Understanding the IFSP Process

What is an IFSP?
The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is a fluid document that identifies family strengths, concerns, priorities, routines and activities, your child's present abilities, strengths and needs (which is included in the Evaluation Report (ER), outcomes (what you'd like to see different) and the services that are needed to assist your family and child to achieve the outcomes. This document changes as the information changes. It is formally reviewed at six months (180 days) and is rewritten annually if your child is still eligible for services.

When is an IFSP completed?
The IFSP is completed after the multidisciplinary evaluation (MDE) has determined that your child is eligible for services. Remember, the MDE gathers information on family strengths, concerns, priorities, activities and routines that will be used in developing the IFSP. While your goal is to help your child do the things that other kids his/her age are doing, our goal is to help educate your family on how your family can meet your child's needs by building on the activities and routines already established. This initial IFSP meeting can be held immediately following the MDE or it can be held at another time.

Typically, the initial IFSP is a starting point for services. It is viewed as a foundation on which to build the services that will best suit your family's and child's needs. You are a pivotal part of how the plan is developed. We need to know what you think might work or might not work; what you really want to focus on relative to your child's needs.

The IFSP document is rewritten annually in a meeting with team members including you as the parent/caregiver. Again, your child is evaluated to determine 1) eligibility; 2) present abilities, strengths and needs; and 3) family strengths, concerns, priorities, routines & activities are included. This information is then used to write the new IFSP.

Who develops an IFSP?
Typically, at the initial IFSP meeting, the team consists of you, your Service Coordinator and the Independent Evaluator(s). You are welcome to have anyone else present that you desire. At the annual IFSP meeting, the IFSP team includes you, your Service Coordinator, the Early Intervention staff that have been working with you and your child as well as anyone else you would like to attend.

Early Intervention utilizes a team approach that is family oriented in serving your child and family. Early Intervention staff will provide you with recommendations, with information that will allow you to make informed decisions regarding the services your child receives. Staff will share their expertise and experiences as appropriate. One of our goals is to help educate you on how you can help your child achieve the outcomes (goals) you've established. You are the expert on your child. One aspect of Early Intervention is to provide suggestions that use the information that you provided regarding your family's strengths, concerns, priorities, activities and routines. In this framework of planning and providing service, your family becomes the teachers and therapists by incorporating the suggestions that Early Intervention staff offer into the existing activities and routines.

The purpose of the IFSP is to identify family concerns and priorities and plan how to meet those stated needs. It states what services will be provided, who will provide them and how often those services will occur.

The IFSP is written in language that makes sense to you. When possible, we try to use your words. We review the written information to make sure that it is what you want written. We will ask if you would like anything changed or reworded.

Every three months, we review progress and adjust the IFSP based upon the team's decision of what to do with the progress analysis. This may mean keeping the outcome, strategies and services the same, revising the strategies or measure of progress, accomplishing an outcome and establishing new, changing or increasing services or determining services are no longer needed.