

## Section 2: Eligibility Determination/Comprehensive Identification Procedures

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### **Eligibility Determination**

Consideration of the child’s eligibility for Early ACCESS services is a focus of the multidisciplinary team.

The importance of eligibility in the REVIEW of records is to gather evidence to support team decisions regarding eligibility determination (i.e., known condition or 25% delay).

Ultimately, the IFSP team has three choices when making the eligibility determination decision:

- Known condition
- 25% delay
- Not eligible

The following definitions describe pathways to guide the team’s eligibility determination process. More detailed procedures for when to determine eligibility and needed documentation is provided in Stage 3 of Section 5:

#### **Initial IFSP Meeting.**

<b>Eligibility Determination</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b><i>Known condition</i></b>	Infants and toddlers referred to Early ACCESS may have a known condition, based on informed clinical opinion, which has a high probability resulting in delays in cognitive, physical, vision, hearing, communication, social or emotional, and/or adaptive development. Children with known conditions are eligible for Early ACCESS services from the first contact with the Service Coordinator.

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## Section 2: Eligibility Determination/Comprehensive Identification Procedures, Continued

Eligibility Determination  
(continued)

Eligibility Determination	Definition
<i>Eligibility based on 25% delay</i>	Infants and toddlers referred to Early ACCESS may have delays in cognitive, physical, vision, hearing, communication, social or emotional, and/or adaptive development. The delays are “measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures and based on informed clinical opinion”. The infant or toddler with a 25% or greater delay in one or more of the required areas of development is considered eligible for Early ACCESS services.

**Note.** Informed Clinical Opinion means the integration of the results of evaluations, direct observations in various settings, and varied activities with the experience, knowledge, and wisdom, of qualified personnel. Informed clinical opinion should be used in conjunction with best practice evaluation and assessment. [281—120.4]

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### Prepare for eligibility determination

Once the evaluation is completed, the Service Coordinator schedules the Individualized Family Service Plan meeting with the parent and members of the multidisciplinary team. Information and evaluation results are reviewed to consider eligibility of the child for Early ACCESS.

*Note.* Disciplines in need of providing reports (as required by professional licensure) prepare results to be included with the *IFSP Evaluations and Assessments* page. These report data and results on the IFSP may include a reference to a report, but shall not substitute what is written on the IFSP Evaluation Assessment page.

Infants and toddlers (birth to three years of age) are eligible to receive early intervention services coordinated by Early ACCESS, if the child meets one of two eligibility criteria (e.g. known condition or 25 % delay).

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### Preparation for eligibility based on known condition

**Eligibility based on Known Condition.** Infants and toddlers referred to Early ACCESS may have a known condition based on informed clinical opinion, that has a high probability resulting in delays in cognitive, physical including vision and hearing, communication, social or emotional, and/or adaptive development (281 – 120.4).

Infants and toddlers with a known condition are eligible to receive Early ACCESS services at the time of referral or within the 45-day evaluation and IFSP meeting timeline.

- One appropriately qualified professional can submit documentation for the child's known condition within their scope of practice. (This information is used by the multidisciplinary team to establish the known condition.)
- A comprehensive multidisciplinary evaluation must be completed in all developmental areas to determine the child's needs to develop an IFSP to address those needs.
- A child with a known condition may or may not have a delay in developmental areas at the time of referral and evaluation but remains eligible for Early ACCESS.

**Note.** The child remains eligible for Early ACCESS services, until the age of three, for ongoing monitoring and assessment of all developmental areas.

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**Preparation for eligibility – Known condition list**

Known conditions with a high probability of later delay, identified for early intervention services include, but are not limited to:

- Genetic abnormalities, including, but not limited to, Down Syndrome, Fragile X, cystic fibrosis, and dwarfism
- Sensory impairments, including, but not limited to, vision and hearing deficits
- Inborn errors of metabolism, including, but not limited to, phenylketonuria, hypothyroidism, galactosemia, and sickle cell disease
- Congenital central nervous disorders, including, but not limited to, spina bifida and microcephaly
- Other congenital or acquired conditions, including, but not limited to, cleft palate, missing limbs, cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, seizure disorders, and physical impairments from birth or accident
- Venous blood lead level greater than or equal to 20 micrograms per deciliter
- Behavioral or emotional conditions such as serious attachment disorders
- Foster care
- Conditions resulting from serious chronic conditions (> 12 months duration expected), drug or alcohol exposure, failure to thrive, Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) and other autistic spectrum disorders, low birth weight, or prematurity.

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### Preparation for eligibility based on 25% delay

**Eligibility based on 25% delay.** For infants and toddlers who do not have a known condition at the time of referral, a 25% delay is used to establish eligibility for Early ACCESS in one or more of the following areas: cognitive development, physical development including vision and hearing, communication development, social or emotional development, and adaptive development (281 – 120.4).

- The delays are measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures to document a 25% or more delay in at least one of the seven areas of development based on professional judgment (informed clinical opinion).
- The information from the comprehensive evaluation is reviewed by the multidisciplinary team to determine eligibility, determine the child's and family's areas of need, and to develop an IFSP to address those needs.

**Definition.** Informed Clinical Opinion is defined as the integration of the results of evaluations, direct observations in various settings, and varied activities with the experience, knowledge, and skill of qualified personnel.

**Example.** A physical or occupational therapist must make judgments about muscle tone abnormality based on the therapist's training and experience with children. The professional judgment (Informed Clinical Opinion) of evaluators becomes a significant factor in the eligibility decision-making process. If results of the evaluation indicate concerns in the child's development, but is not at the 25% delayed level, it may be appropriate to provide early intervention services to the child and family.

**Note.** For children with a **known condition AND who have a 25% delay** in one of more of the previously described developmental areas, the IFSP team designates *known condition* as eligibility determination.

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### Documentation of exceptional circumstances

The exceptional child/family or outside circumstance(s) for not meeting the 45-day timeline must be documented on the IFSP. The following circumstances are considered within reasonable parameters of federal reporting requirements for Iowa meeting compliance of the 45-day timeline indicators:

<b>Exceptional Circumstance</b>	<b>Description</b>
Child/Family (FA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family Schedule</li><li>• Family move or change in residence</li><li>• Family vacation</li><li>• Child hospitalization or illness</li></ul>
Outside/Other (OU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Significant weather related events</li></ul>

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**Documentation of exceptional circumstances**  
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Although there may be exceptional circumstance(s) for not meeting the 45-day timeline, the state is required to report indicator data as “not met” in the Annual Performance Report. However, the state can provide data and explanation for exceptional circumstances and not meeting 45-day timeline requirements. It is critical to:

- document the exceptional circumstance and
- document appropriate circumstance provided in the chart.

Agency or system circumstances may contribute to not meeting the 45-day timeline requirement. The following agency/system exceptional circumstance is a choice to document delay but is not considered an acceptable reason.

Exceptional Circumstance	Description
Agency/System (AG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff shortage</li> <li>• Meeting notice not sent</li> <li>• Staff schedule</li> </ul> Location of family residence (travel distance to family’s home on extreme boundary of region; difficult to manage driving time for distance to family’s home and schedule of visits)

The state reports agency/system exceptional circumstances for the 45-day timeline indicator as “not met” and considers the data necessary to improve the state system. It remains critical to:

- Document agency/system exceptional circumstances
  - Document exceptional circumstances described in the chart.
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