to goals that are meaningful for your child and family.
Everyday routines matter	Communication can be supported during meals, play, books, dressing, bath time, errands, and other real-life activities.
Caregivers are partners	Parents and caregivers can learn strategies that make communication opportunities easier to create throughout the week.
Progress is individualized	Goals should reflect your child's strengths, needs, developmental level, and communication style.

Understanding the Process

The exact process varies by location and program, but families often move through several common steps.

- Share your concerns with your pediatrician, early intervention agency, school district, or pediatric SLP.
- Request an evaluation or developmental assessment when appropriate.
- Learn what your child does well, what areas may need support, and what services are recommended.
- Work with the team to identify meaningful goals and practical strategies.
- Review progress and adjust supports as your child develops.

Questions to Ask During an Evaluation

- What are my child's communication strengths?
- Which areas are most important to support right now?
- How will we measure progress?
- What can we do during everyday routines?
- Would speech therapy be appropriate? How often?
- Should we consider a hearing evaluation?
- Could AAC or another communication support be helpful?
- What should we expect over the next few months?

California Families: Where Do I Start?

Early intervention and preschool special education follow different pathways. Your local program can confirm eligibility, referrals, and current procedures.

Birth to age 3

California families may be connected with early intervention through their local Regional Center or other local early intervention pathways, depending on eligibility and circumstances.

Age 3 and older

Families can contact their local school district to ask about preschool special education evaluation and Child Find. Processes and eligibility can vary, so confirm current requirements with your local district.

Preparing for Your Child's First Visit

- Your main concerns and what you hope will improve.
- Examples of words, phrases, sounds, gestures, signs, or AAC your child currently uses.
- Languages your child hears and uses.
- Any history of hearing concerns or ear infections.
- Relevant developmental, medical, or educational information.
- What motivates your child — favorite toys, foods, songs, people, activities, or routines.
- Situations when communication is easiest and situations when it is hardest.

Questions Worth Writing Down

- What do you want your child to be able to communicate more easily?
- What situations cause the most frustration?
- What has helped in the past?
- What would meaningful progress look like for your family?

Bloom's Approach

A supportive next step for families who want practical, functional communication support.

You do not have to figure it all out alone

If you are unsure where to begin, a pediatric SLP can help you understand your concerns, identify appropriate next steps, and determine whether a full evaluation may be helpful.

Communication beyond the therapy session

At Bloom, the goal is not simply to practice skills at a table. We want families to understand their child's communication, feel confident supporting them, and see progress carry over into everyday life.

Your Family's Next-Step Notes

Topic	Helpful guidance
My main concern	_____
What my child does well	_____
What I want to learn	_____
Who I plan to contact	_____
My next step	_____

Bloom Pediatric Speech Therapy, Inc. • Parent education resource

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For California program details, families should verify current eligibility and referral procedures directly with their local Regional Center or school district.