

## ARTICLE RESOURCE:

# BENEFITS OF EARLY INTERVENTION

There is increasing recognition that the first few years of a child's life are a particularly sensitive period in the process of development, laying a foundation in childhood and beyond for cognitive functioning; behavioral, social, and self-regulatory capacities; and physical health. Yet many children face various stressors during these years that can impair their healthy development. Early childhood intervention programs are designed to mitigate the factors that place children at risk of poor outcomes. Such programs provide supports for the parents, the children, or the family as a whole. These supports may be in the form of learning activities or other structured experiences that affect a child directly or that have indirect effects through training parents or otherwise enhancing the care-giving environment.

As part of a recent study, RAND researchers synthesized what is known from the scientifically sound research literature about the short- and long-term benefits from early intervention programs, the features that are associated with more-effective programs, and the economic gains that accrue from investing additional resources in early childhood. We summarize those findings here.

Key findings:

- Early childhood intervention programs have been shown to yield benefits in academic achievement, behavior, educational progression and attainment, reduction in delinquency and criminality, and improved labor market success, among other domains.
- Interventions with better-trained caregivers and smaller child-to-staff ratios appear to offer more favorable results.

Reference: RAND Labor and Population documented in Early Childhood Interventions: Proven Results, Future Promise by Lynn A. Karoly, M. Rebecca Kilburn, and Jill S. Cannon, MG-341-PNC, 2005, 200 pages, ISBN: 0-8330-3836-2 ([Research Brief](#))

A study published in PEDIATRICS (the official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics) details some of the use statistics of the Early Intervention program. Their findings indicate:

- average age at which families report concerns about their child 7.4 months
- diagnoses made on average 1.4 months later (average age 8.8 months)
- children referred to Early Intervention on average 5.2 months after diagnosis (average age 14 months)
- individualized family service plans developed on average 1.7 months after referral ( average age 15.7 months)
- there is a large cluster of children who begin EI by 7 months (usually born with a substantial disability)
- a second large cluster of children beginning EI includes those between 23 and 30 months (these later children tend to have real but less intense developmental delays)
- 86% of families with children with delays talk to a doctor or medical professional about their concerns. Physicians are at the front line the referral process.
- 76%-82% of families report that the the EI services their child receives are sufficient in terms of quantity
- 93% indicate that the services are either good or excellent.